

**Primer #8: The Accra Agenda for Action:  
A brief review from a women's rights perspective**

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND WOMEN'S RIGHT SERIES

By Nerea Craviotto

# ABOUT THIS SERIES

## “DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND WOMEN’S RIGHTS”

The purpose of this set of Primers is to share critical information and analysis with women’s rights advocates about the new development cooperation system that has emerged as a result of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. The Aid Effectiveness agenda, born out of the Paris Declaration, currently determines how and to whom aid is delivered, as well as how donor and developing countries relate to one another. Development cooperation allocation and distribution is clearly not just a mechanistic process, but is also a political one. The issues discussed within these Primers aim to encourage women’s rights advocates and civil society organisations (CSOs) to continue and deepen their engagement—or join in the process—of calling for a more comprehensive, balanced, and inclusive approach to development cooperation that promotes sustainable and inclusive development for all.

**Primer No. 1:** An Overview of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness & the New Aid Modalities

**Primer No. 2:** Key Official Bodies Related to the Implementation of the Paris Declaration

**Primer No. 3:** CSOs Engagement in the Aid Effectiveness Agenda: The Parallel Process, CSOs Concerns and Recommendations

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**Primer No. 8:** The Accra Agenda for Action: A brief review from a women’s rights perspective

**Primer No. 9:** The road to Korea 2011: Key official and civil society actors

## ABOUT THIS PRIMER

Primer #8: The Accra Agenda for Action: A brief review from a women’s rights perspective  
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND WOMEN’S RIGHT SERIES

Primer 8 provides an overview of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness as well as an analysis, from a gender equality and women’s rights perspective, of its outcome document: the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA).

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The Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) is an international, multi-generational, feminist, creative, future-orientated 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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## ACRONYMS

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
AWID	Association for Women s Rights in Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
DCF (UN DCF)	United Nations Development Cooperation Forum
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
ESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
FfD	Financing for Development
GNP	Gross National Product
HLF- 2 / 3 / 4	High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness 2 / 3 / 4
IADG	International Agreed Development Goals
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ISG	International Steering Group
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non - governmental organisation
NETRIGHT	Network for Women s Rights in Ghana
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Paris Declaration
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
SWAP	Sectoral Wide Approach
UN	United Nations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women (UN Women)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WB	World Bank
WIDE	WIDE network
WP-EFF	Working Party on Aid Effectiveness
WWG on FfD	Women s Working Group on Financing for Development

# INTRODUCTION: CHALLENGING THE AID EFFECTIVENESS PARADIGM

In 2005, civil society organisations (CSOs) bore witness to the signing of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness<sup>1</sup>—an agreement to reform aid delivery and management in order to strengthen its impact and effectiveness. The Paris Declaration (PD) was adopted in March 2005 at the 2<sup>nd</sup> High Level Forum (HLF-2) on Aid Effectiveness organised by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Since then, 25 donor countries, eight<sup>2</sup> European Union (EU) emerging donor countries<sup>3</sup>, 101 developing countries<sup>4</sup>, and 27 multilateral institutions have formally adhered to the Declaration<sup>5</sup>.

While many CSOs acknowledge the importance of the five principles (ownership, alignment, harmonisation, mutual accountability, and management for results)<sup>6</sup> contained in the Paris Declaration and the need for reform in official donor/developing country government development cooperation practices, CSOs are not signatories to the Paris Declaration. They are critical of the process and are engaging in it from that angle.

CSOs and women's rights activists are concerned that the Paris Declaration agenda is a highly technical process, is donor driven, and is focused more on aid management and delivery procedures than aid impact in achieving development goals. Along these lines, the United Nations (UN) Secretary General's report on "Trends and progress in international development cooperation"<sup>7</sup>, prior to the UN 2008 Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), raised the following concerns, which are still relevant: "the Paris Declaration marked a step change in articulating benchmarks for progress, yet the negotiation process did not engage the full range of stakeholders [and] (...) discussions were dominated by members of the Development Assistance Committee." The Declaration came about "without the approval of a conventional international multi-stakeholder process." In addition, "the aid effectiveness agenda is not yet demonstrating its ability to change donor behaviour."

In 2009, USD 119.6 billion<sup>8</sup>, in the form of Official Development Assistance (ODA) from bilateral and multi-lateral funding agencies, flowed into developing countries<sup>9</sup>. In fifty years of aid allocation, the beneficiaries of these public resources have rarely been women—who receive only a tiny proportion of overall ODA<sup>10</sup>. Aid as a structuring device, process, and resource has had debatable effectiveness in reducing poverty and inequality, promoting development, and supporting gender equality and women's rights.

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1 - For further information on the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness process, from a gender equality and women's rights perspective, please take a look at AWID's former Primers on Aid Effectiveness, available in English, French, and Spanish: [www.awid.org/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Primers-on-Aid-Effectiveness](http://www.awid.org/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Primers-on-Aid-Effectiveness)

2 - DAC member countries: [www.oecd.org/document/38/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34603\\_1893350\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/38/0,3343,en_2649_34603_1893350_1_1_1_1,00.html), plus Iceland.

3 - New EU member states, namely: Czech Republic, Cyprus (Republic of), Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia.

4 - However, this group includes new emerging donor countries like: India, Kuwait, Korea, Malaysia, People's Republic of China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Thailand.

5 - [http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_3236398\\_36074966\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_36074966_1_1_1_1,00.html)

6 - For further analysis on the PD principles from a gender equality and women's rights perspective: [www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Implementing-the-Paris-Declaration-Implications-for-the-Promotion-of-Women-s-Rights-and-Gender-Equality](http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Implementing-the-Paris-Declaration-Implications-for-the-Promotion-of-Women-s-Rights-and-Gender-Equality)

7 - E/2008/69, page 15: <http://www.undg.org/docs/9214/N0835208.pdf>

8 - This number includes only DAC members' ODA.

9 - [www.oecd.org/document/11/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34487\\_44981579\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/11/0,3343,en_2649_34487_44981579_1_1_1_1,00.html)

10 - Although ODA was most frequently mentioned by a total of 35% of AWID "Where is the Money for Women's Rights" Survey respondents, it is clear that funds for gender equality represent a very small proportion of overall ODA. See page 48 of AWID's 2007 Second FundHer Report, Financial Sustainability for Women's Movements. <http://www.awid.org/eng/About-AWID/AWID-News/Financial-Sustainability-for-Women-s-Movement-s-Worldwide-Second-FundHer-Report>

The Paris Declaration commits donor countries to a common set of principles and targets to achieve aid effectiveness, but CSOs are calling for the following more fundamental reforms in current aid priorities and practices, guided by principles and approaches<sup>11</sup> to ensure development effectiveness<sup>12</sup> drives international development cooperation<sup>13</sup>:

- 1 - Promote **development effectiveness** as the guiding framework for reforms in international development cooperation and reform the aid architecture to be inclusive, multilateral, and equitable.
- 2 - Focus on human rights, recognise the centrality of **poverty reduction, gender equality, social justice, decent work, and environmental sustainability**.
- 3 - Promote a transition from a narrow focus on aid management to a more **inclusive and outcomes-oriented emphasis on development**, less dependent on development cooperation.
- 4 - Promote full implementation of existing commitments on (democratic) ownership, use of country systems, and **ending policy conditionalities**.
- 5 - Commit to **gender equality and women's rights**, as well as to the promotion of **decent work and equitable economic development**, as key objectives for sustainable development.
- 6 - Create an enabling environment for **democratic ownership** and participation at all levels: CSOs, including women's rights organisations, along with parliaments, the media, the private sector, and other development actors.
- 7 - Improve **mutual accountability for development results** by expanding the range of actors involved in assessing aid and development effectiveness, particularly at the country level.
- 8 - Make **aid transparent** to improve the accountability of donors and developing countries to each other and to their citizens—and to increase the impact of aid for sustainable and just development.
- 9 - Address the reduction of poverty and inequality through a **comprehensive set of policy reforms** (aid, agricultural, financial, trade, investment, migration, and other policies) that impact development.
- 10 - The **monitoring of the Paris Declaration** commitments must be fully transparent and inclusive of women's rights organisations and CSOs, and should not be an instrument to impose policy conditionalities that undermine the ownership principle and the right to development.
- 11 - 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 Paris Declaration indicators<sup>14</sup>. In relation to broad-based democratic ownership, an additional indicator to capture the scope of the participation of all stakeholders in relation to the national development strategy must be integrated. This includes asking if civil society participated in the formulation/monitoring of the national development strategy<sup>15</sup>.

Overall, development cooperation processes and policies must be aligned with international and regional agreements on human rights and gender equality, including the **Beijing Platform for Action** and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (**CEDAW**)<sup>16</sup>.

CEDAW, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR), and other conventions pose legal obligations to governments regarding issues of development, human rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability. While the Paris Declaration is not a binding agreement, international treaties endorsed by governments in recent decades must be the framework for development policies and practices. Governments should be held accountable for these commitments within the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness agenda<sup>17</sup>.

11 - Based on Human Rights, a truly democratic and inclusive multi-stakeholder approach, systemic coherence among global policies (including fulfilment of women's rights frameworks and just global governance), the goal to eradicate the root causes of poverty and structural inequalities, and alignment with international and regional agreements on human rights and gender equality.

12 - While meeting aid effectiveness commitments is essential for development effectiveness, current reforms are insufficient because they are focused primarily on aid efficiency. Development effectiveness promotes sustainable change that addresses the root causes as well as the symptoms of poverty, inequality, marginalisation, 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 (BetterAid, 2010).

13 - Adapted from BetterAid (2010). Development Cooperation, Not Just Aid. Key Issues: Accra, Seoul and Beyond. [www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org)

14 - AWID (June–July 2010): Development cooperation beyond the aid effectiveness paradigm: A women's rights perspective. Preliminary discussion paper. 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" (GENDERNET, 2010). While helpful these are only voluntary indicators, thus there are no sanctions for non application. More info about GENDERNET in section 2.2.

15 - Contribution from Cluster A for the 2011 Paris Declaration Monitoring Survey. Source: WP-EFF Portal.

16 - AWID (June–July 2010): Development cooperation beyond the aid effectiveness paradigm: A women's rights perspective. Preliminary discussion paper.

17 - Adapted from the Accra Women's Forum statement (2008), available at: [www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Recommendations-for-Action-on-Development-Effectiveness-in-Accra-and-beyond](http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Recommendations-for-Action-on-Development-Effectiveness-in-Accra-and-beyond)

# 1. THE ACCRA HIGH LEVEL FORUM III: OVERVIEW

In September 2008, donor and developing countries and multilateral agencies met for the **3rd High Level Forum (HLF-3)** on Aid Effectiveness, held in Accra, Ghana to assess progress in the implementation of the Paris Declaration<sup>18</sup>. At this meeting the **Accra Agenda for Action (AAA)** was agreed upon, building on the commitments in the Paris Declaration.

The HLF-3 was conceived as an opportunity to take stock of the implementation of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness halfway towards its target date of 2011. Originally, the aim was to focus on providing a technical assessment of the progress made and obstacles encountered so far, based on the monitoring and evaluation reports developed by the DAC, and to agree on the next steps. However, due to ongoing profound changes in North-South relations<sup>19</sup> and complex consultations among the different actors and interests, the Accra HLF-3 became a Forum to continue renegotiating the global governance of development cooperation, covering political issues affecting aid relationships<sup>20</sup>. CSOs also played a role in influencing the debates, bringing new issues to the table.

In late 2006, CSOs began planning their involvement in the Accra HLF-3; their aim was to influence the discussions and outcomes of the HLF-3. A CSO International Steering Group was created, and by September 2008 was supported by more than 700 CSOs in a Better Aid Platform, which adopted an agenda for significant reforms in the goals and practices of aid. These 700 CSOs gathered in Accra during the first week of September 2008 for a two-day parallel CSO Forum on Aid Effectiveness, and as *observers*<sup>21</sup> in the HLF-3, sending an unprecedented 80-member CSO delegation to its roundtables and plenary sessions<sup>22</sup>. Regarding women's rights groups' participation, while they were not present at the HLF-2 in Paris in 2005, they coordinated lobby and advocacy work towards the HLF-3 (through the international steering group (ISG) but also by their own means and spaces) and attended it in substantial numbers.

Women's rights advocates were concerned about the lack of a gender approach in the PD and the fundamental weakness that this implied, as well as the absence of women's rights groups' participation throughout the process. They started strategising by mid-2007 and formally gathered for the first time during the "International Consultation of Women's Organizations and Networks and Aid Effectiveness," organised by AWID and WIDE, in collaboration with other women's organisations and networks, with the strategic support of United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). From there, many of the participating groups decided to strengthen their mobilisation and coordination efforts on gender equality and aid effectiveness in their own countries and regions. In addition,

## BOX 1:

### What exactly is the Accra Agenda for Action?

The AAA is the outcome document of the HLF-3 on Aid Effectiveness. The AAA was negotiated between donors, multilateral organisations, and developing country governments.

However, unlike the HLF-2 in Paris, in the HLF-3 CSOs played significant a role in advocating for deepening the Aid Effectiveness agenda; however, as with the Paris Declaration, CSOs are not signatories of the AAA.

18 - The HLF-3 brought together 130 countries, 40 international organisations, over 80 civil society organisations, and representatives from the private sector and academia.

19 - In the last decade, Southern blocs have been strengthening their own cooperation systems as well as economic integration processes. In this sense, financial coordination has become one the main pillars of these regional blocs as well as a strong area for South-South cooperation. The last decade has seen also the rise of developing country alliances within international spaces, for example the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) and the IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa).

20 - Schulz, N. (2008). From Accra to 2011: Perspectives for the Global Governance of Aid. FRIDE: Madrid, Spain. The whole article can be downloaded at [www.fride.org/publication/502/perspectives-for-the-global-governance-of-aid](http://www.fride.org/publication/502/perspectives-for-the-global-governance-of-aid)

21 - CSO representatives could attend all plenary and roundtables sessions organised throughout the HLF-3; however, they were not part of the negotiations.

22 - Wood, J. et Valot, H. (2009). Strengthening Civil Society's Roles and Voice: Reflections on CSO Engagement with the Accra Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. IBON Books: Philippines.

an informal coalition of organisations agreed to coordinate their advocacy work to make a greater impact at HLF-3<sup>23</sup>. All these initiatives lead to strong participation of women's rights groups towards the Accra HLF-3.

Once in Accra, women's groups were present through the Accra Women's Forum (August 30), the Civil Society Parallel Forum (August 31– September 1), and as part of the official CSO delegation to the HLF-3. In addition, for the very first time, three representatives from women's organisations (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT), and AWID) had the opportunity to have a seat and speak as part of the official HLF process. However, the possibility to speak in the official plenary sessions was reduced to an initial intervention during the first day and then CSOs were not allowed to take the floor and intervene in the broader space.

The AAA reflects these complex negotiations, with multiple official and *observer* actors, resolving with **48 new or strengthened commitments** (34 of which target the donor community), in addition to the 12 indicators agreed within the Paris Declaration. Furthermore, the 2008 Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration highlighted that progress has been made since 2005, but was too little and too slow, concluding that efforts needed to be sped up if Paris targets were to be achieved by 2011.

From a CSO perspective, the outcomes of **the agreed AAA reflect a mixed performance**<sup>24</sup>. Some important advances include the recognition in the AAA that "gender equality, respect for human rights, and environmental sustainability are cornerstones for achieving enduring impact on the lives and potential of poor women, men, and children" (§ 3) and, beyond the AAA, the inclusion of CSOs as full members of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF)<sup>25</sup>.

The AAA set out areas of action on the issues of predictability and transparency of aid flows, true ownership by CSOs and parliaments over aid decisions, reliance on the systems of developing country governments rather than donor systems, and a better and more efficient division of labour amongst donors. However, the agreed AAA fails to put in place time-bound and monitorable commitments and indicators to measure progress on these actions. It also falls short in sufficiently addressing other key areas, such as decent work, policy conditionality, tied aid, mutual accountability, and the reform of the aid governance system.

23 - Craviotto, N et Antolin, L. (2009). The mobilisation of gender equality and women's rights organisations towards Accra: actions, strategies, successes and challenges. WIDE: Brussels, Belgium.

24 - Better Aid (2009). An assessment of the Accra Agenda for Action from a Civil Society Perspective: [www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org).

25 - The WP-EFF was established in 2003 as an international partnership of donors and developing countries hosted by the OECD-DAC. Building on the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the AAA, it aims to accelerate and deepen Paris Declaration implementation. The WP-EFF sets the agenda following Accra HLF-3; the HLF-4 will take place in 2011 in Busan, South Korea.

26 - Analysis based on highlights from the article "A gender analysis of the Accra Agenda for Action" from Craviotto, N., in Alemany, C. et al. (2008), Conditionality Undermine the Right to Development. AWID: Mexico DF, Mexico. It can be download at [www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org).

27 - Available at: [www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Recommendations-for-Action-on-Development-Effectiveness-in-Accra-and-beyond](http://www.awid.org/eng/Issues-and-Analysis/Library/Recommendations-for-Action-on-Development-Effectiveness-in-Accra-and-beyond)

28 - The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was adopted without any gender equality or women's rights perspective. The Paris Declaration was gender blind.

29 - The expression "as appropriate" is non-specific and dilutes the commitment.

30 - By democratic ownership we understand that citizens' voices (women and men) and their concerns must be included and be central to the national development plans and processes.

31 - With the AAA, donor countries and multilateral organisations also recognised the lack of progress in donor country governments using partner country systems, engaging donor country governments to "use country systems as the first option for aid programmes in support of activities managed by the public sector" [§ 15a]. Moreover, "should donors choose to use another option and rely on aid delivery mechanisms outside country systems (including parallel project implementation units), they will transparently state the rationale for this and will review their positions at regular intervals. Where use of country systems is not feasible, donors will establish additional safeguards and measures in ways that strengthen rather than undermine country systems and procedures" [§ 15b]. In terms of timing, donor country governments commit to start working immediately and to transparently share their plans to fulfil their PD commitment on using country systems and thus, reaffirm their commitment "to provide 66% of aid as programme based approaches. In addition, donors will aim to channel 50% or more of government-to-government assistance through country fiduciary systems [...]" [§ 15d].

## 2. THE AAA: A BRIEF REVIEW FROM A GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE<sup>26</sup>

This section seeks to provide a gender analysis of the AAA and compares how the 14 recommendations<sup>27</sup> made by the Accra Women's Forum (September 2008) to donor and developing country representatives attending the HLF-3 were integrated into the AAA and its action plans.

In terms of gender equality and women's rights issues, Accra, compared to Paris HLF-2 (2005)<sup>28</sup>, showed and resulted in some modest progress. This relates to the visibility of gender equality in the official discussions and the participation of women's organisations in HLF-3, including as speakers. Considering that women's groups were not represented in Paris at all, this was a major difference and the gains made in the AAA are a definite step forward. However, this progress is compromised by the lack of monitorable targets and other unresolved issues outlined in Box 2 (see page 11).

In its preamble, the AAA emphasises the central place of poverty reduction and Human Rights in development policy and the importance of Human Rights, gender equality, and environmental sustainability as "cornerstones for achieving enduring impact" [§ 3]. It states, "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," [§ 13c] and that "donors and developing countries will work and agree on a set of realistic peace- and state-building objectives that address the root causes of conflict and fragility and help ensure the protection and participation of women" [§ 21b]. Moreover, the AAA recognises the need to improve the availability of sex-disaggregated data and developing countries' commitment to strengthen the quality of policy design, implementation, and assessment by improving information systems, "as appropriate"<sup>29</sup>. This includes disaggregating data by sex, region, and socioeconomic status. However, it fails to explicitly recognise the need to allocate resources and to bind in support from the donors' community.

As mentioned, advances in language are undermined by **the lack of new targets or monitorable commitments** towards gender equality and women's rights. This is indicative of a lack of political will from donor and developing countries' governments, as well as bilateral and multilateral agencies, to make gender equality a priority in the Aid Effectiveness process. Thus, although women's rights advocates identify some level of improvement in the recognition of the importance of gender equality in the Paris process, the level of commitment is still far from delivering significant changes. The AAA final text also demonstrates a failure in applying a gender mainstreaming approach throughout the different priorities put forth in the document.

Regarding ownership, an important demand for CSOs and women's rights groups, the AAA does not refer to "democratic ownership"<sup>30</sup> (as advocated by civil society and women's rights organisations), but identifies country ownership as a key area and commits developing country governments to "take stronger leadership of their own development policies" through a "closer involvement of parliaments and citizens in shaping those policies" and commits donor governments to "respect countries' priorities" [§ 8]. Officials at the HLF-3 committed to "work in more inclusive partnerships so that all our efforts have greater impact on reducing poverty" [§ 9]. In addition, "developing country governments commit to also engage with civil society organisations" [§ 13a] and donor governments commit to "increase the capacity of all development actors—parliaments, central and local governments, CSOs, research institutes, media, and the private sector—to take an active role in dialogue on development policy and on the role of aid in contributing to countries' development objectives" [§ 13b]<sup>31</sup>.

Although one could welcome the steps taken with the AAA to deepen the concept of "country ownership," there are still challenges ahead, especially at the implementation level. Democratic ownership requires legitimate governance mechanisms for participatory decision-making and accountability in development plans and processes that apply to parliaments and elected representatives as well as civil society groups, including women's rights organisations and citizens. However, so far, considering the AAA does not identify new indicators to assess progress in meeting the ownership commitment, the primary indicator used to measure progress on country ownership has been the existence of national development plans, including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). Yet the PRSPs continue to be attached to conditions (linked to loans) and,

although developing country governments are the ones in charge of writing the PRSPs, in practice they opt for programmes they know will be accepted by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), even if this conflicts with priorities identified through the consultative processes.

In addition, although CSOs, including women's rights organisations, are acknowledged in the AAA as development actors in their own right [§ 20], no attempt is made to tackle the need to establish clear funding mechanisms to support the participation of CSOs, including women's rights organisations, in all the national development planning processes and aid planning, programming, management, monitoring, and evaluation.

Transparency and accountability was also a key demand for women's rights organisations and CSOs in general, on the road to Accra. The AAA includes stronger language on this matter, recognising "transparency and accountability as essential elements for development results" [§ 24]. In this direction, developing countries are committed to "implementing greater transparency in public financial management, including public disclosure of revenues, budgets, expenditures, procurement, and audits" and donor country governments are committed to "publicly disclose regular, detailed, and timely information on volume, allocation, and, when available, results of development expenditure to enable more accurate budget, accounting, and audit by developing countries" [§ 24a]. Paragraph 24 also includes a commitment to "review proposals for strengthening the (mutual accountability) mechanisms by end 2009<sup>32</sup>," which is an opportunity for CSOs and women's groups to bring their perspective.

In Accra there was also agreement to review mutual accountability at the international level, which was an important issue for both CSOs and developing countries, in order to improve the weak accountability of donors. The AAA mentions: "developing countries and donors will jointly review and strengthen international accountability mechanisms, including peer review with participation of developing countries" [§ 24c]. The timeline given to meet this goal was by the end of 2009.

Despite the steps taken to improve transparency and accountability, the AAA negotiators<sup>33</sup> failed to identify mechanisms to monitor how aid allocations correspond to national priorities and people's needs, and how they contribute to development impacts. Ultimately, aid allocations must be assessed in terms of progress towards meeting internationally-agreed Human Rights, including women's rights, the right to development, and associated economic and social rights.

Regarding conditionality, similar to the PD in 2005, this issue was put aside in Accra and the AAA hardly reflects any progress. The few commitments made called for "mutually agreed conditions" [§ 25a] that support ownership and improve the predictability of aid flows. Donor and developing country governments committed as well to "regularly make public all conditions linked to disbursements" [§ 25b]. AAA negotiators also recognised the need to review "good practices" of conditionality "with a view to strengthening country ownership" and explicitly stated that this review will "be receptive to contributions from civil society" [§ 25c]. Nevertheless, in the final AAA text, donor countries and bilateral and multilateral agencies again avoided making a commitment towards the end of policy conditionalities, despite both developing country and civil society calls for this to happen. Yet, using aid as a tool to impose policy conditions has no place in a paradigm rooted in a commitment to ownership and accountability.

From women's rights groups' point of view, there is agreement that the AAA is not revolutionary and will not change much of the process towards the end of November 2011 (when the next High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness will take place), unless there is political will to do so. However, the AAA does open some windows of opportunity for improvement, and for women's rights organisations to promote gender equality and women's rights. Now the challenge is to see how these intentions will translate into practice.

According to the BetterAid Platform, implementation of the AAA has been disappointing and limited, jeopardizing commitments made in the Paris Declaration and the AAA<sup>34</sup>. For example, the AAA encourages the submission of country-based action plans, with time-bound and monitorable proposals to implement the Paris Declaration and the AAA [§ 28]. However, so far<sup>35</sup> only 35 PD/AAA Action Plans<sup>36</sup> have been submitted to the WP-EFF (out of the 161 members adhering to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness framework). In terms

32 - With this aim in mind, Accra witnessed the launching of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), a UK-led donor initiative that makes a number of commitments on making aid more transparent. This initiative was endorsed by 14 donors, including the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Commission (EC).

33 - Donor and developing countries' governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies.

34 - BetterAid (2009:4). An assessment of the Accra Agenda for Action from a civil society perspective. Better Aid: [www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org)

35 - Last check on WP-EFF portal is from September 18, 2010.

36 - The PD/AAA Action Plans are an effort to adapt Paris Declaration and AAA commitments to different country circumstances. However, it is important to highlight that this is not a compulsory exercise for any of the PD/AAA signatories.

of gender equality and women's rights, a quick screening of these plans shows that only 14 of them make references to gender equality commitments, representing 40% of the total action plans submitted; seven of them make references to human rights commitments, representing 20% of the total action plans submitted; and two of them make references to the participation of women in fragile country situations, representing 0.7% of the total action plans submitted<sup>37</sup>.

The analysis of the 14 PD/AAA Action Plans tackling gender equality commitments shows that donor/developing countries and multilateral agencies' plans have mainly focused on including steps to make progress in meeting the AAA commitment stated in paragraph 13c (12 out of the 14), and only one country and one multilateral agency tackled the AAA commitment stated in paragraph 23a, despite the importance of progress on this pledge to measure accountability to gender equality commitments and the impact of the development process to promote equal societies.

Thus, progress since the HLF-3 seems to have been rather modest.

The following box provides an overview of how effectively each of the Accra Women's Forum recommendations has been addressed in the AAA (achieved, partially achieved, or not achieved)<sup>38</sup>. It is important to note that even when women's rights recommendations have been incorporated or partially incorporated into the AAA, progress on implementation by donor and developing countries remains a challenge. To this end, further policy work is needed to track the current state of the AAA's country implementation and the few gender equality and women's rights commitments.

Box 2 shows that a very important part of the agenda proposed by women's groups in the preparation for Accra is still not achieved, even if there were some partial achievements. For example:

<b>BOX 2: Assessing gender equality and women's rights demands towards the Accra HLF3</b>		
	RECOMMENDATION	ASSESSMENT
1	To be consistent with the recognition of gender equality, environmental sustainability and respect for human rights, as cornerstones for development; by treating these policy priority issues as sectors with progress indicators and specific resources allocated in national budgets.	Not achieved
2	To align the Paris Declaration implementation with international agreed development goals (IADG) as suggested by the United Nations Secretary General Report <sup>39</sup> , particularly the international standards on Human Rights, gender equality, decent work, and environmental sustainability.	Partially achieved
3	To deliver donors' commitment to increase Official Development Assistance (ODA) to 0.7% of their GNP. In addition, aid should be additional to debt relief, and should be in the form of grants, not loans.	Not achieved
4	To provide transparent information on how ODA allocations respond to policy commitments and people's needs, and developing country governments have to provide transparent and publicly available budgets.	Partially achieved
5	Donors and governments need to ensure that special funds are available for women's rights organisations and that effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that the money reaches these organisations. Funding needs to be diversified to ensure that the current focus on CSOs as instruments of advocacy does not exclude other work that is critical for women's rights, gender equality and poverty reduction.	Not achieved
6	To recognize the importance of the UNSCR 1820, and allocate resources for mobilizing communities and the protection of women rights and their organizations.	Not achieved
7	To integrate a strategic plan for financing gender equality and women's empowerment that is reflected in budget guidelines into the monitoring system of the PD implementation.	Not achieved
8	To establish clear mechanisms for the participation of women's rights organizations as part of civil society, particularly women from excluded groups, in all the national development planning processes and aid planning, programming, management, monitoring and evaluation. In this sense, women's organisations should receive substantial, predictable and multi-year, core funding.	Not achieved at national level. Partially achieved at WP-EFF level (mechanism of participation only)

37 - As part of the BetterAid Platform, AWID and Action Aid are carrying out a more in depth analysis of the implementation plans to analyse how they integrate human rights, gender equality, and civil society participation. This analysis will be soon available at [www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org).

38 - A similar exercise was undertaken by the BetterAid Platform with the paper Assessment of the AAA from a CSO perspective available at [http://betteraid.org/images/Documents/an\\_assessment\\_of\\_the\\_aaa\\_from\\_a\\_civil\\_society\\_perspective.pdf](http://betteraid.org/images/Documents/an_assessment_of_the_aaa_from_a_civil_society_perspective.pdf)

39 - UN/ECOSOC E/2008/XX, Secretary General Report (2008), Trends and progress in international development cooperation, Unedited version.

9	To define democratic and participatory ownership as a vector principle of the implementation of the Paris Declaration, without setting new forms of process conditionality. Such an approach must be in line with the recognition of national leadership (Monterrey Consensus), the right to development, the right to self-determination, the right to participation, and the right to non-violence.	Not achieved
10	To strengthen the capacities, resources and authority of national women's machineries to support and monitor line ministries, other government bodies and parliaments in influencing national development planning and budget allocations for gender equality and women's rights.	Partially achieved
11	To accept that economic policy conditionalities have a negative impact on people, particularly on women. And therefore, to remove all economic policy conditionalities that undermine the principle of ownership and stand in contradiction with the rights to Development and Self-determination. This must include those conditionalities related to gender equality and the so-called 'positive conditionalities'. Instead, mutual responsibility, accountability and transparency of donors and developing countries must be applied and strengthened towards gender equality and Human Rights standards and goals.	Not achieved
12	To measure development results within the Paris framework by adopting the existing reporting and monitoring systems for Human Rights compliance, such as the Gini Index of Income Inequality, as well as other processes such as CEDAW, MDGs, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325), etc.	Not achieved
13	To measure outcomes on gender mainstreaming and gender specific action such as access to health and education, changes in women's employment and income, incidence of gender based violence, right to reparation, right to inheritance, property, land use, women's participation in decision-making.	Not achieved
14	To pay special attention to the needs and rights restitution of victimized women in fragile states (states in conflict, coming out of conflict or post-conflict situations) and in communities experiencing localised conflicts and xenophobia attacks, by involving women in peace-building processes and channelling specific development assistance to women's organisations to address the concerns and needs of women survivors, including, capacity building, access to sexual and reproductive health, information and services and the stopping of violence against women.	Partially achieved
15	To promote the use of a mix of funding mechanisms to ensure progress on women's rights and empowerment, including general as well as sector budget support, pooled funding through the SWAP and partnerships with civil society organizations and UN agencies. General budget support alone cannot lead to progress on development goals, especially for the most marginalized groups.	Not achieved

Recommendation 2: With AAA paragraph 13c, donor/developing countries and multilateral agencies partially meet women's group's recommendation 2, which asks that "development policies and programmes are designed and implemented in ways consistent with agreed international commitments on gender equality, Human Rights, disability, and environmental sustainability." However, the lack of monitoring mechanisms to assess the level of implementation and a clear implementing calendar makes recommendation 2 only partially met. In addition, commitment 13c still falls short in stating that resources must be committed to fulfil these goals and rights, and does not put forward incentives or any new indicators to track actual impact<sup>40</sup>.

Recommendation 4: This recommendation was partially met. On one hand, donor countries commit in the AAA to openness and transparency and making aid more predictable (paragraphs 24, 25, and 26). The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)—launched in Accra by the Netherlands and British governments and now has 18 donor signatories—has been working to develop a standard to secure these aims. However, how the results of this initiative will be integrated into the aid effectiveness official process remains a question<sup>41</sup>. On the other hand, although the AAA states that donors would seek to improve allocation of resources within sectors, within countries, and across countries, and commits them to addressing the issue of countries that receive insufficient aid (paragraph 17), the AAA introduces no concrete measures to improve aid allocation and there is no evidence that donors would move to act on this recommendation collectively. In addition, donor/developing countries and multilateral agencies did not commit on any concrete measure to improve aid allocations based on human rights commitments and people's needs. Moreover, as long as economic, foreign policy, and other interests are the primary drivers of the provision of aid, uneven and inefficient aid allocations will continue<sup>42</sup>.

40 - BetterAid (2009:6): See footnote 34.

41 - BetterAid (2009:7): See footnote 34.

42 - BetterAid (2009:13): See footnote 34.

Recommendation 8: This recommendation was partially met. Only one representative from a women's rights organisation was invited to participate in the WP-EFF regular meetings<sup>43</sup>; as such, a voice was given to civil society at the aid effectiveness official process. However, it is important to highlight that the AAA recognises the role of CSOs as independent development actors in their own right (paragraph 20) and commits donors to working with CSOs to provide the enabling conditions to maximise their effectiveness. Nevertheless, much work is required to improve the enabling conditions for CSO development effectiveness. CSOs have urged their respective governments to create legal frameworks and mechanisms, which provide for freedom of association, the right to organise and participate in national decision-making processes, and a free and open media. The need to establish and protect such frameworks is particularly acute in countries in which CSO work is increasingly being curtailed and even criminalised. In addition, CSOs, including women's organisations, also need predictable, regular, and systematic long-term funding not only from donors but also from progressive Southern governments. New funding modalities should be explored to provide this support<sup>44</sup>.

Recommendation 10: Although this recommendation is not directly addressed within the AAA commitments, AAA paragraph 8 somewhat covers the women's group demand: *"Developing country governments will take stronger leadership of their own development policies, and will engage with their parliaments and citizens in shaping those policies. Donors will support them by respecting countries' priorities, investing in their human resources and institutions, making greater use of their systems to deliver aid, and increasing the predictability of aid flows."* Women's groups expect that developing country women's machineries will benefit indirectly in those countries where they are established. In addition, AAA commitment by developing countries to *"strengthen the quality of policy design, implementation, and assessment by improving information systems, including, as appropriate, disaggregating data by sex, region, and socioeconomic status"* (paragraph 21a), could also be a step closer to recommendation 10.

Recommendation 14: With AAA paragraph 21b, donor/developing countries and multilateral agencies partially met women's group's recommendation 14, which, among other requests, asks for the involvement of women in peace-building processes (in line with UNSCR 1325). Thus, paragraph 21b calls for helping *"to ensure the protection and participation of women in a set of realistic peace- and state-building objectives that address the root causes of conflict and fragility."* However, again, with this commitment donor/developing countries and multilateral agencies do not put forward incentives or any new indicators to track the impact of this initiative.

Despite progress made, in order to continue to push for gender equality and women's rights, women's groups now have to build on this process and this agenda setting effort for Accra and continue mobilising for the next HLF (HLF-4) that will take place in Busan, South Korea in the end of November 2011. There are several ways to do this. There is the possibility to be part of the preparations for the HLF-4, and also to be part of the mobilisations and advocacy actions promoted by the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development (WWG on FfD) at the UN level, particularly around the DCF. There are also other multilateral policy spaces that can and should complement these efforts, such as processes towards the Rio+20 Earth Summit and its UN Conference on Sustainable Development<sup>45</sup> that will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2012.

The development agenda and its relation with development cooperation in 2011–2012 present an opportunity for women's groups to recover a more substantial approach to development beyond the MDGs, and to reposition the women's movement in the multilateral arena promoting development debates and mechanisms for international cooperation that fully integrates women's rights and women's groups' visions and proposals.

43 - However, it is important to clarify here that it was the Better Aid Coordinating Group who decided internally to be represented at the WP-EFF by one Southern non-governmental organisation (NGO), IBON, and one women's rights organisation, AWID. The WP-EFF process covers all expenditures related to their participation at WP-EFF meetings.

44 - BetterAid (2009: 8): See footnote 34.

45 - More info about Rio+20 here: [www.uncsd2012.org/](http://www.uncsd2012.org/)



# WHY SHOULD WOMEN'S RIGHTS GROUPS CARE ABOUT THE AID EFFECTIVENESS AGENDA? WHAT IS AT STAKE FOR WOMEN AND GENDER JUSTICE?

**GOAL: To promote a new framework for development cooperation from a women's rights perspective** that includes: i) Human Rights, including environmental, economic, social and cultural rights, with an integrated gender approach; ii) A truly democratic, inclusive, and multi-stakeholder approach ensuring participation of women's rights organisations; iii) systematic coherence among global policies, including fulfilment of women's rights frameworks and just global governance; and iv) the goal to eradicate the root causes of poverty and structural inequalities.

## **The Paris Declaration and the AAA are still gender blind!**

Within these documents no measures to promote women's rights, gender equality, or human rights standards are proposed or acknowledged through impact assessments or any other measures. Hence, gender sensitive and gender specific indicators measuring progress on development effectiveness outcomes must be integrated into development cooperation processes.

## **Women's rights and gender equality are often not reflected in national development plans!**

The new aid architecture is designed to align aid to nationally-determined development priorities—severely problematic in some government contexts where gender-sensitive strategies are neither practiced nor promoted. Alignment with a country's priorities, while desirable in theory, can negatively impact the lives of women and hinder the achievement of key development commitments when implemented in political contexts characterised by gender inequality and human rights violations, for example. In sum, developing countries' priorities and development plans must be aligned with international and regional agreements on human rights and gender equality (including the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW), with no policy conditionalities and no tied aid.

## **Government actions alone will not reduce poverty adversely affecting women!**

The Aid Effectiveness agenda focuses on institutional reforms in government for a more effective and efficient aid system, instead of on conditions for effective and sustainable development and for democratising the international cooperation processes. We call for a broader vision of development cooperation promoting development effectiveness for all.

## **Preserve the strategic roles that CSOs play for women!**

Civil society and women's rights organisations have little space to influence the Aid Effectiveness process. Their contributions and roles as key development actors are essential for creating a climate of social, political, and economic change and reducing poverty, social inequality, and gender inequality. Furthermore, predictable, long-term and diversified funding for women's organisations promoting gender equality and women's rights should be ensured.

## **The PD is another effort to agree on international targets and indicators (such as the MDGs) for aid effectiveness.**

The PD agenda was defined by donors (at the OECD) and the current Aid Effectiveness process is being monitored by indicators developed by the World Bank (WB). Where are the voices and contributions of women's organisations and other CSOs in this context? Why should international development priorities be agreed at the OECD instead of at a multilateral/multi-stakeholders' forum such as the UN?

Nowadays, civil society groups and several development actors understand development effectiveness (not aid effectiveness) as a more comprehensive framework for development cooperation. As women's rights activists we should aim for a shift in the development cooperation system and the aid effectiveness paradigm towards an inclusive, sustainable, and just paradigm. The ultimate goal is to contribute to social justice and engage substantively in building participatory democracies at the local, national, regional, and global levels, towards a more equal and inclusive global governance system.



## **ABOUT THIS PRIMER**

Primer #8: The Accra Agenda for Action: A brief review from a women's rights perspective  
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND WOMEN'S RIGHT SERIES

Primer 8 provides an overview of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness as well as an analysis, from a gender equality and women's rights perspective, of its outcome document: the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA).