
TAI & DEVELOPMENT, 2008

REC Latvia report

Part II

National Roundtable on Uganda TAI National Assessment Report and Latvia's development assistance policy

Time: September 17, 2008

Title: "Latvian Development Assistance and Opportunities to Integrate Environmental Democracy in it"

Participants list

Nr.	Name	Organization	Contact e-mails
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Agenda and main topics of the roundtable meeting:

1. General introduction into RIO Principle 10 and TAI initiative, and Presidency Fund project “ The Access Initiative- Good Environmental Governance- a Prerequisite of Sustainable development” ,
by Ms. Erika Lagzdina, REC Latvia
2. General Introduction in Latvia’s development assistance policy,
by Mr. Davis Daudzvardis, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
3. General Introduction in Latvia’s development assistance policy in environmental sector and implementation process in 2008 , plans of MoE for 2009 ,
by Ms. Dace Rika, MoE, and Mr. Janis Rudzitis, Latvian Environmental Protection Fund
4. Results of Review of The Access Initiative (TAI) Uganda National Assessment Report and main findings related to development assistance and co-operation projects,
by Ms. Erika Lagzdina, REC Latvia
5. Presentations by participating NGOs and other participants on their particular experience in cooperation projects with developing countries
6. Facilitated discussion on integration of Environmental Democracy into Development Assistance
7. Facilitated discussion on Recommendations and next strategy steps.

Brief minutes of roundtable

1.

Ms. Lagzdina opened roundtable and presented general introduction into Principle 10 and TAI initiative, as well as project goals and tasks. She explained link between TAI prproject and development assistance and Latvia’s role in it.

2.

Mr. Daudzvardis presented main policy considerations and facts about The Development Cooperation Policy Programme of the Republic of Latvia 2006-2010 as The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for forming the development cooperation policy and for coordination . Special emphasis in the Programme has been laid on activities involving society, by increasing public knowledge of development cooperation, and by ensuring public involvement in defining the priority areas and directions for action. Annual Plans may give priority to specific countries and specific sectors based on the following criteria:

- Latvia's national interests;
- Active presence of Latvian NGOs and/or businessmen in the specific country;
- The recipient country's cooperation with NATO and the European Union on defense matters;
- Foreign policy focus, observation of universal democratic values and human rights by the specific country, and the rule of law there;
- Situation regarding combating and prevention of corruption in the specific country and other criteria.

Environment was defined as priority in each of recipient country. In defining Latvia's priorities we will follow the goals set by the UN Millennium Declaration. While the attention of the big donors is mainly focused to the African region, Latvia is interested in the economic growth, stability and strengthening of democracy in neighbouring regions. Therefore, Latvia has set the former Soviet republics to the East from the EU – Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine - as its development assistance priority regions for 2007. Latvia is interested to promote cooperation also with Belarus, however such

cooperation can occur at present only in specific areas, like civil society development, etc. Special activities are supported in Afghanistan.

Unfortunately only 0,06 % of GDP is allocated for programme what does not meet goals set by EU policies. Examples of projects were presented .

Mr. Daudzvardis was supported by his colleague Ms. Tomase who added few aspects of cooperation, emphasizing that role of Latvia is to be a bridge between EU and former soviet bloc countries, as Latvia's assistance is more valuable as Western one due to our common past and similarities in development.

Participating NGOs raised questions about selected priority activities and countries.

3.

Ms. Rika and Mr. Rudzitis presented facts about assistance policy in environmental sector and implementation process in 2008 . Cooperation is additional and independent from formerly discussed MOFA policy. This is financed from state budget line where environmental resource tax income generator, and this is good will of MoE. Cooperation is based mainly on bilateral agreements between Latvia and recipient country MoE. Such agreements (with Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia and Serbia) defines priorities. A lot of opportunities are provided for NGOs cooperation, as grants are open call.

4.

Ms. Lagzdina presented Results of TAI Uganda National Assessment Report and main findings related particularly in respect to development assistance and co-operation projects with aim to initiate more alive discussion, as seems development assistance is not familiar topic in society (with exception of participating people).

The main issues raised for discussion besides those described in the Uganda Review Summary were as follows:

- Uganda has made considerable steps into direction of environmental democracy, still there are many gaps what need to be properly assessed in designing development assistance,
- and perceived as valuable case study for quite similar situations what exist in countries Latvia is supporting right now (ex. Belarus, Afghanistan)
- There is big gap specifically in environmental governance on Uganda's national level and this might be closed by properly designed assistance programs and twinning projects from Latvian side
- Latvia is not meeting Millennium development goals with current development assistance policy as world's poorest countries are not its focus. Why Africa is not important for Latvian politicians. This is short sightedness and lack of world's sustainability needs awareness .
- Donors helping Global South do not use efficiently PP instruments thus providing capacity building for recipient government officials,
- PP shall be more extended beyond policy planning and integrated in an technical and financial assistance activities
- There is considerable lack of awareness in Latvian society and among politicians and government officials on Millennium Declaration obligations

this issue was re-echoed by experience of Ms. Luse from PR agency "PR Stils" who made interviews on this issue in early 2008 and have facts about unwillingness of society at this stage of our economic hardship to help other world. But this can be justified by lack of discussion on this aspect in public media.

Meeting was closed with expression of deep satisfaction about interesting discussions and promises to keep current network alive and exchange information.

Prepared by

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