

Global Donor Platform for Rural Development Teleconference: Financing and economic empowerment scenarios for women in agriculture / 28 October 2015

The FfD3 outcome - a feminist perspective

Anne Schoenstein , WWG on FfD co-facilitator and Lead Advocacy Associate at the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

Thank you on behalf of AWID and the WWG on FfD for this invitation. I was asked to contribute an input about the outcome of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD3) and its adequacy from a feminist lense.

The WWG on FfD

The Women's Working Group on Financing for Development (WWG on FfD) was formed in October 2007 as an alliance of women's organizations and networks who advocate for the advancement of gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights in the Financing for Development (FfD) related UN processes. Reactivated for FfD3, the group actively engaged in the preparatory process that led to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) in July 2015. This included the examination of the drafts of the outcome document to which the group developed proposals and concrete suggested language. The WWG on FfD works closely together with and is part of the broader CSO FfD group.

The AAAA

In short, for CSOs the final outcome is very disappointing and concerning. It missed a number of opportunities, and failed to create the conditions to achieve just economies that would contribute in turn to achieve the respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights, including women's rights. It fails to remove the global obstacles to development, address systemic issues, overcome structural injustices and the unequal balance of power in the current global economic governance, finance systems and institutions. A majority of women bear the burden of this reality and also act as shock absorbers and stabilizers for market and state failures. This adds further onto the multiple constraints that a majority of women, including women smallholder farmers are still dealing with.

Yes, the AAAA includes various references to women, gender, equality, human rights and the WWG on FfD acknowledges certain parts and recognizes that already agreed language got reaffirmed. For example, §240 of the Future We Want that states “[w]e resolve to undertake legislation and administrative reforms to give women equal rights with men to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and appropriate new technology”

was incorporated into the AAAA (§41). However points of critique and further steps¹ are also applicable and needed here.

Also, yes, given that the FfD3 process started off quite gender-silent² the explicit mentions can be regarded as an achievement that feminist and women's rights groups contributed to together with other gender advocates. However, the picture is more complex and must get looked at and get addressed from the root not just the surface.

Why are feminist and women's rights organizations disappointed by the AAAA despite the fact that there are undoubtedly many more references to gender equality and women in the AAAA than ever before in the FfD agenda? Further examples³ beyond the already flagged:

Domestic resource mobilization:

- Tax policy is not gender neutral but there is no reference in the document on the need to promote equity, including gender equality as an objective in all tax and revenue policies.
- The AAAA failed to establish a global UN tax body. Strengthening the existing Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters does not fulfill the need of an intergovernmental, transparent, accountable, and well-resourced body that is urgently required by all countries to truly combat illicit financial flows and tax evasion. A situation, as almost any, with clear gendered implications.

The corporate sector in development:

- FfD3 should have addressed the duties and responsibilities of States to protect people from harms caused by the private sector, and to ensure that businesses respect human rights in their activities. Instead it rather strengthens corporate power.
- Furthermore, governments failed to acknowledge, let alone endorse, the critically important process unfolding in the UN Human Rights Council to develop an international legally binding instrument on Transnational Corporations and other Business Enterprises that is based in the international human rights framework .

Development Cooperation:

- 'Developed' countries did not commit to scaling up the share of ODA for achieving gender equality, women's empowerment and women's human rights.

¹ See page four of WWG on FfD reaction to AAAA.

² See WWG on FfD input to 2nd round of substantive informal sessions:

³ This input raises some aspects, other areas of concern are equally important and can be read about in the WWG on FfD reaction to the AAAA that is available in En/Sp/Fr and in the CSO Forum Declaration and response to AAAA.

Women and gender equality as a business case:

- The AAAA and FfD3 debates included strong tendencies towards the instrumentalization of women and to financing gender equality and women's empowerment as a means to achieve economic growth and to increase productivity. This kind of discourse is rather limiting for the path towards achieving women's full human rights.

Key messages for moving forward on some of the aspects raised

1. Achieving the full realization of human rights, including women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment is central to a sustainable development agenda. This must be in focus and an end in itself.
2. Instead of "access to ownership", governments should guarantee women's and girls' rights to full and equal access to ownership and control over resources including the right to inheritance and land titling.
3. Ensure an enabling and safe environment for all CSOs, including for Women Human Rights Defenders. This should be translated to substantive participation at local, national and international levels and at all stages of the development process (planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating), and is also particularly relevant for the setting of gender sensitive agricultural policies and needs to come with corresponding budgeting.
4. Tackling corporate illicit financial flows and tax evasion will contribute strongly to domestic resources mobilization. The establishment of a global tax body under the UN be key in this regard too.
5. Scale up the share of ODA for achieving gender equality and women's human rights.
6. Engage constructively with and support the work of the Human Rights Council Intergovernmental Working Group mandated to elaborate an international legally binding instrument to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. This includes contributing to ensure that it gets written, established with an integrated gender and feminist perspective.
7. Finally, it is important to recall that the FfD agenda is more than the means of implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. Tackling systemic issues is a pre- condition to achieve the SDGs, but also to generate the structural conditions for the implementation of other existing internationally agreed development agendas and goals related with women's human rights included in the Beijing Platform for Action, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), among others. It will thus be key to ensure that the annual ECOSOC Forum on FfD follow-up provides sufficient 'room' for the entire FfD agenda.

For more information visit: <http://www.awid.org/special-focus-sections/third-financing-development-conference>;
<http://www.gonffd.org/publications-2/statements/> & <https://csoforffd.wordpress.com/>