

## WOMEN'S FORUM STATEMENT:

### Recommendations for Action on Development Effectiveness in Accra and beyond

On the 30th August 2008, more than 200 women's rights organizations, women's empowerment organisations, gender advocates and experts from all regions of the world attended the Accra International Women's Forum to discuss the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. This statement, which emanates from the forum calls for actions and recommendations for the 3<sup>rd</sup> High Level Forum.

Officials present at the Accra High Level Forum cannot ignore the failure of their development policies and practices, particularly those related to gender equality and women's empowerment.

According to recent figures today 1,4 billion persons live under the new poverty line of USD 1.25, and the majority of these are women and girls. It is essential to analyse the implications of the Aid Effectiveness agenda for the advancement of gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment, and to consider how future aid management will tackle this fundamental issue. It is crucial to understand the political context of development policies and the challenges posed by the implementation of the Paris Declaration (PD). We are concerned about the persistent neo-liberal model that is clearly failing deliver the promised results of growth for all, bringing instead, discrimination, social exclusion, injustice and more inequalities. In addition, it has decreased the possibilities of a fair and people centered development. We are also concerned about the negative impacts of privatisation of basic services , climate change and food insecurity which are undermining any possibility of sustainable development.

#### **Promises of aid made by donors have not been fulfilled.**

Today the aid industry - defined, designed and mainly implemented by donors - is failing to fulfil the right to development as stated in 1986 UN Declaration, as well as the right to gender equality and the right not to be poor. The Paris Declaration is another expression of the unequal aid architecture, lacking a holistic approach to build sustainable development and social justice. Aid assistance should truly support nationally owned and democratically adopted plans towards implementing these commitments, rather than imposing them through aid. To assure sustainability, it is urgent that the relation between the multilateral trading agenda and the aid agenda is made explicit. Aid cannot be detached from the larger context of global trade and the financing system.

While the Paris Declaration is not a binding agreement, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) among others, pose legal obligations to governments regarding issues of development, human rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. International treaties endorsed by governments in the last decades must be the framework for development policies and practices. Governments should be held accountable for these commitments. Any efforts to implement the Paris Declaration should be aligned with these international standards and goals.

The 3rd High Level Forum impacts on aid relations has to be considered in the context of the broader development financing debates. It also has to be recognised that in middle income countries wealth is highly concentrated in the hands of a few, with the majority of the people living in poverty. The last draft of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) has ignored the efforts of the various consultations that could have meant an improvement. Broader civil society organisations (CSOs), including women's rights organisations, are very concerned about this 25<sup>th</sup> July version. As stated in the International Steering Group (ISG) comments on the draft, "*not enough progress has been made in making aid work for poor people*", especially from the donors side. The consequences of a weak AAA could be inaction in improving aid quality and impact.

Compared to 2005 when the Paris Declaration was gender blind, there are now a few improvements in the AAA text. The 11<sup>th</sup> August AAA emphasizes the central place of poverty reduction and human rights in development policy and the importance of human rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability as cornerstones for achieving enduring impact. The AAA also states that "developing countries and donors will ensure that their respective development policies and programmes are designed and implemented in ways consistent with international commitments on gender equality, human rights, disability, and environmental sustainability". It also recognises the need to improve access to sex-disaggregated data.

However, it fails in explicitly recognising the need to allocate resources and to bind support from the donor community. The use of the qualifying phrase - "as appropriate" - obviously opens the door not to do anything. In addition, advances in language are undermined by the lack of new targets. Instead, existing targets are monitored by indicators defined by the World Bank, which are widely contested by CSOs and women's organisations.

## **Another world is possible**

Our vision is a world where aid is no longer necessary, where transformed relations of power and democratic redistribution of wealth continually challenge norms and structures of injustice and war and create new forms of relations based on respect, solidarity and justice for all. Where the existing aid system is not an instrument for oppression and policy capture nor for the support for any armed conflicts, but an instrument for promoting democratic sustainable development agendas which support the equitable distribution of productive resources, decent work, and the provision of social security for all, particularly for women. Last but not least, aid must be delivered to catalyse sustainable dynamics of social organizations and strengthen local productive structures in the face of globalization.

Women's groups understand that legitimate space for norm-setting on aid and international cooperation issues cannot be removed from the larger global trade and finance system contexts. Systemic issues are best discussed under the rubric of the United Nations, and the Development Cooperation forum should be the space to advance and monitor progress on aid and development effectiveness.

The Accra Women's Forum participants believe that there is no aid effectiveness without development effectiveness. Aid effectiveness without a gender equality and women's rights perspective will not lead to effective development and will not contribute to reduce poverty, inequalities and the achievement of the MDGs.

## **Women's recommendations to the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness**

The Aid Effectiveness process continues towards 2010 by which time the Paris principles will need to be met. Yet, there are no clear actionable commitments to set up work-plans for the coming phase. To affirm that there is political will to move forward in Accra, women's organizations call donors and developing country governments:

- To be consistent with the recognition of gender equality, environmental sustainability and respect for human's rights, as cornerstones for development; by treating these policy priority issues as sectors with progress indicators and specific resources allocated in national budgets.
- To align the Paris Declaration implementation with international agreed development goals (IADG) as suggested by the United Nations Secretary General Report<sup>1</sup>, particularly the international standards on human rights, gender equality, decent work, and environmental sustainability.
- To deliver donors' commitment to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of their GNP. In addition, aid should be additional to debt relief, and should be in their form of grants, not loans.
- To provide transparent information on how ODA allocations respond to policy commitments and people's needs, and developing country governments have to provide transparent and publicly available budgets.
- To consider how available resources are allocated. Donors and governments need to ensure that special funds are available for women's rights organisations and that effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that the money reaches these organisations. Funding needs to be diversified to ensure that the current focus on CSOs as instruments of advocacy does not exclude other work that is critical for women's rights, gender equality and poverty reduction. We recommend that women are given opportunity to design and implement their own projects according to their local priorities. Resources need to be distributed to make provision for the use of local expertise instead of wasting resources on foreign experts and consultancies.
- To recognize the importance of the UNSCR 1820, and allocate resources for mobilizing communities and the protection of women rights and their organizations.
- To integrate a strategic plan for financing gender equality<sup>2</sup> and women's empowerment that is reflected in budget guidelines into the monitoring system of the PD implementation. In addition, donor (bilateral and multilateral) and

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<sup>1</sup> UN/ECOSOC E/2008/XX, Secretary General Report (2008), *Trends and progress in international development cooperation*, Unedited version.

<sup>2</sup> Participants at the consultation call on donors and developing countries to follow the recommendation of the meeting of the UN Expert Group on Financing for Gender Equality asking governments to commit to reach 10% of ODA for gender equality and women's empowerment by 2010 and 20% by 2015, setting out in the action plan of donors, recipient countries and the DAC strategies for reaching the target, monitoring performance and evaluating impact (Expert Group on Financing for Gender Equality - the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Oslo, September 2007).

developing country governments must ensure and establish clear mechanisms for the participation of women's rights organizations as part of civil society, particularly women from excluded groups, in all the national development planning processes and aid planning, programming, management, monitoring and evaluation. Women's organisations should receive substantial, predictable and multi-year, core funding.

- To define democratic and participatory ownership as a vector principle of the implementation of the Paris Declaration, without setting new forms of process conditionality. Such an approach must go in line with the recognition of national leadership (Monterrey Consensus), the right to development, the right to self-determination, the right to participation, and the right to non-violence.
- To strengthen capacities, resources and authority of national women's machineries to support and monitor line ministries, other government bodies and parliaments in influencing national development planning and budget allocations for gender equality and women's rights.
- To accept that economic policy conditionalities have a negative impact on people, particularly on women. And therefore, to remove all economic policy conditionalities that undermine the principle of ownership and stand in contradiction with the rights to Development and Self-determination. This must include those conditionalities related to gender equality and the so-called "positive conditionalities". Instead, mutual responsibility, accountability and transparency of donors and developing countries must be applied and strengthened towards gender equality and human rights standards and goals.
- To measure development results within the Paris framework by adopting the existing reporting and monitoring systems for human rights compliance, such as the Gini Index of Income Inequality, as well as other processes such as CEDAW, MDGs, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), etc. If new indicators are created, they should be built within a more inclusive process that also takes into account grassroots beneficiaries and local actors. It must be explicitly stated how data for indicators are being generated, allowing civil society, and women's groups, to participate both in generating data and monitoring indicators. Allocating national budget resources for training women's groups in monitoring and evaluating should be considered.
- To measure outcomes on gender mainstreaming and gender specific action such as access to health and education, changes in women's employment and income, incidence of gender based violence, right to reparation, right to inheritance, property, land use, women's participation in decision-making.
- To pay special attention to the needs and rights restitution of victimized women in fragile states (states in conflict, coming out of conflict or post-conflict situations) and in communities experiencing localised conflicts and xenophobia attacks, by involving women in peace-building processes and channelling specific development assistance to women's organisations to address the concerns and needs of women survivors, including, capacity building, access to sexual and reproductive health, information and services and the stopping of violence against women.<sup>3</sup>
- To promote the use of mix of funding mechanisms to ensure progress on women's rights and empowerment, including general as well as sector budget support, pooled funding through the SWAp and partnerships with civil society organisations and UN agencies. General budget support alone cannot lead to progress on development goals, especially for most marginalised groups.

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<sup>3</sup> Sharing the case of Mauritania: development partners and donors should not use aid as a policy instrument, on the top of people's livelihoods, instead they should promote a constructive approach and support the population to strengthen and building democratic institutions.

## ANNEX

### Suggested Alternative Indicators for Monitoring Progress towards National Development Goals, including Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment<sup>4</sup>

Paris Declaration Principle	Suggested Indicators
<b>Ownership</b>	<p><b>1.1</b> Countries evaluated in 2010 have institutional structures in place which allow for systematic participation of civil society and women's groups in national development planning (including PRSP formulation), implementation and monitoring.</p> <p><b>1.2</b> National development strategies and PRSPs developed up to 2010 integrate a gendered analysis of poverty consistently supported by sex disaggregated data, and reference to national commitments to international conventions such as CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action.</p> <p><b>1.3</b> National gender equality priorities/plans are costed, supported by an action plan and integrated into the national development strategies and PRSPs.</p>
<b>Alignment &amp; Harmonization</b>	<p><b>2.1</b> Donor and partner countries evaluated in 2010 have gender responsive budgeting systems in place at national and local levels.</p> <p><b>2.2</b> Percentage of donor funds dedicated to capacity building on mainstreaming gender perspectives in public finances for Finance Ministry officials, Line Ministries, Civil society (and in particular women's organizations) and Parliamentarians.</p> <p><b>2.3</b> Percentage of public/donor funding for meeting women's specific needs for example, violence against women and HIV/AIDs.</p>
<b>Managing for Results &amp; Mutual Accountability</b>	<p><b>3.1</b> The 2010 evaluation of implementation of the Paris Declaration principles include systematic involvement from civil society and women's organizations.</p> <p><b>3.2</b> At least three gender-sensitive indicators are assessed during formal aid effectiveness monitoring and evaluation processes.</p> <p><b>3.3</b> Performance assessment frameworks of donors include gender equality as a key result and include systematic involvement from civil society and women's organizations.</p> <p><b>3.4</b> Percentage of aid dedicated for harmonized systems for joint government/donor capacity building on mainstreaming gender equality in programme-based approaches in place at country level.</p>

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<sup>4</sup> UNIFEM, 2008 (draft version).