

13 September 2007  
ENGLISH only

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**United Nations**  
**Division for the Advancement of Women**  
**Expert Group Meeting on financing for gender equality**  
**and the empowerment of women**  
**Oslo, Norway**  
**4-7 September 2007**

**MONEY MATTERS:  
THE STRATEGIC RELEVANCE OF DONOR FUNDING TARGETS AND  
CONDITIONALITIES FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT  
AND GENDER EQUALITY RESULTS**

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*The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.*

## **1. Introduction**

Almost twenty years of Hivos experience with explicit policy, implementation and monitoring & evaluation in the field of gender, women & development (GW&D) informs this paper. The intention is to share Hivos strategies and practices and to draw lessons and recommendations for future good practices in support of women's empowerment and gender equality. Whereas Hivos is classified to belong to the funding sector of International NGOs (INGOs) in the AWID *Funder* reports, the insights and recommendations of this paper will be of relevance beyond the INGO sector and Official Development Assistance (ODA).

Hivos is predominantly a channel for ODA. It receives four year core funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and individual programme or project funding from the European Commission, some multilateral and bilateral agencies, as well as non-ODA funding from international foundations, companies and individual donations.<sup>1</sup> Hivos is an intermedia1 T12 72 708..15 Th-26.

present Hivos mission statement states that the empowerment of women in order to achieve gender equality is a primary directive in Hivos policy.<sup>5</sup>

## **2. Major lessons**

Hivos' capacity to put and keep women's empowerment and gender equality on its agenda during the past two decades provides a few important insights how this has been possible. Hivos' experience suggests the following are vital:

- commitment and accountability from leadership and management at highest levels, combined with commitment and accountability at middle management levels, given delegated decision-making;

- explicit GW&D policy, and clarity on its status in relation to other sectoral and overall institutional policies;

- responsibility for gender mainstreaming has to be shared, owned and embedded widely throughout the organisation, preferably within each unit of major organisational decision-making;

- availability of gender expertise needs to be of a generalist and of a specialist nature in order to be a useful resource for other sectoral domains. Gender capacity building for (new) staff and knowledge sharing should be ongoing and consistently refreshed.

Ultimately gender competency should be included in job ty frx4Gend typreferablity sTJ7.ently47



the thrust via gender mainstreaming. This has resulted in a reduction in gender expertise, capacity and advocacy, which resides predominantly within women's organisations and gender equality units, and which are indispensable to processes of mainstreaming.

Changes in **aid modalities**, in particular donors' replacement of direct project support and implementation, with recipient-country-led strategies such as sectoral approaches, basket funding and budget support have implied that gender equality, as a policy objective was lost. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness also fails to recognise the centrality of gender equality in aid effectiveness. Its current operationalisation tends to focus on agency efficiency rather than effectiveness for development results such as the MDGs.

Civil society organisations – including women's organisations – have become more dependent on the goodwill of their own governments; possibilities for policy dialogue with, and direct funding from, bilateral agencies have been reduced. Many recipient governments do not prioritise women's rights, and are not in favour of strong civil society advocacy for justice and equality. Two-thirds of the women's organisations surveyed by AWID say that it has become more difficult in the last five years to raise funds for women's rights and gender equality.<sup>8</sup>

ODA calls for proposals and funding criteria do not match easily the work done by women's organisations or the application and reporting requirements are too rigid and demanding to be met. The specific gender equality

Hivos prefers to support civil society organisations, which aim explicitly at bringing about social and political change. Civil society organisations, working in alliances, as social movements are important drivers of change for the agenda's of sustainable development, equality, economic and social justice. Again, the consequence is that Hivos does not support civil society organisations that concentrate on (just) the delivery of basic social services. In Hivos' vision, that is the responsibility of governments.

### **5.1. Rationale to support women's organisations**

For Hivos it is crystal clear that women's organisations have been and continue to take the lead in civil society to promote the interests, rights and participation of women. This has been confirmed by external evaluations, highlighting the persistent division of labour within civil society, women's organisations representing the interests of women and male dominated civil society organisations not acknowledging the political value, importance and role of women's rights and organisations.<sup>12</sup>

It is critical to recognize the multiple roles that women's organisations fulfil:

- agenda setting of old and new gender inequalities, exposure of violations of women's rights;
- knowledge generation, gender specific analysis and dissemination;
- empowering women through knowledge sharing on rights, mobilisation to claim rights and demanding accountability to these rights;
- building women's leadership, voices, representation and citizenship in civil society, public and private sector;
- building organisations, networks, alliances, movements across a diversity of women's interests and engendering other civil society organisations and alliances;
- service provision, in particular in relation to rights that states fail to deliver or recognise, e.g. violence against women and sexual & reproductive rights;
- development of international normative frameworks and accountability mechanisms and increased formal, legal equality;
- challenging deep entrenched notions of gender inequality, people's minds, values, attitudes and behaviour, changing societal relations and creating new norms and values in society.

### **5.2 Earmarked GW&D budget**

Each Hivos sector receives a fixed percentage of the core funding that Hivos receives from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During the period 2007 – 2010 annually 15% of the core funding is allocated to the GW&D sector. The non-core funding (25% of the total Hivos budget) acquired from other sources is raised on the basis of specific delineated projects or programmes. Hivos experience with raising additional funding for women's organisations, beyond its core funding, has proven to be more difficult in recent years. This is particularly the case for the

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<sup>12</sup> EOS Consult, Lida Zuidberg, in collaboration with Patricia McFadden and Marianne Nugteren, (2004), *The Role of Women's Organisations in Civil Society Building. A joint evaluation of the programmes of Cordaid, Hivos and Icco in Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe in the period 1998 – 2003*, CFP evaluation series 2003 – 2006: no. 2, MFP Breed Netwerk, p. 58.

European Commission, bilateral agencies and private foundations for similar reasons that women's organisations face. The emphasis on gender mainstreaming and the changed aid modalities also have reduced access to resources for Hivos for ongoing grant making to women's organisations. At present the other Hivos sector programmes are more successful in acquiring additional funding.

For Hivos this has had the consequence that the strategy of the fixed funding target of 15% of the total annual budget (target since 1996), can no longer be realised due to the increased dependence on non core-funding. The percentage of total expenditures for the GW&D sector has gradually dropped from 15% in 1995 to 10% in 2006.

However, the budget indicator has played and continues to play a crucial role. It is explicitly mentioned in the Hivos four year Business Plan with core support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is tracked annually and integrated into the financial and programme administration, and has to be reported on in Hivos annual reports. Over the years the fixed budget target for the GW&D programme has served its purpose of keeping support to women's organisations on the agenda, and of demanding accountability to gender equality and the agenda of women's rights (internally). The 2004 external Programme Evaluation confirmed this.<sup>13</sup>

### **5.3. Funding mechanisms and partner policy**

Hivos has different funding mechanisms, ranging from small-scale one-off support (with a maximum of € 10,000), to annual project or programme support and institutional core support with a maximum contract period of 4 years. In 2006 the largest annual grant size to a women's organisation has been €200,000, whilst the average annual grant size to women's organisations was €65,000.

Hivos also provides support to some of the women's funds, Mama Cash and the African Women's Development Fund, for ongoing grant making where they have an added value compared to Hivos. For instance in their support to small, new, young initiatives that cannot yet meet Hivos standards for reporting and registration.<sup>14</sup> According to AWID's *Fundher* reports Hivos niche is its support to medium size women's organisations between €50,000 and €100,000.

Hivos supports women's organisations at all levels, local, national, regional, continental and global, in recognition of the importance of women's rights work at all levels and to make the connections between the different levels. The GW&D budget is allocated per region but with the flexibility to shift resources between regions if the need arises.

Renewal of the partner portfolio is part of Hivos partner policy, to enable new and often young organisations to become part of the Hivos network. Organisations are supported for a maximum of ten years, though with scope for ongoing support in case of specific added value and strategic relevance of the organisation for the sector and Hivos programme.

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<sup>13</sup> EOS Consult, p. 18.

<sup>14</sup> Hivos requires partners to be formally registered and to provide financial statements approved by an external auditor, except for one off initiatives, small grants, extreme repressive contexts or when auditing firms are absent.





## **6.1. Earmarked GW&D funding in other sectors**

Similar to the 15% of core funding to the GW&D sector programme, all other Hivos sectors combined are expected to allocate 15% of their core funding to organisations and activities that specifically benefit women. This target is a recent one and to be achieved by 2010. Women's organisations that qualify to be part of one of the other Hivos sectors are supported out of the budget allocation to those sectors. Thus organisations of lesbian women are supported from the Human Rights & Democratisation budget and feminist media initiatives from the ICT & Media budget.

The 15% target is tracked annually, integrated into the financial and programme administration, and included into the annual planning and reporting cycles of all sectors.

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The gender performance criteria are integrated into the programme administration. All Hivos staff that process funding requests are required to use this tool. It serves an agenda setting purpose internally and with partner organisations. All sectors have to identify, plan and report on specific interventions to assist partners to improve their gender performance, including gender and organisational change trajectories, gender self-assessments and gender audits.

The GW&D team plays a supportive role for mainstreaming in the other sectors for which the sectors are responsible. Ultimate accountability for gender mainstreaming is at the level of Hivos directors.

## **7. Recommendations**

Based on almost twenty years of Hivos two track strategy, with resources, budgets, staff and instruments for both tracks, Hivos has formulated ten recommendations that will contribute to increase and mobilise resources for women's empowerment and gender equality.

different funding sectors should identify alternative ways to provide financial support to women's organisations, for instance through intermediary ongoing grant making organisations that have the commitment, track record and capacity to support women's organisations.

4. Funding should be accessible to women's organisations at all levels, local, national, regional,

resources on doing ‘gender equality repair’ work at the normative level, having to defend rights earlier achieved, at the expense of actions to enforce realisation of these rights. Recent examples of ‘gender equality repair’ work concerned the scope and indicators for the MDGs and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

#### 10. Never give up! Perseverance is innovative!

To quote Hivos Executive Director at the closing session of the Hivos-AWID INGO meeting on Women’s Rights – Unfinished Business, held in Amsterdam, November 2006:

“We all know about gender fatigue. Because gender inequality is very deep entrenched in people’s minds, values, attitudes and behaviour, we require expertise and passion, but also time and perseverance. As donors we keep pushing for innovation to be responsive to the changing global context. We do have to keep in mind however that it is very innovative to stick to your principles and continue with the hard work of gender justice instead of keeping on chasing after new fashions.

It is the responsibility of donor agencies to mobilise public support and resources, to build alliances with citizens (women and men), politicians, journalists, entrepreneurs, to invest in the future of women and girls in the South. Let’s go for gender equality and women’s empowerment and let’s put the money where our mouth is.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Hivos, (2006), *Women’s Rights – Unfinished Business, What should International NGO’s be doing?*, Report International NGO Conference Amsterdam, 15 – 17 November 2006, p.12, [http://www.hivos.nl/english/english/themes/gender\\_women\\_development](http://www.hivos.nl/english/english/themes/gender_women_development)