

**Review of trends and progress to make aid more transparent: Gender perspectives
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The outcome documents of both the Doha Review Conference on FfD and the Accra HLF on Aid Effectiveness reaffirmed the unequivocal demand for a universal and inclusive environment for discussions on development cooperation. I therefore wish to congratulate the DCF for incorporating gender equality as an integral component in its processes.

As a CSO representative working with a women's rights network – NETRIGHT and a member of the WWG on FfD, I will make my intervention from a gender perspective.

Transparency is one of the most important issues when we talk about accountability and openness in aid effectiveness. It is also essentially about emancipation of women and men through information: empowering people by showing them what decisions are made about aid, when and how. The ability to do this is critical: everyone from the local to the national, regional and international levels and from different socio-economic background should be able to see how much aid is provided, what it is spent on, and what it aims to achieve. Transparency is needed in the interests not only of accountability, but also of the overall effectiveness of aid.

Too many citizens in developing countries are unable to meet their basic needs because of how decision-makers have tended to ignore their concerns and because they have no way of holding them accountable to their responsibilities. The financial crisis for example is once again pointing to the ways in which inequalities are perpetuated when there is lack of accountability to marginalised groups such as women, the aged, and children. Transparency is important for the poor because if we are able to track how resources are being used we can demand that they specifically target those who need those resources most. Areas such as health, education, water and food are critical in this respect. At all levels and in all socio-economic sectors transparency helps ensure that aid is used in the most efficient way, so that resources can be used judiciously in fighting poverty and promoting gender equality.

I will therefore like to raise the following which are critical to aid transparency:

- 1) Access to information - civil society and citizens have very limited access to information that would enable them to participate in development processes more consistently or effectively i.e. planning (medium term development frameworks), budgets, monitoring frameworks, conditionality, performance assessment frameworks by donors of the government progress, annual progress reports, consultation processes, policies being developed: examples: Ghana (RTI - duration in bill for access problematic, Bangladesh (RTI - billed passed but you cannot questioned bilateral or IFIs contracts with the government)

2) Information gap: the increasing information gap we see in Ghana - for example who has access to the information that is being released. All of the above mentioned, information flows to donors before it flows to other government agencies, civil society and citizens. Another element of the information gap is who donors and government release the information to in civil society i.e. some policy advocacy groups known to government or international NGO's. For example Nicaragua, the government claims to disseminate information at the grassroots level, however it does that through the ruling party's structures.

Example of Burkina Faso ("Comparative study of data reported to the OECD CRS and the national AMP", OECD/Development Gateway, Rudolphe Petras, Oct 2009): France is the largest donor to Burkina and reported 129.9 million Euros in 2007 to the CRS and only 60.5 million Euros to the AMP. 70 millions difference! So, it is already difficult to access this information (who from us knows how to access the "CRS" and the "AMP")? and if we are able to access those databases, how can we reconcile those major differences?

3) Availability of information and timeliness: what information is made available and when - there are real issues about the depth of information provided to the public and the timeliness if government or donors want meaningful participation on consultations and national development processes - terms of engagement must be spelt out

4) Policy advocacy now takes place in a highly technocratic policy space with a very ambitious policy agenda spanning the economic, social and political spheres, with its associated time and financial demands, causes serious constraints. There are distinct skills and information needed. Building local capacity to hold governments accountable is very crucial in this. Gender budgeting initiatives and capacity building programmes for local councilors about their roles and responsibilities are very important in this respect.

5) Aid transparency does not automatically lead to mutual accountability - unless there is a shift in the focus of governments away from donors (in terms of accountability) and in the direction of accountability to citizens there will be little change- the assumptions about the relationship between the two are difficult - Democracy has become a business plan, with a bottom line and assumed result for every human activity - democracy is much messier than this

6) Transparency is important to ensure investments in development are effective, consistent and predictable. Without transparency, it will be difficult to track how resources are being used in order to demand that aid specifically target those who need those resources most. Areas such as health, education, water and food are critical in this respect.

7) At all levels and in all socio-economic sectors transparency helps ensure that aid is used in the most efficient way, so that resources can be used judiciously in fighting poverty and promoting gender equality.