

Regional Consultative Meeting on Aid Effectiveness: Opportunities and Challenges in the Implementation of the Paris Declaration (PD) and Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) in Africa held in Yaoundé, Cameroun on 30th – 31st May 2011

DECLARATION

We, the Participants at a Regional Consultative Meeting on *“Aid Effectiveness: Opportunities and Challenges in the Implementation of the Paris Declaration (PD) and Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) in Africa”* held in Yaoundé, Cameroun on 30th – 31st May 2011;

Having come together as African women’s rights and civil society organisations and networks, in the spirit of partnership as key actors working on gender equality and women’s empowerment and development effectiveness from twelve (12) countries in Africa;

Reaffirming that if Africa is to see fundamental change in the quality of life of its citizens the global aid architecture and its motivation has to shift to be more focused and inclined towards the achievement of development effectiveness that promotes gender equality and women’s rights as central pillars to democratic ownership, good governance, and sustainable development;

Noting that as a result of the adoption of the Paris Declaration in 2005 and later the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) in 2008 aid recipient countries in Africa and their donor partners have taken several steps, measures and actions to work towards the achievement of the goals and targets articulated therein albeit facing a number of challenges as indicated below under each of the five principles;

Concerned that the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action have so far failed to address important issues including the empowerment of African women in the socio-economic and political fields, and the aid architecture has remained weak partly due to the disabling macroeconomic frameworks, and poor national accountability systems of Africa governments to their citizens;

And also lamenting that the cosmetic involvement of women in the development and design of national plans and their implementation and evaluation has resulted into minimal direct benefits to African women in particular, with regard to the implementation of the aid effectiveness agenda;

We therefore, took cognisance of the following concerns in this meeting:

1) Ownership

Despite the recognition in the AAA that aid effectiveness has to focus on the achievement of gender equality, human rights and environmental protection as cornerstones of sustainable development this has not led to significant increase in the participation of women in the development of national development plans. Gender equality and women’s empowerment issues still remain at the periphery. Furthermore the national development plans, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Programmes (PRSPs) across Africa, are still embedded in macroeconomic frameworks that are patriarchal, and loaded with neo-liberalism agendas that exacerbate the marginalisation of women. This has greatly compromised the national ownership of development agendas by women generally.

The low levels of democratic ownership of the development plans, has not only led to the hijacking of the development agenda by the political class, it has also compromised the process of building national consensus on the development priorities. Each political party pushes its own agenda when in power. The situation is compounded by development partners who are more interested in promoting the interests of their governments as opposed to responding effectively to the needs of the recipient country and hence creating problems of continuity.

Recognition of women’s rights to equal and equitable participation in the development of national development plans, its implementation and evaluation at all levels should ensure that the policies and practices of the aid

recipient countries and the donor partners do not in any way hinder the realization of these rights instead they should support the implementation of policies and programmes that address gender inequities.

2) Alignment

Whereas efforts have been made by some development partners to align to country's national development strategies, institutions and procedures, evidence on the ground show limited impact in addressing the patriarchal macro economic frameworks. The alignment process has been focused more on procedural issues with no efforts directed towards addressing key concerns for women of Africa including mitigating the effects of neo-liberalism and privatisation.

Future alignment processes including the capacity building efforts must move beyond managing systems and procedures of aid delivery and spur reforms in the macroeconomic policy content. It must also be implemented within the context of anchoring women priorities as integrated in the national development plans.

3) Harmonisation

The multiple harmonisation efforts have not resulted into tangible outcomes for African governments particularly on marginalised women. There still exists multiple funding mechanisms including budget support, basket funding, project funding, Project Implementation Units, to mention a few. These are not necessarily selected and implementation based on the high potential they have to achieve the development outcomes set out in the recipient country's development plans including the targets for achieving the empowerment and advancement of women. Aid still remains volatile and highly unpredictable, thereby jeopardising programs and initiatives towards women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming. Mechanisms such as division of labour among the representatives of donors have failed to achieve their intended outcomes due to the overarching interests of each donor country or organisation that continue to supercede the achievement of the development priorities and needs of the people for which development aid is intended to mitigate.

4) Managing for results

Management for results must go beyond indicators and address issue of gender equality, women's empowerment and advancement. Key empowerment indicators including, gender equity, provision of social safety nets, sustainable and decent employment, enabling environment for democratic ownership must be at the core for management for result. In the evaluation of results, efforts should be made on obtaining disaggregated data and its proper analysis to measure the impact on marginalised women. The current indicators need to go beyond the issues of management and delivery of aid to include an assessment of the social changes taking place which are longer term in nature.

5) Mutual Accountability

The current concept of mutual accountability between governments and donors is limited and is in itself a bottleneck that has denied key actors, particularly citizens and parliamentarians, access to aid information. The failure of governments to account to its citizens and failure of donors to account to the recipient country's citizens on the levels of aid flows and their streams into different sectors makes it impossible for citizen to monitor and demand for accountability for aid resources and their effective use. The current skewed information flows and accountability makes it particularly difficult for civil society actors like women rights organisations and networks working to promote the interests of poor and vulnerable people and communities to participate in meaningful advocacy at different levels.

We therefore, declare the following that;

African Governments

1. Promote the democratic ownership principle

African Women must be at the centre of all development programmes and projects. Democratic ownership must recognise the importance of women organization and networks as full and equal participants in all development processes. We urge African governments to initiate processes and institutions that mobilise and transform the voices of the hundreds of million of women across the continent into meaningful and relevant development agendas. Furthermore governments must develop a national development agenda that transcends the electoral cycles and political interests of the ruling elite. Development plans must eliminate poverty, empower communities

to take charge of their development and the voices of the most poor and vulnerable in Africa who are women and children, should be positioned to influence development processes to work and deliver development effectiveness – meaning transformed lives and sustainable development.

2. Fulfil Human and Women Rights

Respect, protect and fulfil human and women's rights as stipulated in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and other international and regional human rights instruments including Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the Beijing Platform for Action. This shall be achieved by ensuring that women's rights are integrated in the national aid effectiveness reform agenda, national development plans including poverty reduction strategies, national legal frameworks and providing adequate financial and human resources within the development of national and sectoral budgets.

3. Generate and strengthen domestic revenue mobilization

African governments have to develop policies that will generate and strengthen domestic revenue mobilization and build a system for sustainable revenue mobilization to support the implementation of their development plans. They should identify the means to recoup the revenue losses caused by privatisation and neoliberalism and rectify the underlying weaknesses in tax policy and administration that have retarded progress over recent decades. They must further ensure that aid resources are efficiently and effectively applied to bring about sustainable development so that Africa does not remain dependent on aid

4. Improve the Operating Environment of CSOs in Africa

Governments must demonstrate their commitment to democratic governance, transparency and accountability by fully implementing the PD and AAA and national laws and policies on Access to Information as a strategy for enhancing citizens' informed participation and where such laws and policies are non-existent ensure that they are enacted. African governments have to guarantee the participation of CSOs in development processes through inclusive multi-stakeholder processes where citizens can give their opinion and enable them to raise grievances and seek redress.

5. Support domestic accountability

Domestic accountability remains paramount both in the context of aid effectiveness and development effectiveness. While the current focus remains skewed towards aid recipient countries' accountability without mutuality, efforts must be made for accountability to focus more towards horizontal accountability. African governments must be and seen to be more accountable to their citizens. Therefore, governments have to strengthen the use of the rights- based approach in their institutions and systems which promote domestic accountability across and among different actors. One way is to decisively deal with corruption in the national systems and institutions and ensure that perpetrators especially at the top level are made to account and this should be one of the ways of demonstrating their commitment to transparency and accountability in governance and development effectiveness

We urge Development Partners to:

6. Promote Country Ownership

Ensure that aid management and delivery is focussed on country priorities and sector strategies that are developed through a democratic, transparent and democratic process with participation of women and women groups. Better understanding and recognition of the roles of CSOs as development actors and as part of the international aid architecture is important for creating an enabling environment for their operation. Donors should encourage a tolerant environment where the rights of CSOs to criticize government and donor policies and are encouraged. CSO funding should not be compromised in this regard. The diversity of CSOs particularly those of women organizations and their contributions to the development process should be recognized, respected and promoted.

7. Demonstrate Commit to alignment and use of local technical assistance

Using country systems and local technical assistance should be considered as the default option. The support and use of the procurement laws and procedures of the aid recipient countries should be seen as a demonstrated commitment by donors to enhance institutional development and reduce transaction cost. Use of national systems for management and delivery of aid should not be the exception but the norm as this will facilitate achievement of long-term efficiency while at the same time ensuring the growth of local industries and companies particularly those that are owned by women or empower women.

8. Accelerate implementation for the AAA and PD

Commit to accelerate and redefine the implementation of the AAA and any agreed aid architecture within a multi-stakeholder framework because the AAA and PD have some important statements of good intent that should not end at the 4th High Level Forum, but must be promoted beyond the Busan meeting.

Signed this Tuesday the 31st of May, 2011 in Yaoundé, Cameroon by:

Signatories:

1. African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
2. Reality of Aid Network (RoA)
3. NETRIGHT Ghana
4. FEMNET Cameroon
5. Appui Conseil Femme Développement (ACFED)
6. Gender Studies and Human Rights Documentation Centre,
7. Women of Liberia Peace Network (WOLPNET)
8. ONG Dimol (Dignité)
9. Santé de la Reproduction d'une maternité sans risque Siège: Face Cour d'Appel
10. WILDAF-Nigeria
11. SIHA Network
12. Women for Change, Lusaka, Zambia
13. Women's Action Group
14. Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP)
15. Female Teachers League (LIFE Cameroon)
16. COSADER and National Alliance against Hunger
17. Liberty and Human Rights League (LDL)
18. Institut De Formation et de Coopération Pour Le Développement (IFCD)
19. FEMNET Mali