

“Brussels counts in seconds, rural areas count in seasons”

... this was only one of the conclusions drawn during a workshop on EU funding and project management held in Nairobi/Kenya, March 20 to 24.

For the first time APRODEV member agencies – Bread for the World, Christian Aid, Church of Sweden, DanChurchAid, EED and ICCO – had jointly organised such a workshop in order to share their knowledge and experiences on EU funding issues with African partner organisations. The workshop was attended by 38 programme and financial managers of 23 organizations coming from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. Facilitated by FAKT, a German consultancy, the EU funding officers from the APRODEV agencies introduced participants to different aspects of EU grant application and contract management. The methodology used included presentations, discussions in plenary, role plays and practical exercises in working groups.

For Bright Mawudor who opened the workshop on behalf of the All African Conference of Churches, there could be no better time to run such a workshop because of the need in the framework of globalisation for a more accountable society to deliver on contracts signed. In addition, as Mrs. Maria José Pallares, Head of the Social and Environment Section of the EC Delegation in Kenya, pointed out in her welcome speech, it is not only the tools provided for submitting a project application which in her view makes such a workshop useful but also the opportunity to familiarize participants with the general context of the EC cooperation policy.

Presentations on the EU as global player in development with emphasis on the Cotonou agreement and the recently adopted EU-Africa strategy were eye-openers for many participants who until now had not really be aware of the involvement of the EU in African development policy and especially on the role civil society is supposed to play in this aspect. On explicit request by the participants a special session on these issues was held where Karine Sohet from the APRODEV secretariat explained in more detail the background of the Cotonou agreement and its implications for civil society. Participants were especially keen to learn what the agreement provides for civil society organizations and how they can get involved in the forthcoming negotiations of the 10th EDF.

Participants, though familiar with their bilateral relationships with individual APRODEV member agencies, also learned about APRODEV as a network as well as about CONCORD, the European confederation of relief and development NGOs and the role these two networks can play in lobby and advocacy on EU policy and funding issues.

After five intensive days participants understood very well that EU funds are no “easy money”, nevertheless many expressed their sincere willingness to take the challenge and to get more involved in EU funding. To be able to do so, however, they also expressed the need for further backstopping and support from their European partners. Here now also lies the challenge for APRODEV member agencies who learned that despite all difficulties African partners are interested in the opportunities the EU offers them – on both the levels of policy dialogue and funding – and that they are ready to go for it.

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