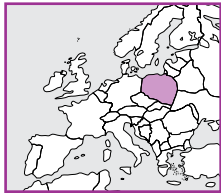


Aid for development without clear guidelines



A former recipient of development assistance and now a donor country, Poland is a player in reducing the world development gap. However, despite this new role on the international political scene, the country is still facing side effects of the transition into a market economy. In addition, the impact of the world financial crisis is becoming noticeable in the national economy and, in consequence, by households.

Network of East-West Women / NEWW-Polska

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At the start of the economic transition in 1989, Poland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) fell sharply and the rate of poverty increased significantly. The National Statistical Office estimates the rate of extreme poverty at 5.6% in 2008 compared to 6.6% in 2007. The relative poverty rate was 17.3% in 2007 and 17.6% in 2008. The percentage of people living in households with expenditure levels lower than the poverty threshold was 10.6% in 2008 and to 14.6% in 2007.¹

However, differences among social groups are widening. It is highly probable that the current decrease in family income will cause further pauperization of the middle and lower class. The increasing social exclusion influences the democratic process: only 25% of Poles feels they can have an effect on the State; 72% claims it is beyond their capabilities.²

The groups most endangered by social exclusion include poor families, single parents, orphans, disabled, chronically ill and elderly people. Since women are predominantly responsible for taking care of children as well as elderly or disabled members of their families, it may be assumed that poverty affects women more than men.³

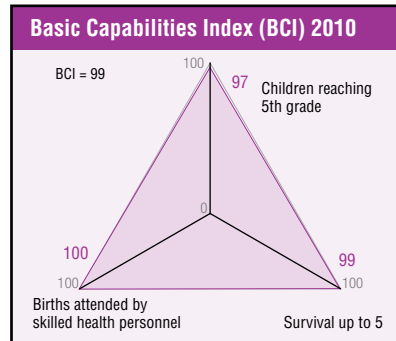
According to the National Statistics Office, the registered unemployment rate amounted to 8.5% at the end of 2009 – 8.2% for men and 8.8% for women.⁴ What should be added is that Poland lacks effective recruitment of women, especially those over 50 years old, into the economy as well as regulations that counteract discrimination against women in the labour market, such as the reluctance to employ them because of their maternal role.

1 National Statistics Office. Household situation in 2008 in the light of household budget research. Available from: <www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL_wz_sytuacja_gosp_dom_2008.pdf>.

2 Public Opinion Research Center. Available from: <www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2009/K_020_09.PDF>.

3 Feminoteka Foundation. *Women in Poland during transition 1989-2009*. Available from: <www.feminoteka.pl/downloads/raport_20lat_www.pdf> [in Polish].

4 National Statistics Office. Monitoring the Labour Market. Quarterly information on the labour market. Available from: <www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL_pw_kwartalna_inf_o_rynku_pracy_4k_2009.pdf>.



Education

Poland has high levels of enrolment throughout the education system. Universal access to education is guaranteed, with literacy rates nearing 100%. Among the population over 16 years old, women are better educated than men: 19.5% of females received secondary education, and 9% higher education (compared to 16.4% and 14.8% of males respectively).⁵

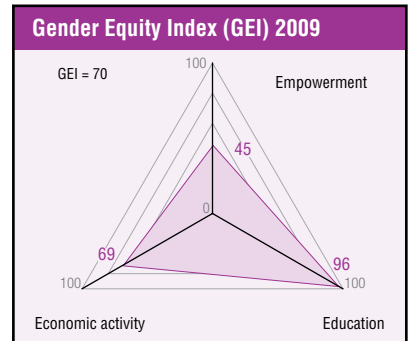
In spite of this, the Polish educational system continues to be discriminatory in terms of gender, especially at the tertiary level. Women constitute half of the students, sometimes even more, but they do not participate in decision-making processes. Additionally, the gender gap in salaries, promotions, work conditions and degrees is widening. Also, the problem of balancing professional career and family life is neglected in higher education. Female scientist discrimination is clearly illustrated by the fact that, in spite that 65% of all graduates are female, women's participation in the academy decreases after the first degree: 49% of PhD-graduates are women and the habilitated female professors reach 35%, while only 16% get a full professorship.⁶

Health

The health care system is publicly financed. Despite the fact that private and public institutions cooperate with the State in health care provision, the system continues to be underfunded. Some services need to be additionally paid for. Only a small group of people

5 National Statistics Office. Incomes and living conditions of the population report from EU-SILC survey of 2007 and 2008. Available from: <www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL_wz_dochody_i_warunki_zycia-rap_2007-2008.pdf>.

6 Andrea Rothe, et al., "Gender Budgeting as a Management Strategy for Gender Equality at Universities," Munich, 2008, 22.



can afford expensive medical care and the vast majority of the population is excluded from high quality services.

There is large deficit regarding sexual and reproductive rights in Poland. The limited access to contraceptives, the lack of family planning counseling and high-quality maternal care for all women all violate human rights. The country has received several admonishments from international agencies in this regard. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) instructed Poland to implement measures aimed at expanding women's access to health care, and urged that research be carried out on the extent, causes and consequences of illegal abortion and its impact on women's health.⁷

At the same time, services such as birth delivery or epidural anesthetics on demand without medical prescriptions are paid extra cash. Women have to bear the high cost of childbirth if they want their partner to be present during the birth, or get anything other than the standard anesthetic. This deepens the divide between the rich and the poor.

Immigration

Compared to other EU countries Poland has a relatively short immigration history. For years Polish migration policy focused on the outflows rather than inflows. During the period 1989-2004 immigration policy became more reactive, driven by the preparations for the accession to the EU. Immigration was discussed mostly in terms of human rights and

7 Agnieszka Nowak, "Women's status in Poland: a permanent crisis," in *Beijing and beyond: Putting gender economics at the forefront*, Social Watch, 2010. Available from: <www.socialwatch.org/node/11595>.

refugee protection, border protection and the repatriation of ethnic Poles from countries belonging to the former Soviet Union, rather than in terms of social or economic policy.⁸

Since Poland is a relatively poor country, immigration problems are underestimated by the authorities. In theory Poland pursues a policy of integration based on European standards; in fact, foreigners who manage to integrate do so mainly due to their own determination and actions.⁹

Accession to the EU in May 2004 required the incorporation of EU norms and rules into domestic legislation, and the development of institutional capacity in this policy area. In June 2004, the Act on the Promotion of Employment and Institutions of the Labour Market came into force. It specifies who can be granted a work permit, a temporary residence permit, a 'tolerated stay' or 'temporary protection' status. Despite institutional and legislative adaptation to EU standards, Poland has not yet developed an immigration policy that includes the integration of foreigners. Policies have instead concentrated on refugees, the repatriation of ethnic Poles and foreign spouses of Polish nationals.¹⁰

There are no structures enabling immigrants to influence political decisions at any level. There are no consultative bodies, nor immigrants' parties. Also, the question of voting rights at the local level for non-citizens is not being discussed – either by the Government or political parties, NGOs or the immigrants themselves.¹¹ So far, active civic participation of immigrants is limited to activities aimed at improving the immigrant communities' social and economic situation, and at maintaining ethnic, religious and cultural identity.

Development aid

In 2008, Polish Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounted to PLN 900 million (USD 272.6 million), equivalent to 0.08% of GNI. In 2006 ODA amounted to PLN 922.2 million (USD 279.3 million). This means that, for the first time since Poland accessed the EU, the level of Polish ODA has decreased. In 2008 the country made no progress in ensuring a steady increase of ODA funding. This despite the fact that in 2010 Polish ODA is targeted to reach 0.17% of the GNI, increasing to 0.33% by 2015.¹²

Polish ODA consists of multilateral assistance (provided through international organizations) and bilateral assistance (provided directly through Polish institutions, organizations and other bodies). Multilateral assistance consists of payments made into the EU budget and that of other international or-

ganizations, and of funds such as the United Nations agencies, the European Development Fund (EDF), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the European Investment Bank (EIB). Bilateral assistance is coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but includes expenditures by other Polish ministries, such as the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and others. These funds are allocated in co-financing projects conducted by public administration bodies and NGOs.¹³

The channels for providing Polish foreign assistance are: food aid, scholarships, financial assistance, technical assistance and humanitarian aid. In 2006, Poland ratified the Food Aid Convention, although so far the country has not provided any foreign food aid within the framework of development cooperation.

A large amount of Polish ODA is allocated in scholarships for students from developing and transition countries. The K. Kalinowski Scholarship Program, established in March 2006 by Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, is addressed to Belarusian students, who have been expelled from Belarusian universities due to their defense of democratic values. The program is implemented in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Science and coordinated by the Centre for East European Studies of the Warsaw University.¹⁴ Although such expenditures are being reported as ODA, they do not fulfill the OECD DAC criteria.¹⁵

Technical assistance is intended to support the development of human resources, increasing the qualifications and technical and productive capacities of developing countries. This kind of assistance takes various forms including training, delegation of experts, study tours, scholarships and other activities undertaken within the framework of projects implemented by government administration bodies, local governments and NGOs.

Humanitarian aid comes from the State budget target reserve administered by the Development Cooperation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Humanitarian aid is carried out in line with the principles of the Good Humanitarian Donorship and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. Poland's priority countries for humanitarian aid are Sudan, Chad and Iraq. At the same time Warsaw often cooperates directly with humanitarian organizations operating locally in time of disasters as well as with local NGOs.

Since 2008 the Polish army has been involved in the distribution of development aid, particularly

in Afghanistan. According to some NGO critics, "choosing the military as an implementing agent for aid activities undermines the effectiveness of development cooperation, which is heavily dependent on the approach, motivations and goals of those responsible for aid implementation."¹⁶

The objectives of Polish ODA

Poland's main foreign assistance goals are the reduction of poverty and the fulfillment of other MDGs in countries receiving Polish assistance; and ensuring democracy, the rule of law, civil society development and respect for human rights in Eastern Europe.

Priority countries for Polish foreign assistance are Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Afghanistan, Iraq, Georgia, Angola, Vietnam and the Palestinian Authority. Bilateral assistance addressed to priority countries goes primarily to the Newly Independent States (NIS): Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The premises of Polish ODA are consistent with the MDGs and the development policy of the European Union. Its main objectives include "support for sustainable economic growth, respect for human rights, democracy, rule of law and good governance, promotion of global security and stability, transfer of experiences from the field of Polish political transformation, development of human resources, support for development of the public administration and local structures, environmental protection and prevention of environmental problems and providing emergency humanitarian and food aid."¹⁷

Polish development cooperation, and the implementation of its foreign assistance program, are new areas of foreign policy which have not been covered by comprehensive legislation. In addition, the data is not disaggregated by sex. The usual procedure of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to sum up the amounts of Polish foreign assistance and announce them in relation to the countries and not to particular actions.

Polish foreign assistance lacks some basic definitions. There is a strong need to assure properly coordinated development assistance (in compliance with the requirements of the EU) as well as the need to create effective and efficient financial mechanisms and of creating a clear institutional and legal framework. Solutions successfully tested in other developed countries should also be implemented and applied in order to guarantee the continuity of the Polish development policy and the effective achievement of the set goals. ■

8 K. Iglicka, "Poland: *Waiting for immigrants. But do we really want them?*" Centro Studi Di Politica Internazionale. Available from: <www.cespi.it/WPMIG/Country%20mig-POLAND.pdf>.

9 *Ibid.*

10 See: <www.developmentandtransition.net/index.cfm?module=ActiveWeb&page=WebPage&DocumentID=580>.

11 Iglicka, *op. cit.*

12 Zagranica Group, Polish Development Assistance 2008. Independent Report of Non-governmental Organizations. Available from: <www.trialog.or.at/images/doku/polish-oda-2008-ex_summary_eng.pdf>.

13 See: <www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/The_Ways_of_Providing_Polish_Foreign_Assistance_166.htm>.

14 Polish Aid. See: <www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Scholarships_179.html>.

15 Zagranica Group, *Polish Development Assistance 2008*, *op. cit.*

16 *Ibid.*

17 Justification of the Act on Polish Development Assistance. See: <globalnepoludnie.pl/New-strategy-for-Polish-foreign>.