

## A big gap between official policy and citizens' expectations

Public opinion polls concerning attitudes towards development aid have been carried out in Poland since 2004\*. There is a systematic growth of public support for aid to other countries, the increase has been from 64% in 2004 to 84% in 2008.

Polish citizens **are firm in their commitment to Africa**, 57% chose the continent as a first priority for Polish aid. This stands in sharp contrast to both the previous and current government's policy to focus mainly on close neighbours (Belarus and Ukraine) and other countries of the former Soviet Union. **In fact, aid to Africa amounts to only 3% of Polish bilateral aid** (4.63 million USD), according to official figures for 2007.

Despite the fact that the government declares its commitment to poverty reduction and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), actual spendings are either focused on other areas or not strategic at all.

NGOs argue that a more strategic approach to development policy could strengthen both poverty reduction and democracy, contributing to the improvement of Polish aid to make it more responsible and aligned to the international development agenda. The Polish public opinion is probably not aware of this striking gap between public expectations and official policy.

According to opinion polls, only 13% respondents have heard of MDGs and for 89% TV is the main source of information about development issues. The majority of Poles (57%) have not heard anything about Polish aid in recent months. When asked to name sectors which Poland should support, respondents chose mainly education (46%), and health (30%). Poles consider the following challenges to be the greatest among those faced by developing countries: infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS (51%), armed conflicts (43%), access to water (37%) and inability to produce sufficient quantity of food (35%).

There is much less consent agreement concerning criteria for supporting democracy in other countries. The relative majority of Poles pointed at the willingness of the specific country to receive aid as a main precondition for its delivery.

The gap between public expectations and the current official Polish aid policy creates a significant challenge. Will the government focus more on international commitments to poverty reduction, in line with EU policy priorities, taking into account citizens' expectations? NGOs argue that there is much space for Parliamentarians to bridge this gap and contribute both to enhancement of Polish development cooperation and strengthening democracy and accountability in Poland and abroad.

\* Annual TNS OBOP polls made for Ministry of Foreign Affairs, more at: <http://www.polskapomoc.gov.pl/Badania,opinii,publicznej,128.html>

# 84%

of Poles endorse  
Polish development  
cooperation

## What can politicians do about it?

# Towards more effective Polish development assistance

Polish non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been involved in monitoring Poland's official development assistance (ODA) since 2006. Numerous NGOs have participated in the debate on development policy, unfortunately without a strong input from decision makers so far. Since the first AidWatch report published by the *Grupa Zagranica* NGO platform, organizations have been advocating for more strategic approach to development cooperation, more accountability and transparency.

A recent publication by Polish Green Network focuses on three major challenges facing Polish aid:

- the need for **country strategy papers** which would be based on partner countries' development priorities, would focus

on the use of systems which already exist in partner countries and would contribute to strengthening democracies in least developed countries, the need for an **independent evaluation system**, which would foster the achievement of development goals,

- the need to introduce **new aid instruments and programme aid**, including budget support, especially for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and other least developed countries.

Authors of the report argue that Poland's EU presidency in 2011 requires the government and Members of Parliament to take urgent steps in order to improve the quality of Poland's development policy and prepare it for leadership in the area which has not received sufficient attention so far.

Holding the EU presidency will demand experience and institutional background in the field of development cooperation. These have to be developed urgently. The challenge is even greater as the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness is planned for 2011 as well.

The publication contains:

- a revision of Polish commitments to increase aid quantity and quality,
- an analysis of Poland's compliance (or lack of compliance) with European development policy, including specific commitments included in the European Consensus on Development,
- a detailed clarification of three main NGO recommendations regarding aid quality,

- tips on positive involvement of Polish parliamentarians in development policy. Finally, the publication encourages policy makers to utilize the experiences related to development policy issues which have already been gathered by the Polish NGO community, notably the Polish Green Network (PGN), Polish Humanitarian Organisation (PHO) and Institute of Global Responsibility (IGO).
- The publication has been distributed to all Members of Parliament and Polish Members of European Parliament as well to key NGOs involved in development cooperation and academics.

This publication was issued as a part of Polish Green Network project: "Challenging Poland in EU development policy decision-making", financed by Presidency Fund in 2008.

Since 2006 Polish Green Network has been implementing Action for the Global South programme. The purpose of the programme is to cooperate with other NGOs and politicians for increasing Polish development assistance transparency and promoting effective cooperation for the Global South sustainable development. Participation in the global discussion about supporting the role of the EU is one of the essential parts of the Polish engagement in the fight against global poverty.

This publication should encourage Polish politicians to involve in one of the most important global debates.

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