



Focus: Human rights in Austrian Development Cooperation

Human rights are the only system of values that rightly lays claim to universal validity. They are defined minimum standards in regional and international conventions and declarations that those in power must abide by in their direct treatment of people. Government institutions and non-governmental actors are obliged to set out the necessary framework to guarantee compliance with these minimum standards. Human rights entitle every person to organise his/her life in keeping with the principles of liberty, equality and respect for human dignity.

Generally, human rights are subdivided into three categories:

- Civil and political rights: e.g. right to life, prohibition of torture, right to freedom and security, right to respect for private and family life, freedom of speech, right to a fair trial
- Economic, social and cultural rights: e.g. the right to water, food, health, education, work
- Collective rights: e.g. the right to political and economic self-determination, the right to development

At the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 in Vienna, the heads of state and government of more than 170 countries reached agreement on the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and equality of all human rights. This was an acknowledgement that all three categories of human rights have the same status and depend on each other.

Human rights as a key for development

The implementation of *all* human rights is crucial for poverty reduction and peacebuilding - two primary goals of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). As emphasised by the UN Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, in 2005, security, human rights and development are mutually dependent:

“Humanity will not enjoy security without development, it will not enjoy development without security, and it will not enjoy either without respect for human rights.”

Promoting respect for human rights is accorded priority by most bilateral and multilateral donors and has been embodied in international documents on aid effectiveness: The final declaration of the Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan (2011) emphasised the promotion of human rights, democracy and good governance as an integral component of development efforts. It points to international commitments in connection with decent working conditions, gender equality, ecological sustainability and disability. Stress is also placed on the vital role of civil society organisations, which needs to be strengthened.

Because the political will to promote human rights is sometimes lacking and often the requisite capacities in partner countries to respect and assert them are not available, it is essential to support them in these areas.

This is why the **human rights-based approach** has been adopted in development cooperation. This calls for:

- aligning or linking development measures explicitly with international human rights standards,
- placing people at the centre of development efforts as bearers of rights, not merely as recipients of aid,
- explicitly mainstreaming participation, empowerment, non-discrimination and equal opportunities as well as accountability in all measures.

The human rights-based approach in Austrian Development Cooperation

In keeping with international standards and the Development Cooperation Act, Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and its operational unit, the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), has also largely integrated the human rights-based approach into its own projects and programmes. The Three-Year Programme 2013-2015 of Austrian development policy defines good governance and human security as one of the major goals of ADC. Austria promotes respect for human rights in partner countries at **three levels**:

Human rights as a principle: All programmes and projects of Austrian Development Cooperation must abide by international human rights standards. Development measures may 'do no harm'. The human rights principles of participation and empowerment, non-discrimination and accountability must be adhered to in all measures.

Human rights in policy dialogue: In close consultation with other donors, Austria is also committed to promoting human rights in policy dialogue.

Human rights as a sector: Austrian Development Cooperation supports specific programmes and projects for promoting economic, social and cultural (e.g. the right to water) as well as civil and political (e.g. equal access to justice, media) human rights. Particular support is given to equality between men and women, women's rights and measures for strengthening the rights of specific groups, particularly children, persons with disabilities and minorities.

The strategic specifications and the practical directives of Austrian Development Cooperation have been compiled in the ADC policy document on human rights and in the Human Rights Manual. They are based on international human rights conventions, the Accra Action Plan and the Action-Oriented Policy Paper on Human Rights and Development (AOPP) drafted by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC).

Priorities

Austrian Development Cooperation sets the following geographical and thematic priorities in promoting human rights:

Africa

- Regional: political participation (including promotion of parliaments), women's rights, strengthening the role of women in peace processes, above all as a contribution to implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325, human trafficking, peacekeeping and human rights education
- Uganda: justice (particularly access to justice), transitional justice after the civil war in the North, women's rights and civil society

- Ethiopia: women's rights, persons with disabilities, human rights education
- Mozambique: promotion of parliaments
- Burkina Faso: inclusion of persons with disabilities
- Southern Africa: human trafficking, particularly women and child trafficking, violence against women

Danube Region/Western Balkans

- South-Eastern Europe regional: human trafficking, women's rights, gender-based policies, support of media, inclusion of minorities
- Bosnia and Herzegovina: justice, persons with disabilities (mine victims)
- Albania: children's and women's rights, child trafficking
- Kosovo: children's and women's rights, rights of minorities

Black Sea Region/South Caucasus

- Moldova: support of media and civil society organisations
- Georgia and Armenia: civil society and women's rights, persons with disabilities (mine victims)

Himalayas-Hindu Kush/Palestinian Territories

- Bhutan: decentralisation of the justice system, improving access to justice, court of audit
- Palestinian Territories: women's rights

Central America/Caribbean

- Rights of women, children, youth (violence prevention) and minorities (indigenous population)

Austria in the United Nations Human Rights Council

In May 2011, Austria was elected with 177 votes to the United Nations Human Rights Council. Membership lasts until December 2014. The Human Rights Council is regarded today as the key body in the UN for the protection and promotion of human rights. It was founded in 2006 and counts 47 states as members. Besides regular meetings, discussions and the adoption of resolutions on various human rights issues, the Council can appoint special rapporteurs, independent experts or working groups for certain country situations or themes (special procedures). In a regular procedure (Universal Periodic Review), the human rights situation of the UN member states is reviewed every four years.

Austria devotes itself to the following priority themes in the Human Rights Council:

- Protection of freedom of religion and conscience and religious minorities
- Promotion of media freedom and protection of journalists
- Promotion of the rights of children and their protection against violence and exploitation

Furthermore, Austria is engaged in:

- strengthening human rights of persons and groups in particular need of protection (minorities, internally displaced persons, women)
- efforts against impunity after serious crimes and for reconciliation and strengthening the rule of law by advocating the systematic and thorough investigation of serious violations of human rights.

Project examples

Media

Moldova: Confidence-building measures in the Transnistrian Region

Building confidence between the separatist region Transnistria and the Republic of Moldova is the declared project objective. Via partnerships between media representatives on both sides of the Dniester River, it is setting up a dialogue for this. Forty journalists are given the opportunity for further training in how to report more objectively. This and strengthening civil society through further training for NGO representatives aim at strengthening the active participation of the population in decision-making at local level. Improving the flow of information and stepping up exchange among the various sections of the population in the region will build confidence and make a contribution to resolving conflict in and with Transnistria.

Project no.:
8296-00/2013
Contractual partner:
European Council
Term:
1 June 2013 – 30 Sept.
2014
ADA contribution:
EUR 450,000

South-Eastern Europe: Promotion of media development

Conditions are difficult for critical journalism in South-Eastern Europe. Murder threats, physical attacks and self-censorship due to fear are part of everyday life for many journalists. Daily problems include legislation that still falls short of international standards and hampers press relations and lack of journalistic training. With Austrian support, the aim is to strengthen freedom of the press and speech and, with that, democratic institutions in the seven South-Eastern European countries. Conferences on investigative journalism, hate speech, stereotypes or new and old media help to build up functional networks of journalists. Studies and publications on professional journalistic rules, marketing or selected themes, such as diversity and religion, compile and propagate international standards for journalists and improve their expertise. The target groups are media executives, students and representatives of relevant ministries.

Project no.:
7972-01/2009
Contractual partner:
IPI – International Press
Institute/ South East
Europe Media
Organisation (SEEMO)
Term:
1 Sept. 2009 – 31 Aug.
2012
ADA contribution:
EUR 448,000

Rights of the child

Moldova: Reintegrating and strengthening children and youth

Because they cannot find work at home, many Moldovans leave the republic and seek employment abroad. Their children stay with the grandparents or are left on their own. As a consequence, they often turn to crime, become addicted to alcohol or end up living on the street. The Caritas Petruska Crisis Centre in Tiraspol, Moldova's second largest city in the Transnistrian Region, takes care of these children and youth. The aim is to reintegrate them into their families. In training courses, the personnel of the centre are informed about the rights of the child, which they then impart to the children and youth. Training improves their opportunities on the labour market. Major lessons learnt are exchanged via contacts and cooperation with relevant organisations that have gained experience in dealing with street children.

Project no.:
8108-03/2010
Contractual partner:
Caritas
Term:
1 June 2010 – 30 June
2013
ADA contribution:
EUR 100,000

Central America: Preventing violence among youth

Raising awareness and improving cooperation between government and non-governmental actors aim at helping to prevent youth violence in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Of key importance for this are training multipliers, working with the population in communities and urban districts and the psychological care of members of youth gangs (both in their social milieu and in prisons). The project addresses 280 representatives of public institutions (such as police officers and teachers), 85 journalists, 100 representatives of non-governmental organisations, 300 young prisoners and about 2,000 young people, family members and residents of housing estates with hostile communities.

Project no.:
2648-00/2010
Contractual partner:
CEPREV
Term:
1 April 2010 – 31 March
2013
ADA contribution:
EUR 1,111,500

Women's rights and gender equality

Uganda: Peace and reconstruction

The Ugandan Government drafted a peace and development plan for reconstruction in the post-conflict region of North Uganda. With Austrian support, the Ugandan women's network, UWONET, is seeking to ensure that gender equity and the special needs of women are taken into account in the implementation of the plan. Citizens, particularly women and youth, are enabled take part in procedures that decide on the allocation of public resources. The project strengthens the accountability of local authorities and the participation of civil society in the four districts of Kitgum, Lamwo, Pader and Agago. It raises public awareness and builds capacities. One priority is communication and cooperation between local authorities and civil society for gender budgeting.

Project no.:
2636-00/2012
Contractual partner:
UWONET
Term:
1 April 2012 – 31 March 2014
ADA contribution:
EUR 299,308

South-Eastern Europe: Promoting gender-sensitive policies

The Gender-Responsive Budgeting Programme of Austrian Development Cooperation is to be continued: government institutions, civil-society organisations and parliamentarians in South-Eastern Europe are advised and supported in gender budgeting. This will strengthen the economic rights of women and improve policies and programmes for social security and women's development. The programme concentrates on Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia. Civil servants and government institutions are assisted in mainstreaming gender-sensitive measures in strategic planning and budgeting and mechanisms are improved for accountability and monitoring government commitments in women's rights and gender equality.

Project no.:
8181-00/2010
Contractual partner:
UN WOMEN
Term:
1 Dec. 2010 – 30 Nov. 2013
ADA contribution:
EUR 700,000

Rights of minorities

Kosovo: Strengthening the rights of minorities

The conditions of life for about 700 Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo need to be improved. The members of these groups currently live in slums on the compound of a former tobacco factory next to a waste disposal site. 120 new housing units, improved access to health facilities and schools- for example through support in registering children for primary school enrolment - and closer exchange among children, parents and teachers aim to improve the socio-economic integration of these groups. Income-generating measures are carried out for women and youth in particular, such as further training courses or start-up grants for small entrepreneurs. Improving the living conditions for the people is also intended to reduce the risk of human trafficking.

Project no.:
8196-01/2012
Contractual partner:
SDC
Term:
1 Dec. 2012 – 31 May 2013
ADA contribution:
EUR 550,431
(in 2 project phases)

Central America: Strengthening indigenous peoples

Training programmes, initiatives for respecting culture and measures to raise awareness aim at strengthening the indigenous population and people of African descent in Central America. With its focus on women and youth, the project aims at raising awareness of basic (minority) rights among the public and decision-makers. Networking engaged organisations contributes to strengthening the target groups in the North Pacific and Caribbean regions in Nicaragua and the Western Highlands in Guatemala. 2,100 people benefit directly from exchange of experience, studies on the situation of minorities and lobbying activities in dealings with the Central American Integration System (SICA) and the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

Project no.:
2666-00/2011
Contractual partner:
HORIZONT3000
Term:
1 June 2011 – 30 June 2013
ADA contribution:
EUR 880,800

Persons with disabilities

Burkina Faso: Equal rights for persons with disabilities

In community-based rehabilitation programmes, helpers visit the households, plan individual assistance programmes and show the relatives how they can help in learning important skills. The prime objective is to enable persons with disabilities to take equal and self-determined part in development. Major steps towards this are access to school education, basic medical care and rehabilitation. Educational work and information campaigns contribute to preventing disability and raising public awareness. Organisational capacities are built up for rehabilitation. Training affords new prospects for persons with disabilities. About 30,000 people in six regions of Burkina Faso receive ophthalmic treatment and more than 1,200 children and youth are given inclusive education. Altogether, about 60,000 persons per year will benefit from the measures. The project also promotes coordination among organisations and networks for the disabled and addresses the theme at all kinds of policy levels. The systematic documentation of experience will pave the way for the successful implementation of initiatives in other developing countries.

Project no.:
1980-05/2012
Contractual partner:
Light for the World
Term:
1 Jan. 2012 – 31 Dec.
2015
ADA contribution:
EUR 1,400,000

Ethiopia: Poverty reduction and inclusion through higher education and research

Austrian Development Cooperation also takes account of persons with disabilities in education and science - such as in a project titled "Responding to Poverty and Disability through Higher Education and Research (RESPOND-HER)" between Vienna University and Addis Ababa University, implemented under the umbrella of the Austrian Partnership Program in Higher Education and Research for Development (APPEAR). By means of high-quality research on disabilities and specific in-service training of scientific personnel, this project aims at strengthening the capacities at Addis Ababa University in the long term. This will enable it in future to provide suitable training measures for non-university institutions. The project facilitates access to higher education and to the labour market for students with disabilities. Priority is accorded to removing institutional barriers at local, regional but also national level. A long-term aim is the preparation of a national development plan.

Project executing agency:
Vienna University
Contractual partner:
Addis Ababa University
Term:
1 Oct. 2011 – 30 Sept.
2014
ADA contribution:
EUR 266,000

Rule of law, justice and reconciliation

Uganda: Based on the rule of law

Rule of law, respect for human rights and access to the legal system and justice are central components of good governance and lay the foundation for reducing poverty. This is why Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) has been supporting Uganda since 1997 in reforming the judiciary and the forces of law and order. Together with other donors since 2002, Austria has provided sectoral finance for the justice law and order sector (JLOS). This is based on an action plan drafted by Ugandan institutions and agreed with the donors involved. The aim is to strengthen rule of law and improve public satisfaction with and confidence in the justice system. Particular attention is paid here to gender equity, access to justice for children, transitional justice, fair treatment of HIV/AIDS patients and land rights. Legal reforms have been implemented in recent years and the infrastructure enlarged (especially in North Uganda). More courts and prisons are now available. Legal services have been localised. Much still remains to be done: shortening detention periods awaiting trial, for example, promoting equal access to justice and improving prison conditions.

Project no.:
1831-00/2012 (ff.)
Project partner:
Ministry of Finance,
Planning and
Economic
Development
Term:
1 July 2012 – 30 June
2015
ADA contribution:
EUR 6,000,000

Bhutan: Strengthening justice

Austrian Development Cooperation supports the Government of Bhutan in implementing its 10th five-year plan in the justice system. The main objectives are easier access to the legal system for the population and raising the long-term quality of an independent judicial system through human capacity development for judges and judicial officers. Together with Switzerland, finance is provided for the construction of two district courts in Trongsa and Bhumthang and Master courses for judges and further training courses for judicial personnel. Lessons are learnt from foreign legal systems by means of exchange programmes. Support is also given in developing a judicial academy as a research and training centre, the Bhutan National Legal Institute. Moreover, assistance is being provided for the construction of three additional courts of law in Dagana, Tsirang and Zhemgang. This way, more than 55,000 people will gain better access to the legal system by 2015.

Project no.:
2586-01/2012
Project partner:
Gross National Happiness
Commission, Supreme
Court of Bhutan, Royal
Court of Justice (RCJ)
Term:
1 Nov. 2012 – 30 July
2015
ADA contribution:
EUR 1,200,000

Political participation

Networking African parliaments against poverty

Information exchange, mutual learning and strengthening the capacities of parliamentarians are the aims of the African Parliamentary Poverty Reduction Network (APRN). It comprises 15 member states, including the ADC priority countries of Uganda and Burkina Faso. With online courses or in the Learning Centre in Ghana, parliamentarians acquire the necessary know-how for co-shaping policies, overseeing the implementation of poverty reduction strategies, supervising budgetary procedures, allocating public expenditure and ensuring gender equality. This enables them to better represent the interests of poor sections of the population. The measures also contribute to greater transparency and effectiveness in governance. The project is conducted by the Canadian Parliamentary Centre and steered by an executive committee that meets every year. Austria has been supporting the network since 2006.

Project no.:
2387-00/2006 and 2387-
01/2010
Contractual partner:
Canadian Parliamentary
Centre
Term:
Jan. 2006 – Dec. 2009
and Jan. 2010 – Dec.
2012
ADA contribution:
EUR 2,195,600

Mozambique: Parliamentarians in North-South Dialogue

The work of parliaments in developing countries often suffers from shortcomings in legislative procedure, lack of means for government oversight or poor technical equipment. These are also problems facing the Parliament in Mozambique. Austrian Development Cooperation therefore helps develop the capacities of Mozambican parliamentary representatives so that they can better perform their democratic tasks. They learn the necessary know-how for the application of new technologies and are supplied with appropriate IT equipment. In special training courses, they learn to frame legislation with the new information and communication technologies (e-law). Dialogue with the Austrian National Council affords them an insight into how Austrian parliamentary committees work and also enhances the development-policy competencies of Austrian colleagues. This will also encourage Austrian parliamentarians to engage more in development affairs. Regular information, via a newsletter, for example, personal discussions and events held by the Austrian section of the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa (AWEPA) help here.

Project no.:
2411-00/2006, 2411-
01/2008 and 2411-
02/2010
Contractual partner:
Gemeinnützige
Entwicklungszusammen
arbeit GmbH – GEZA
Term:
May 2006 – June 2008,
July 2008 – June 2010
and Aug. 2010 – July
2013
ADA contribution:
EUR 1,052,500

Human rights education and implementing the human rights-based approach

Macedonia: A human rights-based approach to social policy and poverty reduction

Mainstreaming the human rights-based approach in national and local planning procedures in the social sector and poverty reduction is a task worth doing: The aim is socially inclusive government policy. Particularly important here are the principles of equality and non-discrimination, participation and empowerment and the progressive implementation of human rights. A bottom-up process in development planning, that is, from the community via the regional to the national level, ensures that the needs of poor and underprivileged sections of the population are considered in the National Development Plan (NDP). The representatives of government institutions and non-governmental organisations are trained in applying the human rights-based approach. This is carried out in practice in eight small social projects at community level. Together with local non-governmental organisations,

Project no.:
8148-01/2009
Contractual partner:
Ludwig Boltzmann
Institute of Human Rights
– Research Association
(BIM-FV)
Term:
16 Nov. 2009 – 15 Nov.
2012
ADA contribution:
EUR 550,000

local authorities learn to include potentially underprivileged and poor parts of the population in social measures, such as minorities or persons with disabilities. This gives them a genuine say with all their problems and needs. Non-governmental organisations engaged in the social and poverty sector have founded the Macedonian Anti-Poverty Platform and monitor social policy.

Ethiopia: Academic partnership in human-rights education

As part of the Austrian Partnership Programme in Higher Education & Research for Development (APPEAR), the Ethiopian Civil Service University, the Addis Ababa University and the Institute for International Law and Relations at Graz University started a joint project in human rights in autumn 2011. It aims at strengthening cooperation between Austrian higher education establishments and universities in partner countries of Austrian Development Cooperation to enable sectoral and cultural exchange with lasting learning effects for everyone. The project comprises five activities to improve teaching, research and administration in Ethiopian partner institutions. For example, short-term mutual teaching and research stays are organised, curriculum development is evaluated and joint research interests identified. Summer academies focusing on human rights and human rights education are held and Ethiopian doctorate candidates are supported at Graz University.

Project executing agency:
Graz University
Contractual partner:
Ethiopian Civil Service University and Addis Abeba University
Term:
1 Oct. 2011 – 30 Sept. 2013
ADA contribution:
EUR 252,000

Human rights in conflict situations

Peacekeeping and conflict prevention in border regions in West Africa

In the West African border zone among Senegal, Gambia and Guinea Bissau, one of the longest conflicts in Africa has been going on for almost 30 years. Despite repeated efforts to reach peace between the rebel groups and the government, the population suffers from insecurity and restricted access to and lack of control over natural resources. Livestock theft, cross-border crime and small and light arms trafficking are additional sources of conflict. The programme assists local civil-society organisations in this region through specific cross-border training, a dialogue platform (Plateforme sénégalienne) and various micro projects. As the initiatives are included in local and regional action and development plans they make a major contribution to peace efforts in the region.

Project no.:
2681-00/2012
Contractual partner:
ENDA DIAPOL
Term:
1 Oct.2012 – 30 Sept.2014
ADA contribution:
EUR 310,199

Uganda and Ethiopia: Claiming rights - promoting gender equality

The framework programme of CARE Austria contributes to changing gender roles in regions that have long suffered from conflicts or famines. By the end of 2015, it will train about 60,000 women and 30,000 men in advancing gender equality at individual, social and institutional level. The target groups are those affected directly by past armed conflicts in North Uganda and Nepal or by chronic food insecurity in Ethiopia. The aim is to curb sexual violence and reduce harmful traditional practices. Women are engaged in savings groups to improve their economic situation and take increasing part in decision-making in the household and community and at national level.

Project no.:
1980-02/2013
Contractual partner:
CARE
Term:
1 Jan. 2013 – 31 Dec. 2015
ADA contribution:
EUR 2,500,000