

“EU Development Policies and Budgets”

Seminar on Health, Education, Reproductive Health Supplies and the European Development Policies

Mirjam van Reisen, 3 October 2006

Let me start by thanking Countdown 2015 for organizing this timely seminar to discuss European development policies, health, education and in particular sexual and reproductive health and rights.

It is timely because – as most of you know, the European Union is currently re-structuring the way in which it allocates its external aid. This means that the legal, financial and political framework for development actions – including on sexual and reproductive health – is being changed.

This change is embedded in the EU’s strong commitments to the promotion of human and social development as enshrined in the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development, the agenda of the 1995 World Social Summit in Copenhagen, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration. The Millennium Development Goals are a reflection of all of these.

Therefore, the starting premise for my presentation today is that the new structure for EU external aid must strongly reflect the international frameworks to which the European Union has subscribed. The commitments must be clearly reflected in the legal instruments, as well as the financial and budgetary arrangements agreed in conjunction with these.

We must “practice what we preach”– this is one reason why we have to ensure clear links between internationally agreed commitments and programmes of action. In addition, a strong logic and empirical evidence is the reason that poverty eradication and sexual and reproductive health and rights are linked. The evidence ranges from issues related to violence against women and vulnerability for HIV/AIDS infection, to maternal mortality and child vulnerability and survival. These issues are at once complex and fairly simple. They necessitate the recognition that sexuality is a major health concern, and respect for women’s rights is a fundamental aspect of the ability for women to prevent dangerous and hazardous circumstances. This is especially true for women in poverty, who have little bargaining power.

The EU has so far played an important role as a key driving force on these issues in the recognition that sexuality needs to be discussed and the taboo that surrounds it lifted in order to create safer and healthier environments for women and girls – and, let us be clear, for men and boys as well.

Let us tackle this question by looking at the revised structures of EU external aid. Moreover, I will touch upon the particular challenges faced by the move towards the “new aid modalities”: the move from project and programme support to general and sectoral budget support. The purpose of the ‘New Aid Effectiveness’ agenda is to create greater ownership over development processes. This is a crucial concept, which I fully endorse. The key question is:

how is this ownership arranged? Is it a democratic ownership, or an ownership of the elites? Is it an inclusive ownership of one that excludes people living in poverty? Is this an ownership shared equally between women and men?

In addition, we need to broach the important question: how do we lift the taboo on sexuality and its impact on development processes within the context of the new aid effectiveness agenda? What are the policy spaces where we can link reproductive health care with sound conceptions of women's rights? Where do we connect measures for gender equality with practical transformation processes that will give women greater ownership over decisions that concern their sexuality?

Let me start answering those questions by assessing the recently negotiated new framework for EU development co-operation. This will include:

- (1) the policy framework
- (2) the legal framework
- (3) the budgetary framework
- (4) the transition to new aid modalities

1. Policy level:

In this section I would like to briefly discuss the new EU Development Policy Statement and the Roadmap for equality between women and men.

1.1 Development Policy Statement the European Consensus on Development

The new Development Policy Statement – adopted at the end of 2005 - recognizes sexual and reproductive health and rights as outlined in the ICPD Cairo Agenda as one important aspect of achieving the MDGs. It notably states that, *“The MDGs cannot be attained without progress in achieving the goal of universal sexual and reproductive health and rights as set out in the ICPD Cairo Agenda.”* And *“The Community will support the full implementation of strategies to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights and will link the fight against HIV/AIDS with support for reproductive and sexual health and rights.”*

The promotion of gender equality and women’s human rights is included as one of the five core principles of the EU’s development policies – and, although the paragraph does not refer to sexual and reproductive health and rights, it is an important recognition of gender equality and women’s rights as an important political priority.

The European Consensus provides a strong policy framework – particularly considering that the previous Development Policy Statement, which dated from 2000, did not mention sexual or reproductive health and rights at all and only referred to women’s rights as a cross-cutting issue.

1.2 Roadmap for equality between women and men

Apart from the Development Policy Statement, there is also another policy document that I would like to mention – the Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006 – 2010. The roadmap states that:

“Across the world, the EU will continue to promote education and a safe environment for girls and women, sexual and reproductive health and rights, the empowerment of women, which contribute to fighting HIV/AIDS, and the fight against female genital mutilation”.

This again is strong language although, when it comes to describing the indicators against which performance on these issues will be measured, no concrete information is given.

Both documents have been adopted fairly recently and the question now is how these policy objectives are reflected in the legal instrument for development co-operation, which is currently being negotiated, resourced in the new financial instruments and in the budget.

2. The legal level - Development Cooperation Instrument

This instrument has been under discussion for exactly two years now – this week marks the second anniversary of the negotiations. Today it looks as if an agreement – yet to be formally adopted - has finally been reached.

In its original proposal, the Commission proposed a joint instrument for developing and industrialized countries – the Development Cooperation and Economic Cooperation Instrument (DCECI). According to this proposal, there would have been no independent legal base for the EC's relations with developing countries and therefore no clearly defined budget for development. It is unnecessary to explain the disastrous consequences such an instrument would have had for development in general, and education, health and sexual and reproductive health and rights in particular. However, thanks to the efforts of the European Parliament, Member States and Civil Society Organisations, the instrument was eventually split and we now have a political agreement that there will be a Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) which is based solely on Article 179 TEC - the article that governs the EC's relation with developing countries.

Overall, the DCI has been a success from a human and social development point of view.

- Firstly, of course, it was crucial to have a strong development legal base to be able to frame the instrument in the Millennium Development Goals and international commitments related to development co-operation.
- Secondly, the DCI is expected to include a reference that 100% of the geographic money must be “dacable” and that 90% of the thematic money must be dacable.
- Thirdly, in one form or another, the DCI will include a statement that 35% of assistance to developing countries will be allocated to social infrastructure and services and that 20% of assistance given under country programmes will be – by 2009 - spent on basic and secondary education and basic health. This is a commitment that has been called for since the World Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995.

Regarding its thematic content there were also substantive discussions.

In the original proposal from the Commission, all issues relating to human and social development (health, education, gender – including also the sexual and reproductive health budget line) were being replaced by one thematic programme called “Investing in People”. After extensive discussions, the approach has been changed and the thematic headings are now:

- Education
- Health
- Gender
- Other issues, grouping together culture, employment and social cohesion, youth and children

This is a very positive development as it lifts out the issues of education, health and gender and gives more clarity to them. Under the health section, sexual and reproductive health and rights as set out in the Cairo Agenda are explicitly referred to in a quite substantive paragraph. However, the gender section does not refer to sexual and reproductive health and rights at all.

3. The budgetary level

It is still unclear whether the re-structuring will lead to a different structure in the budget. So far, the European Parliament's Development Committee has adopted an amendment calling for a separate budget line for education, health, gender and others – this will now be voted in plenary, so it is too early to know what the outcome will be.

In 2006, the EC agreed 2.8 million Euros in commitment appropriations for gender in development and 19.5 million Euros to population and reproductive healthcare. It must be ensured that the new thematic structure will provide at least as much as was given in 2006 for gender and reproductive health. The figures above also clearly indicate that more must be given to health and education, particularly if the 20% target is to be reached.

Of course it is not only thematic money that can or should be used for health and education issues – and in fact, with the relatively small amounts allocated to thematic issues, it would not be possible to achieve the 20% and 35% benchmarks included in the Development Cooperation Instrument. Also, the geographic programmes must therefore be targeting education, health and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In this context, we are facing particular new challenges – as the Commission has committed itself to sharply increase the amount of assistance it is giving through general budget support (GBS) – with a stated aim of giving up to 50% through GBS.

Therefore, I would just like to say a few words about this new modality.

4. New Aid Modalities

The provision of general budget support makes national policies – such as national development plans and national budgets - increasingly important. Gender budgeting and CEDAW monitoring have proven to be effective instruments to tackle gender equality in the context of the new aid modalities. As for sexual and reproductive health and rights, it is extremely important to open up a discussion on how these will be promoted in the context of the new aid modalities. Particularly where these are part of taboos and culturally sensitive, and considered as part of the private sphere only, how can national policies be promoted that address these issues? Again, ownership should guide us here. Conditionality from outside is the wrong mechanism. Voices from the inside must be heard. These might be slow and difficult processes, but ownership will be necessary to ensure their sustainability.

Apart from this, there is a basic challenge at the heart of general budget support: how can one measure how much of it benefits human and social development? For example, concretely, how much of the EC's money given through general budget support is spent on basic health and education issues? The national budgets will be increasingly important parameters of the success or failure of budget support.

In addition, the mechanisms for ensuring ownership are crucial. It is imperative that aid programmes are negotiated within a context of transparency and accountability. It is also crucial that sexual and reproductive health and rights issues are promoted by creating greater ownership over these issues and especially by lifting the taboos on issues related to sexuality. This needs careful thinking and planning and needs sustained long-term approaches.

5. Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I would like to point to the following observations:

1. There is progress in how the new policy framework of the European Union aid programme reflects the Cairo commitments;
2. The Development Cooperation Instrument also seems to be in line with the ICPD framework;
3. The programming process is increasingly important in the new aid effectiveness agenda, and draws emphasis to the notion of ownership;
4. Ownership is a crucial principle on the basis of which the sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda of the European Union can move forward, with careful approaches to a sustained and long-term process which aim to bring in the open critical issues on the cross-roads of sexuality, health, reproduction, women's rights and poverty.
5. Call for Action have been successful in promoting SRHR and I fully endorse Countdown 2015

Thank you.