

# Development Cooperation Beyond the Aid Effectiveness Paradigm: A women's rights perspective

## A Discussion Paper

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Association For Women's Rights in Development

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) is an international feminist, membership organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. AWID's mission is to strengthen the voice, impact and influence of women's rights advocates, organizations and movements internationally to effectively advance the rights of women.

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For further reading and information on development cooperation see The Development Cooperation and Women's Rights Series available on the AWID website: [www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org)

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# Acronyms

<b>AAA</b>	Accra Agenda for Action
<b>APWLD</b>	Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
<b>AWID</b>	Association for Women's Rights in Development
<b>BACG</b>	BetterAid Coordinating Group
<b>BPfA</b>	Beijing Platform for Action
<b>CCIC</b>	Canadian Council for International Cooperation
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DCF (UN DCF)</b>	United Nations – Development Cooperation Forum
<b>ECOSOC</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Council
<b>EPA</b>	Economic Partnership Agreement
<b>ESCR</b>	Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FfD</b>	Financing for Development
<b>FEMNET</b>	African Women's Development and Communication Network
<b>FTA</b>	Free Trade Agreement
<b>GAD</b>	Gender and Development
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GENDERNET</b>	OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality
<b>HLF2 / 3 / 4</b>	High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness 2 / 3 / 4
<b>IADG</b>	Internationally Agreed Development Goals
<b>ICESCR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>IFIs</b>	International Financial Institutions
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organization
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PD</b>	Paris Declaration
<b>PRSPs</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WID</b>	Women In Development
<b>WIDE</b>	WIDE Network
<b>WWG on FfD</b>	Women's Working Group on Financing for Development

# 1. Background

The multiple crises that the world is facing—food, climate change, financial, economic, ethical, and in care work—leave no doubt that we are dealing with a systemic, structural crisis. In such times, development aid is particularly key for the survival of poor people, the majority of whom are women.

At the same time, international solidarity through sustainable international cooperation based on states' obligations<sup>1</sup> plays a crucial role. However, the present international aid architecture and the policies promoted through it often lead neither to sustainable development nor to the realization of human rights and thus women's rights and gender equality. Moreover, some of the 'prescriptions' used by donor countries and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have, in fact, hindered some developing countries' ability to react appropriately to the most recent financial and economic crisis.

Additionally, while the 2010 disaster in Haiti has displayed an outpouring of international solidarity in the form of rapid mobilisation of aid, search and rescue missions, and disaster relief, it shows the fragility and weaknesses of the international assistance mechanisms currently in place. Tragically, it makes visible the ugly face of international 'efforts' when they are (even if only partly) driven by (developed) countries' own political, security, and economic interests.<sup>2</sup>

The failures of the current predominant patriarchal and neoliberal model of growth and development are more apparent than ever and have never been so widely acknowledged: even the establishment is showing interest in the need for a new development model and a new multilateralism.<sup>3</sup> Yet, there is no easy answer on how to build a more inclusive and democratic international

system. A new system that delivers for those who have been historically marginalised, many of whom—due to socially constructed roles and gender norms—are women.

In order to explore alternatives or to bring existing proposals to decision-making tables and build a new governance system, it is essential to think holistically from the start. This involves understanding the different interlinked channels through which the crisis is transmitted and the processes, politics, and power imbalances in which they are embedded. For example, unfair trade is one of the main structural causes<sup>4</sup> of the crisis' spread and a way of deepening dependent relations and dispersing the neoliberal model more broadly, particularly through free trade agreements (FTAs) or Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) promoted by key players such as the United States and the European Union (EU). Other causes deepening the crisis include labour market flexibility policies, often in place to attract foreign direct investment. However, the structural causes of the crisis have still not been addressed; on the contrary, the underlying systemic failures are maintained.

Also, the multilateral development agenda under the Millennium Declaration with its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) present a narrow and minimalist focus for measuring the advancement of gender equality and women's rights because it ignores the structural nature of poverty and gender inequality. This agenda—already challenged by many social movements and networks—undermines attempts and previous commitments (such as those in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action from 1995) to address the systemic causes of poverty and gender inequality.

1 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, part II, article 2 and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 22.

2 Related example: "In 1970, Haiti still enjoyed food sovereignty. Its farmers produced 90 percent of the food the country consumed. But the Reagan-Bush Plan imposed by Washington forced the country to lower tariffs on imported rice, the central crop of local farmers. US rice, cheaper because it was subsidized, flooded the local markets and ruined thousands of peasant farmers, who emigrated en masse to Port-au-Prince, where they would be later trapped in the earthquake." Source: Ignacio Ramonet, editor of *Le Monde Diplomatique* in Spanish (2010). Available at <http://www.awid.org/News-Analysis/Special-Focus-Crisis-in-Haiti/Haiti-and-Women-s-Rights-Historical-Context2/Learning-from-Haiti>

3 Alemany, Cecilia and Schoenstein, Anne (2008): "Will we hear the voices of those not heard before?" in TERRAVIVA (IPS) Financing Gender Equality. Available at: [www.ipsnews.net/new\\_focus/ffd/doha\\_magazine.pdf](http://www.ipsnews.net/new_focus/ffd/doha_magazine.pdf)

4 Highlights from the strategy meeting co-organized by AWID and UNIFEM in August 2009 to follow-up efforts on Aid Effectiveness, gender equality, and the impact of the crisis on women (2009).

Additionally, MDG8, which calls for the development of a global partnership for development, is being subsequently eradicated due to non-implementation.

Another detrimental factor to the process of development cooperation is the existence of a paramount ideological strategy that pushes for a minimalist state in favour of market-led policies. The current model does not account for—and thus externalises—social reproduction and the environment. The model fails to recognize the value produced by social reproduction activities and environment recovery cycles, denying their fundamental role to the sustainability of production (and life) and is, therefore, based on unsustainable neglect.

The economic efficiency that this model promotes comes at a social cost: a cost disproportionately borne by women through, for example, their unpaid care and domestic work. This burden is exacerbated by the persistent standard economic view that the individual household is a (well-functioning) unit.<sup>5</sup> When the role of the state is reduced, several social functions that were previously performed by the state (or that should be the responsibility of the state), such as healthcare, care-taking, and education, are absorbed by women. This increases women's already high work burdens, as this work is often in addition to their paid work outside the household or the so-called 'public sphere' and their 'invisible' unpaid (care) work in the household or so-called 'private sphere', as well as their voluntary efforts for the broader community. This, in turn, often takes a toll on women's health or leads to girls dropping out of school. The example above highlights that the reduced role of the state can correlate negatively with economic and social rights (such as housing, health, and education) that states are obliged to respect, protect, and fulfill and can generate and perpetuate gender inequalities.

The realization that the international system in general, and the "aid industry" in particular, are in crisis is

not new. We must, therefore, continue to analyze how the processes currently in place to tackle the crisis are translated into practice, and whether they are based on a holistic approach that has the potential to lead to sustainable development for all and contribute to equality and justice.

Some of the positions presented throughout the paper are not entirely new and have been raised by social movements, women's rights organizations, and other civil society organizations (CSOs). Unfortunately, they remain acutely relevant today.

### Box 1 Care Economy<sup>6</sup>

The care economy refers to "reproductive" work such as caring for, maintaining, and developing individuals, families, and communities, which constitute the "productive" labour force. It provides the basis for human life, the functioning of society and the "productive" economy. Care work keeps the labour force healthy and nurtured, and raises the future labour force. This work occurs primarily in the domestic sphere and is performed predominantly by women. Estimates show that the value of unpaid work can be equivalent to at least half of a country's Gross Domestic Products (GDP).<sup>7</sup> The care crisis is caused by states' increasing deferral, often a result of neo-liberal policies, of the costs of care to families and individuals—specifically and overwhelmingly to women. This privatisation of care and care costs is exacerbated by the current crisis, as increasingly indebted governments cut social programmes to balance their budgets, further increasing women's unpaid care work.<sup>8</sup>

5 Based on: Elson, Diane (1992): *Male Bias in Structural Adjustment*. In Haleh, A. and Dennis, C. (eds.): *Women and Adjustment Policies in the Third World*, Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd, London, pp. 46–68.

6 From: Raaber, Natalie (AWID, 2010): *The impact of the crisis on women: Main trends across regions*. Brief 11, p. 11. Available at: <http://www.awid.org/Library/Briefs-The-crisis-impact-on-women-s-rights-sub-regional-perspectives>

7 Elson, D. (1999) "Gender-neutral, gender-blind, or gender-sensitive budgets? Changing the conceptual framework to include women's empowerment and the economy of care," in Commonwealth Secretariat, *Gender Budget Initiative - Background Papers*, London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

8 Bakker, I. (2009) "The Global Financial Crisis and Care: Context and Gender Aware Responses," in WIDE, "Report of the WIDE Annual Conference 2009, WE CARE! Feminist responses to the care crises," 18–20 June 2009, University of Basel, Basel, Switzerland.

## 2. A women's rights perspective on the aid effectiveness paradigm

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness<sup>9</sup> (2005) that came out of the 2nd High Level Forum (HLF) on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action<sup>10</sup> (AAA) are the agreements in place by the donor community concerning the impact and effectiveness of aid and the relationship between developing and developed countries.

The focus of the so-called aid effectiveness agenda situated in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) was, from the beginning, focused particularly on reforming the delivery and management of aid in order to finance development and reach the MDGs more efficiently and effectively. In 2003, during the first HLF on Harmonisation in Rome, Italy, donors' concerns were already focused strongly on tackling "unproductive transaction costs."<sup>11</sup> From a historical perspective and when thinking about future scenarios of who should be governing such key processes, it is important to bear in mind that this current aid effectiveness paradigm building process began in 2003, after the Monterrey Consensus<sup>12</sup> that came out of the United Nations (UN) Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) in 2002.

However, the OECD/DAC has always played an important role in setting the rules for donors' policies and practices, and has thus always had a strong influence on donor development practices. The OECD/DAC is a self-elected group that did not gain legitimacy from a process of recognition from developing countries. Nonetheless, the DAC, and its subsidiary body called the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness,

became the institution to head (and dominate) the aid effectiveness agenda, and thus aid practices, since 2005.

### Box 2<sup>13</sup> Principles of the Paris Declaration

According to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness the following five principles should shape aid delivery:

**Ownership:** Developing countries will exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies, and will coordinate development actions;

**Alignment:** Donor countries will base their overall support on recipient countries' national development strategies, institutions, and procedures;

**Harmonisation:** Donor countries will work so that their actions are more harmonised, transparent, and collectively effective;

**Managing for Results:** All countries will manage resources and improve decision making for results; and,

**Mutual Accountability:** Donor and developing countries pledge that they will be mutually accountable for development results.

9 The Paris Declaration with its five principles: [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf)

10 The AAA: [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/16/41202012.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/16/41202012.pdf)

11 The Rome Declaration: [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/50/31451637.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/50/31451637.pdf)

12 The Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development: [www.un.org/esa/ffd/monterrey/MonterreyConsensus.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/monterrey/MonterreyConsensus.pdf)

13 Adapted from AWID (2008): An Overview of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness & the New Aid Modalities, Aid Effectiveness and Women's Rights Series, Primer No 1, p. 4. Available at: [www.awid.org/Library/Aid-Effectiveness](http://www.awid.org/Library/Aid-Effectiveness)

### Box 3 The Monterrey Consensus

The Monterrey Consensus is the final document that was adopted at the first international conference on Financing for Development hosted by the UN in 2002 in Mexico. This was the first time that the UN entered the "FfD field," previously sole property of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

The main goals of the Monterrey Consensus are: the eradication of poverty; the achievement of sustained economic growth; and the promotion of sustainable development. It looks at six thematic areas: domestic financial resources for development; international resources for development; international trade; international financial and technical cooperation for development; external debt; and systemic issues to enhance the coherence and consistency of the international monetary and financial and trading systems in support of development.

The Monterrey Consensus is a key reference in global development, and also for women's rights groups. Nonetheless, it fails to address the structural obstacles to development and systemic inequalities. Gender equality<sup>14</sup> is particularly marginalised in the consensus.

Regarding procedure, the Paris Declaration was negotiated through a process that did not engage the full range of stakeholders. Developing countries participated only to a limited extent (and thus their participation was not necessarily translated into a negotiation capacity), and only a small number of civil society groups were part of the debate.<sup>15</sup> Women's groups were not at the table.

The highly technical approach described above neglects the need to focus on the contribution of aid and international cooperation towards achieving sustainable and just development. It also does not deal proactively with existing power imbalances between developing countries and donor countries, and IFIs that still, more often than not, undermine national development plans and efforts (government and CSO). Therefore, the presentation of the Paris Declaration as a mutually agreed process between donor and developing countries must itself be questioned.

The specific focus on the MDGs is also highly problematic as "from a women's rights perspective the Millennium Declaration (as pointed out in section 1.1) and the Paris Declaration are both regressive frameworks for guiding development aid, compared to the achievements of the UN conferences of the nineties, the Monterrey Consensus and overall the internationally agreed development goals (IADG) and above all, a setback with respect to the existing instruments of human rights."<sup>16</sup> In fact, the Monterrey Consensus makes reference (chapter 1, point 3) to the MDGs as part of the internationally agreed development goals but does not suggest a sole focus on them.

The aid effectiveness process has been evaluated as a narrow framework for development cooperation and as a strongly technical or instrumental agenda.<sup>17</sup> However, it has also been identified by women's rights organizations (and other CSOs) as a highly political

14 For a systematisation of the few and inadequate references to gender and women in the Monterrey Consensus please refer to Aguiar, D. (November 2008): The Financing for Development Process in the United Nations: a Gender perspective. IGTN Global Secretariat, p.23.

15 Economic and Social Council, Report of the Secretary-General (23 May 2008, E/2008/69): Trends and progress in international development cooperation, p.15. Available at: <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=E/2008/69>

16 Alemany, Cecilia and Dede, Graciela coords (2008): Conditionalties Undermine the Right to Development, p.9. Available at: <http://www.awid.org/Library/Conditionalties-undermine-the-right-to-development-An-analysis-based-on-a-Women-s-and-Human-Rights-Perspective>

17 AWID (2008): An Overview of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness & the New Aid Modalities, Aid Effectiveness and Women's Rights Series, Primer No 1.

agenda and therefore an opportunity to influence development policies and strengthen development results on the ground.<sup>18</sup> During the women's consultations on aid effectiveness promoted by AWID, the WIDE Network, and other partners in January 2008, there was a common agreement that this official agenda under the OECD was also an opportunity to open broader debates among women's groups to discuss new trends, alternatives, thinking, and practices on development issues. To do so it was necessary to critically analyze the Paris Declaration, its principles, and the aid effectiveness process overall

Most of the critiques by women's rights organizations and other CSOs, presented in Box 4 below, were present in all major venues on the path leading up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> High Level Forum (HLF3) on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, Ghana in September 2008. Some, however, are from after the HLF3.

#### **Box 4: Key critiques<sup>19</sup> of the Aid Effectiveness Process, the Paris Declaration (PD), and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA)**

**Technical:** The aid effectiveness agenda is a highly technical process, focused mainly on procedures for aid management and delivery, with insufficient attention to the actual impact aid is having on achieving development goals such as poverty reduction and elimination of gender inequalities.

**Info-lacking:** There was (is) a clear lack of transparency and information-sharing at the country level that has been an obstacle to the full awareness and early involvement of CSOs in the aid effectiveness process.

**Gender blind:** The PD mentions gender equality in only one out of 50 paragraphs (para.42), with very weak language.

**Ignorant and exclusive:** The PD does not take seriously some of the political, social and economic challenges inherent in each country context. Donor countries are not always aware of local realities and well-intended principles, when put into practice, may not be respectful of the local contexts and even undermine human rights, including the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR). Country ownership of development programmes should be understood not simply as government ownership, but as democratic ownership. Democratic ownership means that citizens' voices (women and men) and their concerns must be included in, and are central to, national development plans and processes.

**Donor dominated:** Governance issues surrounding the implementation of the PD and AAA (mostly related to public financial management and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers [PRSPs]) are largely defined by International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) standards. The AAA also does not recognize that in order to redress the highly unequal power relationships between donors and developing countries, the international community must also address fundamental and democratic reform of IFIs, given the continued influence they have over the policy choices available to developing countries.

**Legitimacy-lacking:** Continuing from point 4, effective development requires an equitable multilateral architecture for determining policies and priorities for donors and developing country governments, based ultimately on the legitimacy of the United Nations, not the OECD DAC.

18 Alemany, Cecilia and Dede, Graciela coords (2008): Conditionality Undermine the Right to Development, p.10.

19 Adapted from: Alemany et al, AWID/WIDE (January 2008): Implementing the Paris Declaration: implications for the promotion of women's rights and gender equality, Commissioned by the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC); Alemany, Cecilia and Dede, Graciela coords (2008): Conditionality Undermine the Right to Development; BetterAid policy papers (2009).

**Rights-undermining:** The PD gives short shrift to human rights, women's rights and democratic governance concerns in the overall effort to scale up aid and achieve donor harmonisation and alignment.<sup>20</sup> The AAA is a step forward in this sense, but this key critique remains due to the continued non-commitment to end policy conditionalities and untie all aid. On the contrary, the AAA calls for a review of "good practices" in conditionality, while from a women's rights perspective there is no such thing as a positive policy conditionality.

**Incomplete, non-holistic, and incoherent:** Next to failing to integrate a gender perspective throughout, the AAA fails to incorporate decent work, when clearly it must be part of para. 3+13. Also insufficient links are made between official development assistance (ODA) and other financing for development sources. This non-holistic approach also allows for incoherence of global policies.

**Monitoring-weak:** The PD monitoring plans, particularly the reliance on World Bank evaluation mechanisms and the absence of independent ways to measure the implementation of the PD principles, are very problematic. Women's organizations are concerned with the fact that no gender equality indicators are included. Also, the AAA lacks new targets or monitorable commitments towards gender equality, women's rights and other commitments. The AAA failed, again, to initiate an effective and relevant independent monitoring and evaluation system for the PD and its impact on development outcomes.

Compared to the Paris Declaration, which was essentially gender blind, the Accra Agenda for Action brought some progress in terms of its recognition of gender equality, human rights, and environmental sustainability. It recognizes them as "cornerstones for achieving enduring impact" (para.3) and states explicitly that "developing countries and donors will ensure that their respective development policies and programmes are designed and implemented in ways consistent with their agreed international commitments on gender equality, human rights, disability and environmental sustainability" (para.13c). The AAA also recognizes the need to improve information systems including through the disaggregation of data by sex (para. 23.a), albeit only "when appropriate." So, of the 32 paragraphs contained in the AAA, only three include commitments that might contribute to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The progress, particularly on gender equality, made in the AAA and the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development (2008)<sup>21</sup> is encouraging because the recognition of the importance of gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability are a first step towards their realization. Beyond specific mentions, the commitments undertaken open up new opportunities to continue moving the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda forward in the framework of aid reform.

20 De Renzio, Paolo et al. (2006): Aid Effectiveness and human rights: Strengthening the implementation of the Paris Declaration, a Human Rights perspective on Ownership, GOVNET, September 2006.

21 The Doha Declaration on Financing for Development was adopted by consensus by the UN Member States at the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development that took place in Doha, Qatar, from 29 November–2 December 2008 to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus. The Declaration is available at: [http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/doha/documents/Doha\\_Declaration\\_FFD.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/doha/documents/Doha_Declaration_FFD.pdf)

## Box 5: Gender equality in the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development

Women's rights groups and gender advocates welcome the fact that the outcome document of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development in Doha goes beyond the 2002 Monterrey Consensus with regard to gender equality.

Paragraph 4 of the final document recognizes "gender equality as a basic human right, a fundamental value and an issue of social justice; ...essential for economic growth, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability and development effectiveness." It reiterates "the need for gender mainstreaming into the formulation and implementation of development policies, including financing for development policies, and for dedicated resources." Also, the commitment is made "to increasing...efforts to fulfil...commitments regarding gender equality and the empowerment of women."

The final Declaration has also committed, in paragraph 19, to eliminate gender-based discrimination in all its forms, including in the labour and financial market, acknowledging women's full and equal access to economic resources and the importance of gender responsive public management.

Even though this was a good start, it required more. Women's rights groups continue demanding stronger gender equality policy commitments and actions on development, trade, finance, debt, aid, and systemic issues. They urge "decision makers to acknowledge that macroeconomic, systemic,

and financial issues are not gender-neutral and demand gender-aware policies" and push for a "strengthening [of] the linkages between gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment and the various issues, responses and reforms that may be agreed upon as the global community reviews the financial and monetary systems towards a comprehensive reform of global economic governance."<sup>22</sup>

The agenda moves forward, but without much political commitment. Still, various issues continue to undermine national development efforts and human rights, including women's rights. The priorities advocated for by women's rights organizations and other CSOs prior to and during the HLF3, remain. These are:

- the need to focus on human rights, recognize the centrality of poverty reduction, gender equality, social justice, decent work, and environmental sustainability;
- the transition from a narrow focus on aid management and delivery to a more inclusive and outcomes-oriented emphasis on development that becomes less and less dependent on development cooperation;
- changes in the aid architecture to increase inclusiveness and legitimacy;
- the correction of the imbalance of power in country relationships (e.g., through mutual accountability, reduction and elimination of tied aid, elimination of donor-imposed policy conditionalities, and increased aid predictability);
- the creation of mechanisms to ensure signatories follow through on commitments.<sup>23</sup>

22 Women's Working Group on Financing for Development Press release: "Good but not enough: Women's rights and gender equality in Doha 2008." <http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/finalversionwwgofdfstatementonDOD.pdf?id=767>

23 Adapted from BetterAid: An Assessment of the Accra Agenda for Action from a civil society perspective (2009).

The above points show clearly, as already highlighted in Box 4, that those concerns around the Paris Declaration and its principles prior to the HLF3 continue to remain after Accra. Striving towards an inclusive and democratic international system requires a more transformatory process, which entails—amongst other requirements—going beyond the narrow framework of the current aid effectiveness agenda and engaging in a more in-depth examination of what *we*, as women's rights organizations, mean by development and development effectiveness.

### 3. The need to strengthen women's voices in development debates

Development debates and development alternatives that women are building on the ground with their own practices and livelihood strategies are much broader and transformative than any debate on development cooperation. However, development cooperation has been used as a tool or a means to impose a particular vision of development on the Global South. As a result, a broader development debate is needed in the current global context. In this sense, some developing countries can play a central role in shifting these global imbalances, opening the spaces for frank discussion on which development models and legitimate frameworks will enable development cooperation policies and practices to really support development processes on the ground that are rooted in local, national, and regional development processes. As such, the UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) under the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) can be the forum to have such discussions and go beyond technicalities of the development cooperation system and its machinery.

The idea of development has moved minds, public and private actors and social movements, especially since the post-World War II period, as an intellectual and practical project of social change. Initiatives and actions taken under the justification of development have provoked social change throughout the years, not only in material life (an overall increase in human development indicators) but also in our understanding of social justice. However, the concept of development has often justified the maintenance of dependent illegitimate relations in global governance and has been (and continues to be) used as a tool to advance developed countries' own agendas and interests as highlighted in the first chapter. Over the past three decades, neoliberal fundamentalism has become the framing ideology and rationale of the mainstream development model, and women's groups, as well as other social movements,

have been strongly critical of the model and its impacts across regions.

Historically, women's voices have been ignored in the conception of development models and practices. Women's groups have not been properly recognized in national development processes or in international development debates.<sup>24</sup>

The very understanding of development has been highly debated and has changed over time. It has been dominated by the economic establishment and there is no singular definition that would reflect the different visions of development existing around the world. From mainstreamed western perspectives, development has been intrinsically linked historically and theoretically with the idea of "progress" and that there are models—"developed" countries—to be studied and emulated. This idea is extremely problematic and has been the catalyst for many conflicts in the developing world.

On the one hand, this view of development establishes a few countries as fully "developed" or as a "finalised" project, based on a limited vision of material development, while denying the different dimensions of development promoted by groups that have always been marginalised from mainstreaming thinking (social, community cohesion, identities-cultural development, spiritual). In addition, this view denies the existing problems within those so-called developed countries, such as poverty and inequality, patriarchal relations, racism, gender and other discriminations, social conflict, over-consumption, uncontrolled waste production, and so on.

On the other hand, by defining some countries as the 'model' to be sought, it makes it look as if their history of development can be used as a recipe and be followed outside of the historical and material context in which it happened. Although we still see a reproduction of such accounts of the idea of development, consistent

24 AWID (2010), International Planning Committee of the AWID Forum (IPC) Concept-note, Preliminary version for discussion, June.

critiques and debates have succeeded in bringing new understandings of the project to be sought, beyond the model view of development.

Today, there is an ongoing concentration of income and resources across the world: the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Across the Global South, there are many levels of development—however, only a minority of the population has access to a globalised way of life, while the vast majority of the population struggle with livelihood strategies that they have to renew and reinvent every day.

It is also important to stress that approaches to women and development have changed considerably over the years; yet, projects, policies, planning cycles, etc. still do not consistently, if at all, include a proper gender and social analysis. Additionally, funding does not reflect the many international commitments made towards gender equality and women's rights.

During the early 1970s, women became visible and were included in official development processes. The so-called Women In Development (WID) approach was built on, to some extent, the argument (in order to show the relevance of 'dealing with women') that "positive synergies can be created between investing in women and reaping benefits in terms of economic growth."<sup>25</sup> This tactic proved successful in pushing donors to "pick up" the "women's issues." However, this placed high demands on what women could contribute to development and the focus was very much on efficiency arguments with less attention paid to demands for gender equality. It is important to be very alert about this point as exactly this kind of approach of 'investing in women' that instrumentalizes women appears to be enjoying a revival.

By the late 1970s, it became clear that focusing on women in isolation was not appropriate and the WID approach developed into the so-called Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm. GAD deals with the

socially constructed causes of women's subordination, analyzes gender and other social relations, along with the unequal power relations between women and men and between different groups of women. Then, more and more, the focus shifted toward a rights-based approach to development, with the Beijing Declaration of the World Conference on Women (1995) declaring that "women's rights are human rights."

Gender mainstreaming<sup>26</sup> became the main tool, in the 1990s, that aimed to ensure that gender equality was integrated across the board—from the planning to the monitoring and impact evaluation phase—in development cooperation policies, international organizations, and for national policy processes. It was designed to overcome the marginalization of women-specific projects that were implemented in the 1970s and 1980s and to bring a gender equality perspective into all development activities. However, while mainstreaming holds some opportunities, in practice many significant challenges emerged that are still issues today. Mehra and Gupta (2006), for example, highlight that "gender mainstreaming has not been pursued fully or systematically enough to support definitive conclusions about its success or failure. In most cases, the process is incomplete or not properly implemented and, in some cases, it has been abandoned midstream. Most importantly, especially in the context of multilateral and bilateral development organizations, the process of gender mainstreaming has stopped short of operations—of the very dimension that impacts development on the ground and can show results in terms of development effectiveness."<sup>27</sup>

Generally, the impact of public and development policies on women and on gender equality is often not accurately measured or monitored. Institutional capacity on women's rights and gender equality is still a challenge and in-depth knowledge on gender equality often remains with "specialized" staff. Mainstreaming

25 Razavi, S. and Miller, C. (1995): From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse. Occasional Paper 1, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development United Nations Development Programme.

26 The following paragraphs on gender mainstreaming are based on the draft document *Beyond mainstreaming: Women-specific programming and operations. Key arguments supporting strong operational capacity on the ground for the proposed New UN Gender Entity*. Prepared by AWID with the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign (2010). More on GEAR: <http://www.gearcampaign.org/index.php>

27 Rekha Mehra and Geeta Rao Gupta (February 2006): Gender Mainstreaming: Making It Happen, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), p.6.

is sometimes only understood as a “checking the gender box” exercise, or inviting a few women activists in order to fulfill “inclusiveness” requirements. Moreover, gender mainstreaming has negatively impacted the availability of resources to advance gender equality and women's rights. For example, when funding agencies, particularly bilateral agencies, embraced mainstreaming strategies, many of them cut their funds to NGOs and particularly women's organizations under the theory that gender support would be integrated across other programming areas.<sup>28</sup>

“Mainstreaming has to be understood as a political process and not only an organizational or technical one. Gender equality requires political leadership and political will, resources, capacities, participation and ownership, transparency and a development results based approach. This is far from the experiences documented to date with some successful exceptions.” For the reasons outlined above and further challenges made with mainstreaming the key is to go “beyond mainstreaming and accepting that it must be accompanied by specific capacities-actions-resources for women's rights and women's organizations, with the direct participation of women's groups and women's machineries (ownership and leadership from the design to the monitoring phase); and recovering gender equality as an area or policy sector itself.”<sup>29</sup>

For decades, development programmes were imposed from above. Developing countries had little option but to accept the recipes coming from Northern development agencies, the World Bank, the IMF, and/or more subtle sources, such as native economists trained abroad with the Washington Consensus' “undeniable truth,” to then later take office in Central Banks in their home countries.

From a women's rights perspective, development may have diverse forms and conceptions, but it is intrinsically about confronting the injustice of the

neo-liberal model and of patriarchal societies. A women's rights perspective promotes an in-depth transformation of the development model that enables social and gender justice, inclusive and participatory democracies, and a more sustainable and equal global system.

Therefore, development as social justice, including gender equality, means having a democratic and inclusive debate on what type of development people want/need, as well as ensuring the needed policy space for countries to implement it. Furthermore, it means fighting against all inequalities, including gender, ethnic, class, regional, and cross-country inequalities. Today, neither truly democratic processes nor policy space nor a strong fight to overcome inequalities are in place yet. This is not only a problem of developing countries; indeed, “developed” countries face serious regressions in their democracies and are far from representing models of substantive democracies.

28 Findings based on survey data collected from close to 1000 women's organizations, see: Kerr, Joanna (2007). *Financial Sustainability for Women's Movements Worldwide*.

29 *Beyond mainstreaming: Women-specific programming and operations. Key arguments supporting strong operational capacity on the ground for the proposed New UN Gender Entity*. Prepared by AWID with GEAR (2010).

## 4. An inclusive development cooperation framework from a women's rights perspective

### 4.1 Development effectiveness: a concept to debate

Nowadays, social movements, civil society groups, and several development actors understand development effectiveness (not aid effectiveness) as a more inclusive or comprehensive framework for development cooperation. However, for many women's groups it is not a term or concept that is generally used for development debates or policy proposals. Moreover, some gender advocates would argue that development effectiveness is a narrow approach for development and will not enable a more comprehensive framework for a new development cooperation paradigm. This view may stem from the usage of the term by actors whose actual agenda and meaning behind the words should be more critically analyzed.

For example, the World Bank has published reviews of development effectiveness for many years. However, their discourse is in line with aid effectiveness principles and language that is now included in the Paris Declaration. Also, the term development effectiveness is sometimes even used interchangeably, or considered synonymous to aid effectiveness.<sup>30</sup> This may explain why some gender advocates consider it a narrow approach.

Furthermore, the very idea of effectiveness entails a management concern that may be understood as delinked from the political issues at stake. The power-based relationships inherent to a donor-as-provider and developing-country-as-recipient approach become overshadowed by technical and supposedly neutral concerns with effectiveness of the management of activities. The use of the term 'effectiveness,' though not necessarily intended, may deviate our focus away from key political and development concerns.

Such an understanding of development effectiveness is clearly not what women's rights organizations and other CSO colleagues have in mind. It is thus critical to become very clear about what we mean by development effectiveness.

CSOs and other development actors are currently analyzing this issue. The CSO platform, BetterAid<sup>31</sup>, of which AWID, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), Coordinadora de la Mujer/Bolivia, FEMNET, and WIDE are core members, is also addressing this issue.

On the other hand, the North-South Institute identified, as a starting point, four categories on how development effectiveness can be understood. These are:

- organizational effectiveness;
- coherence and coordination;
- development outcomes from aid;
- and overall development outcomes.<sup>32</sup>

The BetterAid platform describes development effectiveness as follows: "Development effectiveness is about the impact of development actors' actions on the lives of poor and marginalised populations. Development effectiveness promotes sustainable change that addresses the root causes as well as the symptoms of poverty, inequality, marginalization and injustice. This approach positions poor and marginalised populations as central actors and owners of development, challenging many of the current approaches to aid effectiveness."<sup>33</sup>

"Development effectiveness requires significant changes in international global governance structures

30 Kindornay, Shannon and Morton, Bill (September 2009): Development effectiveness: towards new understandings, Issues Brief, The North-South Institute.

31 For more information about BetterAid: [www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org)

32 Kindornay, Shannon and Morton, Bill (September 2009): Development effectiveness: towards new understandings, Issues Brief, The North-South Institute.

33 Definition is based on materials from Reality of Aid (ROA). See: ROA, "The Reality of Aid 2010 Report Theme Statement: Development Effectiveness: Human rights, social justice and democratic development," Unpublished. Also see: The Outreach Toolkit of the Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness, which can be found at [http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/8\\_toolkit\\_april\\_en.pdf](http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/IMG/pdf/8_toolkit_april_en.pdf)

at all levels, including trade, financial markets, foreign direct investment and debt. In practical terms, it means empowering the poor and respecting, protecting and fulfilling international human rights standards. This includes economic, social and cultural rights and means that gender equality and women's rights are explicit in every sector, rather than only "mainstreamed," which can result in the interests of women becoming invisible. These objectives must guide policy discussion and legislation, orient participation and underpin priorities in aid budgeting, planning and monitoring. A development effectiveness approach should take advantage of existing monitoring and reporting systems for international human rights standards, gender equality, decent work and sustainable development commitments, using these standards as a basis for measuring development outcomes."<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, development effectiveness from a women's rights perspective must recognize two basic realities:

1. There is no country in the world where women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities. Gender equality is a goal of justice, not a technical tool. There is no gender-neutrality in any area or sphere (politics, macro-economics, business, household, religion, community, etc.).
2. International assistance and cooperation is the duty and obligation of states, embedded in a rights framework, and not a matter of good will.

Understood in the above sense, development effectiveness may be one of the outcomes of a new development cooperation framework, formed by several components that need to be taken into consideration. Initial proposals of such components are presented in the next section, summarised in Box 6 and then elaborated upon. These proposals are not to be understood as exhaustive and will be developed further as we continue

to engage with this fundamental question, together with our partners, of what a new framework for development cooperation should look like, what it should be based on, and, most importantly, how it can translate into real actions with positive impact on the lives of people.

## 4.2 Initial components for a new development cooperation framework

Women's rights advocates aim to shift the development cooperation system, the aid effectiveness paradigm, and the development discourse towards an inclusive, sustainable, and just paradigm. Such a paradigm recognizes and values reproductive and care work and enables all people to fulfill their rights, engage in policy processes, and promote their own development vision, based on their local experiences and responses free from violence. The ultimate goal of these efforts is to contribute to strengthening social justice movements, especially within the women's movement, and to engage substantively in building participatory democracies at the local, national, regional, and global levels, towards a more equal and inclusive global governance system.

Thus, while the specifics of a development cooperation vision that integrates gender equality and women's rights would vary depending on local realities, we (together with other colleagues from the women's and other social movements) strongly argue that:

- The current development cooperation system strongly dominated by OECD countries is illegitimate and reproduces inequalities, and thus the UN DCF should play an important role to promote profound reform of the international cooperation system or the so-called "new aid architecture."

- The reform of the international development cooperation system is part of a broader reform needed, in terms of the role of international financial institutions and the need for a more inclusive and participatory global governance structure. We reaffirm that these reforms should not be decided or implemented by groups of countries, but under the institutional umbrella of the UN.
- Development cooperation cannot be treated in isolation from other financial flows, and thus should be understood as part of the Financing for Development process and the implementation of Monterrey and Doha.
- A human rights-based approach to development would be a good place to start, and the key to setting up a new framework that emphasises Women's Rights, and the Right to Development, Environmental, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (EESCR).<sup>35</sup>

Based on these arguments, Box 6 summarises some initial components for a new framework for development cooperation.

### **Box 6: Initial components for a new framework for development cooperation from a women's rights perspective**

1. Human rights, including ESCR and environmental rights, with an integrated gender equality approach.
2. A truly democratic, inclusive, and multi-stakeholder approach ensuring participation of women's rights organizations.
3. Systematic coherence among global policies, including fulfillment of women's rights frameworks and just global governance.
4. Eradication of the root causes of poverty and structural inequalities such as gender inequalities or inequalities between and within countries.
5. Alignment of developing countries' priorities and development plans with international and regional agreements on human rights and gender equality, with no policy conditionalities and no tied aid.
6. Strengthening of political and social movement building and women's empowerment as key for development.
7. Predictable, long-term, and diversified funding for CSOs, particularly women's organizations promoting gender equality and women's rights.
8. Gender sensitive and gender specific indicators measuring progress on development effectiveness outcomes.

<sup>35</sup> Raaber, Natalie, Alemany, Cecilia and Schoenstein, Anne (AWID, 2009): Alternative development models and practices from feminist perspectives, Debate Issues prepared for the 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

## Component 1: Human rights, including ESCR and environmental rights, with an integrated gender equality approach

A human rights-based approach argues that aid and development must be consistent with human rights norms, bridging international human rights standards and development interventions.<sup>36</sup>

It is important to be clear that human rights are a broad category which includes not only the rights guaranteed in national legislation and constitutions, but the full array of rights outlined at international human rights conventions (including, for example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),<sup>37</sup> the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination), declarations (such as the 1986 United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development), and the core content of these rights which has been articulated by the United Nations treaty monitoring bodies—the expert panels established to monitor the implementation of, and compliance with, the treaties—in documents called “General Comments.”<sup>38</sup>

Article 2.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) that came into force in 1976 states that “[e]ach State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.”<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the ICESCR commits state parties to

work towards the fulfillment of ESCR including labour rights and rights to health, education, and an adequate standard of living. These are understood as human rights, grounded in the belief that all human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. As gender is a social construct, the measures undertaken to respect human rights for all must reflect this and take this reality into account.<sup>40</sup>

As stressed before, there is no gender-neutrality in any sphere or area, and as such, rights must also be interpreted and implemented in a way that makes sure that women can equally exercise and enjoy their rights. On the topic of substantive equality, point B, section 9 of the Montréal Principles on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states: “Economic, social and cultural rights must be interpreted and implemented in a manner that ensures to women substantively equal exercise and enjoyment of their rights. Substantively equal enjoyment of rights cannot be achieved through the mere passage of laws or promulgation of policies that are gender-neutral on their face. Gender neutral laws and policies can perpetuate sex inequality because they do not take into account the economic and social disadvantage of women; they may therefore simply maintain the *status quo*. *De jure* equality does not, by itself, provide *de facto* equality. *De facto*, or substantive equality, requires that rights be interpreted, and that policies and programmes—through which rights are implemented—be designed in ways that take women's socially constructed disadvantage into account, that secure for women the equal benefit, in real terms, of laws and measures, and that provide equality for women in their material conditions. The adequacy of conduct undertaken to implement rights must always be assessed against the background of women's actual conditions and evaluated in the light of the effects of policies, laws and practices on those conditions.”<sup>41</sup>

36 Alemany, Cecilia AWID (September 2009): Practical implications of human rights standards for ODA: a women's rights perspective. Presentation, p.9.

37 CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

38 AWID (August 2002): A Rights-Based Approach To Development. Women's Rights and Economic Change, No.1.

39 <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>

40 Alemany, Cecilia and Dede, Graciela coords (2008): Conditionality Undermine the Right to Development, p. 28–29.

41 See also: A Primer on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Prepared by The Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE), The International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net), and International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia-Pacific (IWRAP Asia Pacific).

Available at: [http://www.escr-net.org/resources\\_more/resources\\_more\\_show.htm?doc\\_id=1134974](http://www.escr-net.org/resources_more/resources_more_show.htm?doc_id=1134974)

The Declaration on the Right to Development defines development as, “a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from.”<sup>42</sup> Thus development cooperation needs to be examined for the real impact it has on the well-being of all people, including specifically the poor and marginalised, many of whom are women.

To promote endogenous and sustainable development, women should have the opportunity to design and implement their own projects according to their own definition of their local priorities. Donors and governments need to ensure that new aid modalities integrate a gender equality approach and women's groups' perspectives in their design and implementation. Therefore, the meaningful participation of women's rights groups must be ensured throughout the process

Moreover, donors can support national and local government institutions' initiatives to strengthen their own accountability to all citizens and users of their services. They can support the strengthening of parliaments and women's capacities to hold their governments accountable for commitments related to gender equality and women's empowerment. Donors can also work with multilateral organizations to ensure that they are accountable for the impact of their actions at the country level on human rights and gender equality.<sup>43</sup>

So-called ‘investments in women’ should take a holistic approach that recognizes the varied social, economic, cultural and political factors that dictate the roles and expectations placed on women. Linear strategies addressing any of these factors in isolation are unlikely to achieve lasting change and a micro perspective that can deliver locally in the short-term will probably

not be sustainable in the medium term. This is because if this woman or group of women are then burdened by trade, financial, or international economic rules, their and their country's capacity to promote endogenous development is undermined.

Therefore, ‘investments in women’ should be firmly rooted in a rights-based approach founded on the inherent dignity of every human being. Greater opportunities for women are linked to economic growth and development, but this can only be achieved if the international division of labour is radically reformed and sustained through institutional reforms and if clear, inclusive policies are in place.

Box 7 presents some of the possible concrete ways to integrate a human rights-based approach into development cooperation; it is not exhaustive.

It is important to notice that the recognition of the right to development is rooted in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter of 1945; this right took form in the Declaration on the Right to Development in 1986 and reached consensus or universal acceptance in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights on 25 June 1993 (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I, chap. III).

42 Preamble of the Declaration on the Right to Development, adopted by General Assembly resolution 41/128 of 4 December 1986.

43 Adapted from: Alemany, Cecilia/ AWID (September 2009): Practical implications of human rights standards for ODA: a women's rights perspective. Presentation, p.11. Source: OECD-DAC Guiding Principles for Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and Aid Effectiveness.

## Box 7: Concrete ways to integrate a human rights approach into development cooperation<sup>44</sup>

To support partners in developing countries (governments and civil society actors) to fulfill human rights, it is necessary to develop concrete strategies to:

- Strengthen country systems for human rights standards and commitments implementation through institutional support to the central state and local governments, official reporting capacities, data gathering, etc. This can include supporting developing countries' capacities for commitments and standards such as the Universal Periodic Review, the Beijing Declaration, the MDGs, CEDAW, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), as well as regional instruments such as the Maputo and the Belem do Pará conventions.
- Support developing countries' inter-ministerial coordination on human rights and gender equality strategies, and common reporting and monitoring systems for human rights compliance.
- Support local civil society groups, and in particular women's groups, to monitor and report upon country implementation of human rights standards, and hold their governments accountable in relation to international human rights standards and commitments.
- Promote or support existing multi-stakeholders' spaces for national debate on human rights obligations and strategies.

- Use existing country-relevant human rights and gender equality indicators and processes as the basis to monitor results and progress towards human rights, gender equality, and women's rights.
- When deciding upon financing for development, governments must avoid policies that:
- Deregulate labour standards or social security systems.
- Constrain national governments' ability to meet its people's rights to food, health, water, education, etc.
- Constrain national public budget on social policies and programmes or undermine public access to basic social services.
- Undermine local communities' access to land, food, and other local natural resources.
- Impose policy conditionalities that undermine developing countries' policy space and the right to development.

## Component 2: A truly democratic, inclusive, and multi-stakeholder approach ensuring participation of women's rights organizations

A renewed international development cooperation system or "a new aid architecture" must be established and be based on a holistic, rights-based approach and situated in a truly democratic and inclusive multi-stakeholder space. Development effectiveness, understood within a rights-based framework, promotes inclusive participation and democratic action around

<sup>44</sup> Dede, Graciela and Alemany, Cecilia with the support of Raaber, Natalie, A Rights-Based Approach to Development Cooperation: Some Elements for Canadian Aid: in *Looking back on Halifax, Looking ahead to Huntsville: What's changed in the international financial system and its institutions, what hasn't, and what needs to?* AWID (2009).

<sup>45</sup> Tomlinson, Brian (in AuCourant, Winter 2009): The North-South Challenge: Civil Society and Development Effectiveness. Available at: [http://www.ccic.ca/aucourant/aucourant\\_winter\\_2009/\\_files/aucourant\\_winter\\_2009\\_4\\_e.pdf](http://www.ccic.ca/aucourant/aucourant_winter_2009/_files/aucourant_winter_2009_4_e.pdf)

aid and development processes and reflects the values of socio-economic justice, including gender justice and solidarity as global citizens.<sup>45</sup>

Following this line of reasoning, the ownership principle of the Paris Declaration must be understood as democratic ownership, with citizens, parliaments, and CSOs—including women's rights organizations—fully engaged in debating and setting development priorities regarding the alignment of aid to country priorities. These priorities must reflect the needs of the respective country and its entire people, including women. Donors and governments must ensure the existence of mechanisms for the effective participation of CSOs, including women's organizations. Country priorities should not have to be built around the knowledge of what is expected from the 'outside' in order to get loans from IFIs or certain multilateral or bilateral donors.<sup>46</sup>

From the perspective of a human rights-based approach, broad based ownership addresses—among other rights—the right to take part in public affairs and the right of access to information.<sup>47</sup>

To facilitate such a process, a space that actually does allow for a true multi-stakeholder approach is needed and it must be tasked to a body that can promote inter-organizational cooperation and represent all countries on equal footing. Discussions and decisions concerning development cooperation should, therefore, clearly take place within the UN, as will be stressed further in the discussion of component three. The DCF should be the space for mutual accountability reviews to be conducted at the international level, with the active participation of international social movements and civil society organizations. In order to ensure the inclusion of women's rights and gender equality analysis in these reviews, the new UN gender entity should be a key actor in the process, not only in the ex post validation process. In this process, women's groups should also be duly represented.

Donors can contribute to the further development of accountability concepts and practices in developing countries, not by imposing their visions, but by supporting:

- the development or improvement of national accountability mechanisms (including statistic capacities to gather sex-disaggregated data) to reduce gender gaps and empower women;
- women's machineries and women's parliamentary caucuses to strengthen their institutional capacities as well as their coordination capacities to engage with other ministries and broader national policies;
- local women's groups that build awareness and capacities in their societies and communities, and play a watchdog role on local and national development policies and projects supported by the international community.

### **Component 3: Systematic coherence among global policies including fulfillment of women's rights frameworks and just global governance**

All development processes, policies, and practices must ensure that human rights, including ESCR and environmental rights, are respected, protected, and fulfilled with an integrated, gendered approach. Moreover, norm-setting on aid and development cooperation issues must be integrated into the larger global trade and finance system contexts. To ensure sustainability, the relationship between the multilateral trading agenda and the aid agenda must be made more explicit in the future to guarantee that the external impacts of these policies do not undermine the aims and objectives of development cooperation. Additionally, the critical issues of debt, foreign direct investment, but also human security, must come to the forefront of the debate, as they are key issues for global governance.

For instance, many developing countries continue to pay odious and illegitimate debt as well as interest on this debt, at the expense of investing in social and

<sup>46</sup> This relates to policy conditionalities; please see component four.

<sup>47</sup> Alemany, Cecilia/ AWID (September 2009): Practical implications of human rights standards for ODA: a women's rights perspective. Presentation, p.18.

gender justice. At times of crisis this situation is even worse, as several countries are on the verge of a debt crisis.<sup>48</sup> Trade, as pointed out above, is an additional critical concern. Multilateral and bilateral trade agreements are tied with requirements of liberalization that undermine the policy space of developing countries.

Furthermore, unbridled liberalization through these agreements undermines industries and agriculture of developing countries instead of promoting development as it is claimed, since there is not a level playing field for developing countries to compete with products from the North. The case of agriculture subsidies in OECD countries is paramount as subsidies paid are several times larger than aid flows. In a way, aid projects that finance agricultural development are a minimal correction to the destruction created by the introduction - promoted by free trade agreements—of subsidised products to extremely vulnerable economies. The same countries that promote these agreements through the World Trade Organization and FTAs also promote aid for agriculture projects as if none of the harm in local agriculture was created by their policies elsewhere. This contradiction is immoral and ‘real’ people, mainly the poorest of the poor, of whom the majority are women, have to suffer the consequences.

A new transformational governance system may have the potential to bring all countries to the table, with a particular emphasis on developing countries that have been traditionally excluded, and not only the big players from the South, also called emerging donors.

Currently, the UN is the only legitimate space meeting these criteria. The DCF should be strengthened to become the main space for standard-setting on development cooperation. It needs to serve as the platform to promote discussion and help set the agenda on development issues by promoting systematic coherence among global policies for development with human rights, gender equality, democracy, good governance, development, peace and security, as well as climate and energy. For its part, the OECD, through its Development Assistance Committee, should refine its mandate

to focus on its original function: information gathering, systematisation, and reporting on aid flows.

#### **Component 4: Eradication of the root causes of poverty and structural inequalities such as gender inequalities or inequalities between and within countries**

Root causes of poverty and structural inequalities—such as gender inequalities or inequalities between and within countries—must be addressed systematically and be taken into consideration in all policies and practices in order finally to be overcome.

In recent years, the world has seen an increased feminization of poverty, which means that “there is a change in poverty levels that is biased against women or female-headed households”.<sup>49</sup> 70% of the world's 1.4 billion poor are women, that is around 980 million people. This situation has different causes, including the salary gap between men and women, which has a strong impact on female-headed households—a common situation among poor populations. Moreover, there is a feminization of the causes of poverty, such as economic inequality, gender-blind laws and policies, violence against women, power imbalance/unequal power relations, culture, religion, tradition, and socialization. In addition, the unequal participation of women and men in the care economy creates an extra burden on women and prevents many of them from accessing jobs in the market economy, or segregates women to areas where the pay is less and the conditions are worse.

While the MDGs provide a clear set of goals agreed upon by the international community, international efforts and solidarity must work towards achieving the IADGs and aim to transform societal power relations—specifically social and economic relations—in such a way that equality between women and men can be achieved. MDGs have been strongly criticized by the women's movement for being too light and too narrow if compared to other internationally agreed instruments such as the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA); and yet they will not be achieved

48 According to a Jubilee South report from March 2009: “There is a real danger that those 38 countries—and quite possibly many others—may face a debt crisis in the near future.” Jubilee South, *A New Debt Crisis? Assessing the impact of the financial crisis on developing countries*.

49 Medeiros, M and Joana Costa: *What do we mean by feminization of poverty?*, International Poverty Center/UNDP, July 2008.

by 2015. As the MDG Review Summit in September 2010 showed, the MDGs are clearly not addressing the roots of poverty and inequality, and this is not happening in most of the development cooperation policies nor projects across regions. It is critical that all international instruments and agreements related to poverty reduction recognize the importance of addressing gender inequalities and set out clear commitments to doing so.

**Component 5:  
Alignment of developing countries' priorities and development plans with international and regional agreements on human rights and gender equality, with no policy conditionalities and no tied aid**

The priorities and development plans of developing countries are paramount. No policy conditionalities of any kind must be imposed explicitly or implicitly upon developing countries. The same applies for tied aid.

In order to alleviate and ultimately eradicate human impoverishment—understood in a broad sense to mean economic, social, cultural, and political impoverishment—economic policy conditionalities that undermine the principle of country ownership, as discussed above, limit policy space and stand in contradiction with the Right to Development and the Right to Self-determination and, therefore, must be eliminated. This must include those conditionalities related to gender equality and 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.<sup>50</sup>

The right to self-determination (of the ICESCR) is very explicit and states that “by virtue of that right they [all people] freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”<sup>51</sup>

Overall, development cooperation processes and policies must be aligned with international and regional agreements on human rights and gender equality including the BPfA and CEDAW.

However, it should also be understood that the human rights approach, which commendably is being integrated now in some donors' plans, should not be used as a conditionality to impose human rights. Instead, it should be used, on the one hand, as a tool to support developing countries to strengthen institutional capacities to accomplish their obligations on human rights. And, on the other hand, it should be used to strengthen parliaments and local CSOs to hold their (executive) governments accountable on their commitments. It is here that donors should focus their funding and advisory efforts and not using it as a new form of conditionality.

**Component 6:  
Strengthening of political and social movement building and women's empowerment as key for development**

Political and social movement building is essential to the full realization of human rights and is an intrinsic characteristic of mature democracies. Social movements, women's movements and organizations, and civil society actors are development actors in their own rights. Women's empowerment has been narrowly conceived by development cooperation policies in many cases, as economic empowerment only. Being development actors means the ability of women's groups and other civil society actors to influence national policy processes, to be economic, social, and political actors that are affected by national policies and development cooperation practices, and thus to have the right to access information and to participate in the definition of these policies. However, these dynamics and the capacity to fulfill these rights depend highly on the national context and whether there exists a participation culture.

50 Alemany, Cecilia and Dede, Graciela coords (2008): Conditionalities Undermine the Right to Development: <http://www.awid.org/Library/Conditionalities-undermine-the-right-to-development-An-analysis-based-on-a-Women-s-and-Human-Rights-Perspective>

51 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Part 1, Article 1, point 1.

They depend also on the real capacities and resources that these groups have to mobilize and advocate.

Within the crisis context, and with a narrow understanding of civil society actors as service delivery or service providers only (both by national governments and development cooperation actors), the capacity of those groups to influence development cooperation processes has been reduced. There is a need for clear commitments to ensure women's groups and civil society participation at each of the stages of development cooperation and national development processes (such as planning, programming, management, monitoring, and evaluating). More resources need to be invested in these actors for their advocacy, monitoring, and evaluation work, if significant advances in human rights and women's rights are to be accomplished. Special attention should be given to women's organizations working in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding.

### **Component 7: Predictable, long-term, and diversified funding for CSOs, particularly women's or- ganizations promoting gender equality and women's rights**

CSOs, including women's organizations and movements, cannot be sustained without resources. Women's organizing takes shape in a range of formal and informal structures, working at local, national, regional, and international levels. It provides crucial services, produces valuable research, holds powerful actors to account, and serves as a steady advocate and innovator in advancing women's rights and gender equality. Even though some progress has been made, the overall funding available continues to be insufficient to achieve and sustain internationally agreed-upon goals for gender equality and women's rights.<sup>52</sup>

In light of this, states (developed and developing countries) need to ensure that gender equality and women's rights commitments are not only politically supported but are also fully funded, including supporting women's organizing as key for the advancement of those commitments. Bilateral and multilateral funding agencies have been an important source of support for the women's movements around the world, consistently accounting for close to 30% of the revenue of women's organizations participating in AWID surveys. However, the overall level of ODA allocated for gender equality is still inadequate for reaching the commitments made in the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and at the Millennium Summit in 2000.<sup>53</sup>

It is critical then that donor countries increase their amount of ODA targeting gender equality issues, but it is just as important to ensure that a sufficient portion of that ODA is allocated to women's organizations directly. Funding needs to be predictable and based on a long-term perspective. Stronger systems are required in order to track that funding; and these systems for tracking and analyzing statistical information on donor funding are not mere technical exercises—they are crucial political tools to monitor commitments to gender equality and to strengthen their implementation. The OECD DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker is currently the only available tool and its use remains limited, as not all aid is screened against it and not all countries use it. A broader use of the Gender Equality Policy Marker could help in ensuring that donor countries set up clearer funding targets for gender equality and women's rights. Additionally, as the Gender Equality Policy Marker does not tell us how much ODA goes to women's groups, this could be monitored through the OECD DAC sector code statistics.<sup>54</sup> Particularly, the DAC sector code 15164 records ODA reaching governmental and non-governmental 'women's equality organizations and institutions.'<sup>55</sup> Furthering the

52 AWID (2010) Lydia Alpizar et al, 2009–2010 *FundHer Research, Update brief series. Brief 1* Trends in Bilateral and Multilateral Funding, p.39.

53 Ibid, p.8.

54 For more information about the Gender Equality Policy Marker please see: AWID (2010) Lydia Alpizar et al, 2009-2010 *FundHer Research Update brief series. Brief 1* Trends in Bilateral and Multilateral Funding, p.20. Available at: <http://www.awid.org/Library/Brief-1-FundHer-Research-Update-Brief-Series>

55 Information and data provided to AWID by OECD - DAC Statistics Department on DAC Sector Code 15164: Women's equality organizations and institutions, 2004–2008. For specific data please see: Ibid, p.21.

use of these instruments is key to the predictability of funding for women's organizations.

Diversified funding is also important to ensure that the gender mainstreaming approach promoted by many donors does not dilute women's rights nor exclude other work that is critical for women's rights, gender equality, and poverty reduction. As was pointed out in chapter three, mainstreaming should be accompanied by direct and specific actions towards women's rights and gender equality, and include direct support to local women's groups. Special funds should be available for women's rights organizations—these include increased, substantial, predictable, and multi-year core funding—and effective mechanisms must be in place to ensure that the money reaches these organizations. The Dutch Fund MDG3, “Investing in Equality,” is a good example of a unique fund dedicated specifically to supporting CSOs working in several gender equality issues. In 2008, this Fund allocated €70 million to 45 grantees of which 29 were women's organizations.<sup>56</sup>

At the multilateral level, the Fund for Gender Equality (a multidonor fund initiated by Spain and managed by UN Women) has been another example of a means through which governments could channel predictable and long-term funding directly to women's rights organizations. In 2009, the Fund allocated, through its Catalytic Grants modality, close to USD 10 million to 27 initiatives comprising a total of 37 grantees (ten collaborative proposals were supported). Seventeen out of the 37 recipients were women's organizations—applying either alone or in collaboration with another organization. These women's groups received close to USD 4 million or 41% of the total funding awarded and they represented 46% of the grantees. Besides these 37 organizations, there are many others that participate in the projects as partners but do not directly receive the funds. Among these we can count 11 other women's organizations that are somehow benefiting from the Fund's resources.<sup>57\*</sup>

The creation of the new UN Entity for Gender

Equality and the Empowerment of Women, UN Women, in July 2010, is a major achievement for the global women's movement and has the potential to support women's organizations. However, the new UN agency will need to be well-funded to accomplish its goals and support CSOs working in women's rights and gender equality. Governments need to start and/or continue their pledges soon so that the agency becomes a strong multilateral leader in the realization of women's rights and gender equality worldwide.

Within the new aid modalities, and specifically around Gender Budget Support, both developing and developed countries must build capacities for gender responsive budgeting, both to track investments in gender equality and to ensure public expenditure matches gender policy commitments.

### **Component 8: Gender sensitive and gender specific indicators measuring progress on development effectiveness outcomes**

Development cooperation should promote the Right to Development and Self-determination. As such, indicators measuring progress must focus on development effectiveness outcomes and be gender sensitive and gender specific, requiring action on a much broader range of women's rights issues than those captured by the existing indicators. Human rights treaties' standards, principles, and legal obligations of donors and governments should be used to determine the effectiveness of aid policies and approaches, particularly their impact on vulnerable groups.<sup>58</sup>

When managing for development results, time-bound specific targets must be established for the maximum and flexible use of developing country systems, with, as highlighted above, multiple year rolling aid resource commitments to increase country level predictability of aid.

56 AWID (2010) Lydia Alpizar et al, 2009-2010 *FundHer Research. Update briefseries. Brief 1* Trends in Bilateral and Multilateral Funding, pp.25–29.

57 Ibid, pp.32-34.

\* This data was based on an analysis of the Fund's Catalytic grant-making conducted as of February 2010, prior to the announcement of its Implementation Grant awards. In total the Fund for Gender Equality awarded USD 37.5 million in its first round of grantmaking.

58 Alemany, Cecilia and Dede, Graciela coords (2008): *Conditionality Undermine the Right to Development*, p.83.

The need for more sex-disaggregated data is paramount, and this must include funding to set up the needed systems and capacities (e.g., training) to be able to follow through with the data collection. However, rather than re-inventing the wheel, existing country-relevant gender equality indicators and processes should be the basis to monitor results and progress towards development goals, including gender equality.<sup>59</sup> Existing mechanisms include MDG targets and indicators, as well as CEDAW reporting requirements and reporting on the Beijing Platform for Action. Additionally, there are international instruments such as the Universal Periodic Review, as well as regional instruments such as the Maputo and the Belem do Pará conventions.<sup>60</sup>

Also, the DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET) of the OECD has developed draft indicators on gender equality and aid effectiveness that “partners and donors can “choose to use” to measure their support for gender equality in the implementation of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action at the country level.”<sup>61</sup>

The usage of these indicators would contribute “to ensur[ing] that gender equality and women’s empowerment are given adequate consideration in the process of implementing the Paris Declaration with the need to avoid imposing additional burdens on national coordinators and other stakeholders in the management of the survey process at the country level.”<sup>62</sup> While helpful, history suggests that voluntary measures (like, for example, codes of conduct for companies) have usually not proven to be an ‘effective’ strategy, as there are no sanctions if one decides to ‘choose to not use them.’ However, it is an important first step, and it would be crucial that those countries (developed and developing) committed to promoting advances on gender equality really measure those indicators as part of their own monitoring and the Monitoring Survey of the Paris Declaration. The optional module<sup>63</sup> on gender equality and aid effectiveness is key in this respect.

## **Box 8: GENDERNET Draft Indicators:**

**GENDER EQUALITY INDICATOR 1 - Ownership:**  
Gender equality and women’s empowerment are grounded in a systematic manner in National Development Plans.

**GENDER EQUALITY INDICATOR 2 - Managing for Gender Equality Results:** The performance assessment framework addresses gender equality.

**GENDER EQUALITY INDICATOR 3 - Mutual accountability for gender equality and women’s empowerment.**

59 Accra Women’s Forum Statement (2008): [www.awid.org/eng/content/download/43402/461138/file/Women's%20Forum%20Statement%20\(FINAL\)-1.pdf](http://www.awid.org/eng/content/download/43402/461138/file/Women's%20Forum%20Statement%20(FINAL)-1.pdf)

60 Alemany, Cecilia and Grace Dede coords. (2008), *Conditionalities Undermine the Right to Development*, p.126: <http://www.awid.org/Library/Conditionalities-undermine-the-right-to-development-An-analysis-based-on-a-Women-s-and-Human-Rights-Perspective>.

61 DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET, 2010): *Draft indicators for Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality*

62 *ibid*

63 See: [http://www.oecd.org/document/33/0,3746,en\\_21571361\\_39494699\\_39497377\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/33/0,3746,en_21571361_39494699_39497377_1_1_1_1,00.html)

## 5. Conclusion

Finally, where new challenges emerge, there are always tendencies to keep the status quo for as long as possible, and often other, external forces are needed to promote changes in structures. Historically speaking, structures usually change later than reality. When structures are not reformed and resist reality transformations for too long, they tend to become irrelevant and thus there are no more pressures to transform them. Policy frameworks also fall victim to pressures to adapt to new realities, and development cooperation is no exception.

By 2008–2010, new challenges emerged for all development actors, and there were opportunities to learn from the past to transform the development cooperation system, its practices, and structures. Social movements and women's movements in particular, have strong experience on how to promote development strategies and livelihood strategies and should be part of the deep reflection needed to go beyond the aid effectiveness framework. The rights approach is a possible basis to have a more comprehensive cooperation framework, and this needs to come together with serious reform of the system that currently guides development cooperation. The current development cooperation system is not only inefficient, as many have argued, but it reflects power dynamics and structures that have been exhausted and have not delivered their promises.

The High Level Forum in Korea in November/December 2011, will be an opportunity to come to a more comprehensive framework to host all development actors in their own right and promote common norm-setting at the international level for development cooperation. On the road to Korea and the DCF preparation process, women's groups will go beyond this initial discussion paper, and propose concrete recommendations on how to integrate a rights perspective in development cooperation structures and practices.