

## TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SERBIAN GENDER EQUALITY SYNERGY GROUP

### 1. BACKGROUND

Gender equality is an issue of extreme importance in terms of overall development of a society. Development actors often regard it as a cornerstone in the perception of poverty and sustainable development. Mainstreaming gender equality is a strategy for achieving sustainable development for all, by supporting the right of choice, empowerment and provision of resources. Gender discrimination is one of the main causes of poverty and a major obstacle to equitable and sustainable global human development.<sup>1</sup>

The Government of Serbia adopted the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality in February 2009. The Action Plan for its implementation was adopted in September 2009. Gender Equality Law was adopted in December 2009.

The main objective of the Strategy is to define a complete and harmonised state policy with the purpose to eliminate discrimination against women, improve their position and integrate the gender equality principle in all spheres of functioning of system institutions, as one of the elements of a wider modernisation and democratisation of the society, in order to achieve faster, more equal and efficient development of the society, in accordance with the policy of equal opportunities proclaimed in the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. The Government of Serbia now needs to tackle the challenge of the implementation of the Strategy, the Action Plan and relevant legislation.

The implementation of the Action Plan falls under the remit of the Gender Equality Directorate of the Government of the Republic of Serbia. It was established in July 2008 within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as the first executive gender equality government mechanism in Serbia. Its mandate is to: 1) coordinate the preparation of the draft Gender Equality Law, 2) prepare and implement the Action Plan for the National Strategy for Improving the Position of Women and Promoting Gender Equality, 3) monitor the implementation of CEDAW Committee recommendations, in cooperation with the Ministry for Human Rights and report to it and 4) interpret and assist in fulfilling the international obligations related to gender equality, particularly the legislation vital for EU accession.

Following the adoption of the Action Plan, the necessity to organise an adequate mechanisms for implementation and follow-up, including a functioning performance assessment framework has been recognised. The help of bilateral and multilateral donors and civil society organisations in this process is considered vital.

Serbian Gender Equality Synergy Group (GESG) was established in 2006, with the main aim to establish policy dialogue between the donors and the Government of Serbia, in order to ensure that gender equality issues are integrated in development programme/project design and delivery and to harmonise the approaches. The overall

---

<sup>1</sup> 2005, Promoting Gender Equality in Development Cooperation, Sida policy paper

objective of the Serbian Gender Equality Synergy Group, in the spirit of Paris Declaration<sup>2</sup>, is to coordinate development co-operation in the area of gender equality with the Government of Serbia and to help create conditions that will enable equality in redistribution of resources, implementation of equal opportunity policies and respect for human rights in Serbia. Originally, the Canadian International Development Agency took the lead in this process. In mid 2008, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) took over the lead and started co-hosting the meetings of the Synergy Group.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF GESG**

Given the specifics of this stage of the reform process, the Gender Equality Directorate and Sida have agreed to reposition the focus of the Gender Equality Synergy Group, in order to make it more instrumental in the implementation of the Action Plan.

Thus, the redefined overall objective of the Gender Equality Synergy Group is to facilitate Serbia's gender equality reform process and strengthen the performance of the sector, by providing a forum for programme- and results-based policy dialogue between the key stakeholders with the following specific objectives:

- to enable permanent policy dialogue among donors, international organisations and government stakeholders in Serbia. The main topics of this dialogue will be: the reform in the sector and strengthening of institutions, sector performance management and improvements, improved aid effectiveness and coordination and monitoring and reporting on the progress and impact of the reforms;
- to harmonise the approaches in donor aid with priorities of the Government of Serbia in the area of gender equality and gender mainstreaming;
- (if necessary) to identify short, medium and long-term priorities for gender equality reform process and support the Gender Equality Directorate in developing, updating and monitoring the operational plan for the sector;
- to support the Gender Equality Directorate in developing a performance assessment framework to track, monitor and report on performance and improvements, including the development of adequate indicators to be used;
- to facilitate joint analyses of core issues pertaining to gender equality reform process and identify future challenges;
- to take stock of the status of the reform process in different areas of the sector;

---

<sup>2</sup> Five principles of Paris Declaration are: *Ownership* – which commits developing countries to take leadership in implementing nationally defined development strategies; *Alignment* – which commits donors to support national development strategies; *Harmonization* – which commits donors to harmonize aid priorities; *Managing for results* – which commits donor and partner countries to focus on results; *Mutual accountability* – which commits donors and partners to measure aid performance through systems, procedures.

- to offer assistance and support to the integration of gender equality issues and gender mainstreaming in all development project and/or programme design and implementation;
- to identify, present and discuss the ways to strengthen aid effectiveness, streamline the coordination of donor assistance and map further funding needs in the sector;
- to monitor the overall funding envelope for gender equality reform process, including contributions from the Government and different development partners;
- to monitor the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting and programmatic budget in the sector;
- to gather active stakeholders committed to coordinating their activities and sharing information, knowledge, experience and best practice in the area of gender equality in Serbia;
- to serve as a platform to address new and emerging concerns and issues pertaining to the reform process.

GESG is gathering active stakeholders committed to coordinating their activities and sharing information, knowledge, experience and best practice in the area of gender equality in Serbia, namely: donors (development agencies, bilateral and UN agencies, Delegation of the European Commission, international non-governmental organisations, implementing agencies of different donors) and Serbian institutions which allocate significant analytical and financial resources to promote gender equality in Serbia.

### **3. METHODOLOGY OF WORK**

1. Serbian Gender Equality Synergy Group is an informal forum for exchange of information and opinions and it does not function under any organisation or institution. The GESG is not a part of any specific project or programme.
2. GESG meets on a needs basis, but not less frequently than 2-3 times a year.
3. The GESG meetings are co-chaired by the Gender Equality Directorate and Sida.
4. Each organisation, including NGO sector, can participate with maximum two authorised representatives per organisation.
5. The agenda for the meetings could be proposed by each member of the GESG. Members of the GESG are encouraged to propose topics for agenda.
6. Logistical arrangements for the GESG meetings (place, date and information about meetings) are done in accordance with the agreement between the Gender Equality Directorate and Sida.
7. Meeting minutes will be prepared in cooperation between the Gender Equality Directorate and Sida and they will be shared with all members.

8. To keep the GESG members informed about current gender equality issues in Serbia even in between meetings, an e-mailing list will be established. Managing and updating of the GESG e-mailing list is done by the Gender Equality Directorate and Sida. Contributions of other members of the GESG to the GESG e-mailing list are more than welcome and encouraged.
9. Creating and updating of the contact list of all GESG members is done by the Gender Equality Directorate and Sida. Contributions of other members of the GESG to the GESG e-mailing list are more than welcome and encouraged.
10. Official language of the GESG is English, but translation from and into Serbian can be provided upon request.

#### **4. THEMATIC AREAS**

The discussion topics can cover a wide range of issues relevant for the sector, but they should all share the following characteristics: they should address strategic and operational issues relevant for the status, direction and vision of the overall gender equality reform process in Serbia and they should be relevant for Serbia's EU accession.

All members of the GESG can suggest topics to be discussed and present issues at the meeting.

#### **5. MEDIA AND VISIBILITY**

Subject to consultations between the members and following the approval of the Gender Equality Directorate, press releases can be prepared jointly, in connection to specific GESG meetings. These press releases will be disseminated to media after the meeting. Press conferences may also be organised. All relevant information will be posted at the website of the Gender Equality Directorate [www.gendernet.rs](http://www.gendernet.rs).