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**THE PARIS DECLARATION ON AID EFFECTIVENESS
AND
GENDER EQUALITY**

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** The views expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.*

Introduction¹

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, agreed in March 2005, established principles and time-bound targets aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of aid and has set in train a considerable momentum at aid policy and implementation level. Participants include 35 donor countries and agencies, 26 multilateral agencies, 56 aid recipient countries and 14 civil society organisations. Additional countries and agencies have subsequently adhered to the provisions of the declaration. The intention is to improve aid processes and quality and to scale up aid in order to ‘*increase the impact of aid ...in reducing poverty and inequality, increasing growth, building capacity and accelerating achievement of the MDGs*’.²

The questions that this paper wishes to explore are:

- i. To what extent does the Paris Declaration address gender inequality and the empowerment of women?
- ii. What are the implications for gender equality in development cooperation for each of the five Paris Declaration principles?
- iii. What opportunities and challenges do the Paris Declaration agenda and the associated new aid modalities pose for gender equality and the empowerment of women?
- iv. What steps have been taken by donor and recipient countries to ensure a gender responsive implementation of the Paris Declaration, including in new modalities?
- v. What will we be able to say about the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and its impact on gender equality and women’s empowerment when the Paris Declaration is reviewed in Ghana in September, 2008?
- vi. What steps should be taken, and by whom, to ensure that gender equality is addressed in the follow-up processes to the Paris Declaration and leads to the hoped-for benefits for poor women and men?

Gender Equality and the Paris Declaration

Gender equality is not explicitly mentioned in the fifty-paragraph Paris Declaration document beyond a need for harmonisation efforts on cross cutting issues such as gender equality (paragraph 42). It is however implicit in the statement of resolve contained in paragraphs 1-2 which indicate that these reforms are intended to reduce poverty and inequality, increase growth, build capacity and accelerate achievement of the MDGs. There is now substantial empirical evidence of the functional necessity of gender equality and empowerment of women to these stated aims of the Paris Declaration. However, so far, donor and recipient country efforts have chiefly concentrated on technocratic efficiency dimensions of aid reform (mechanisms and processes or nuts and bolts) rather than address challenging values-based, issues such as gender equality (substance and results). The main ‘movers and shakers’ in furthering the Paris Declaration agenda are economists, technocrats, administrators and planners, rather than social development or gender advocates. To some extent, we have allowed this to happen, and must now work extra hard to catch up.

¹ This paper makes the case for addressing gender equality and women’s empowerment within the evolving Paris Declaration reforms, including new aid modalities and processes. It is argued that incorporating gender equality is functionally essential to effective aid reforms and that applying the Paris Declaration principles to work on gender equality and women’s empowerment will enable us to further these objectives. The paper also looks at what we have learnt so far and where we need to focus attention in order to provide the necessary evidence to influence ongoing aid and development reforms to incorporate gender dimensions.

² See paragraphs 1-2 of the Paris Declaration <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf>

The Paris Declaration is not a new or stand-alone agenda. Its principles are built on years of development experience on what does and does not work. Deconstructing the five principles of the Declaration shows, not surprisingly, considerable congruence with approaches that gender advocates have espoused for some time. There have now been several papers highlighting these connections including UNIFEM (March 2006); Gaynor (June 2006); Fleming et al for DFID (June 2007)³ so these are only briefly covered here. In practice these principles interact with one another. *Ownership* and *mutual accountability* are the bedrock that underpins *alignment* and *harmonisation*, while *managing for development results* focuses on impacts and outcomes of aid and development efforts.

The foundation principles i.e. '**Ownership**: *Partner countries take the lead in setting the development agenda*' goes beyond government/state ownership to include key stakeholders such as civil society organisations, parliamentarians and engaged citizens – women and men. The new aid processes and modalities must create adequate space and build capacities of all national stakeholders to determine development plans, priorities and strategies. As more than half of any countries citizens are women this cannot be done without involving them, the organisations that truly represent poor women and the drivers of change that lead to more equitable societies. So far, these stakeholders have not been significantly engaged in aid or development reforms of the Paris Declaration agenda. And there is much work to be done to make Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS) and other national development plans more meaningful to poor women, who make up the majority of the poor, of those who cannot read or write, of those discriminated against, and of those carrying the main burden of HIV/AIDS.

As was highlighted in the Paris Declaration Baseline Survey report⁴, the requirements and mechanisms for **Mutual Accountability**: *Donors and partners are accountable for development results*' are not currently well articulated. This is however familiar territory to advocates of gender equality who have much experience in working towards strong women-inclusive citizens voice and demand for accountability, with tools and approaches such as gender analysis, gender auditing systems and sex-disaggregated data to improve accountability mechanisms. There is much scope here for gender advocates to demystify and add value to this principle and, at the same time, to engage with the main country and agency performance assessment frameworks.

The principle of **Alignment** requires that '*donors base their overall support on partner countries' national development plans, institutions and procedures*'. This recognises that it is harmful to operate parallel structures and requires donors to work with and support improvements in partner countries institutions, systems, capacities and procedures to deliver what partners want i.e. their policies and commitments. This will not happen overnight of course and the baseline survey shows that there is much work to be done. Currently, energies focus chiefly on reform of public financial management (PFM) and of the public sector. This is an important dimension and one where gender activists already have a head start through, for example, gender responsive budgeting (GRB), which has helped to make budgets more responsive to the needs of citizens and the poor by disaggregation of needs impacts. Examples of successful GRB can be found in countries across the globe such as Afghanistan,

³ UNIFEM (March 2006) Promoting Gender Equality in New Aid Modalities and Partnerships; Gaynor for DAC Network on Gender Equality, op cit; and Fleming, Sue et al (June 2007) Conceptual Framework and Partnership Strategy: Background documents for Phase 2, DFID

⁴ See Chapter 3 of OECD (2007) 2006 Development Cooperation Report for preliminary findings, or country and agency specific reports for more detail, from the 2006 baseline survey on monitoring the Paris Declaration.

Brazil, Morocco and Tanzania. But stronger linkages are needed between those who support GRB and those working on PFM, to ensure more mainstream uptake of these tools. It will be important too to ensure that women benefit from and that gender equality is incorporated in the capacity development programmes that are part of implementing this principle. A further dimension is ensuring that gender policies and commitments such as the Beijing Platform of Action and CEDAW are included in the base to which donors align.

Harmonisation: *'Donors' actions are more harmonised, transparent and collectively effective'* requires donors to act together, and is giving rise to new aid modalities and processes that need to be influenced to incorporate gender equality. Sector wide approaches (SWAp) have been around for some time but there is now increased division of labour and donor specialisation across and between sectors. New mechanisms such as Joint Assistance Strategies have emerged in a number of countries e.g. Zambia and Uganda. But attention paid by recipient and donor countries so far on how to address critical issues which cut across these sectors, such as gender equality, has been poor. Such changes have far reaching implications for the competencies and incentives prioritised by recipient and donor countries for their aid and development specialists. These JAS and other division of labour mechanisms need to be explicit on responsibilities for gender equality and other key dimensions. And we need to monitor carefully how these are treated (e.g. gender is regarded as a sector in Zambia JAS but as a cross cutting issue in Tanzania JAS), what are the implications and what safeguards might be needed to ensure that these priority issues are not sidelined. Increased coordination and harmonisation in donor agencies approaches to support gender equality and empowerment of women would help advance these issues further and faster.

Managing for development results requires all to *manage resources and improve decision-making for results*. We cannot have development results (effectiveness) without making progress on gender equality and empowerment of women. The 2006 PD Baseline Survey indicates that just over one quarter of countries have established performance assessment frameworks and that there is scope for improvement in collection, analysis and feedback of data on interim results and impacts into policy and programme development. Experience from work on gender equality can contribute to improvements at country level by utilising expertise on collection and analysis of qualitative data, by tracking sex-disaggregated development outcomes, by advocating for strategic gender-responsive indicators in PAF and by strengthening mechanisms for feeding data into decision makers. In Zambia, gender has been incorporated in the Performance Assessment Framework related to General Budget Support and it has been agreed to undertake a gender audit every two years in priority sectors.

Steps taken to ensure a gender responsive implementation of the Paris Declaration

As the above short deconstruction of the five principles with respect to gender equality shows there are many entry points in the PD agenda and new aid modalities for gender equality to add value in realisation of aid and development effectiveness. We need to ask ourselves why this has not happened more already. While there is early evidence of discussion and analysis of the implications of the Paris Declaration and new aid modalities for gender equality and women's empowerment (e.g. the UNIFEM/EC conference on the theme in Brussels in November 2005 and Joint meeting of Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality in Nairobi in January 2006), the agenda meantime rolled out and much of this was done by technocrats and without active engagement of gender specialists at macro level or during in country implementation.

Donor agency formal responses to the Paris Declaration and websites on aid effectiveness suggest that few connections were made before 2006 between these issues and gender equality. Talking to social and gender specialists in agencies at headquarters and field level, they indicate that they did not participate in early work on the new aid architecture. The PD agenda was the remit of a rather select group and gender specialists did not make early connections. For example, the declaration itself and the twelve indicators for monitoring it were in place before we critiqued them, while in developing Joint Assistance Strategies there does not appear to have been a significant input on gender equality issues in countries such as Zambia (where gender was decidedly not a ‘darling’ sector) or Tanzania where comments from agencies to an early draft of the JAS are devoid of gender equality content.

Monitoring and Evaluation of progress and impact of new aid modalities

The Paris Declaration has a set of indicators (12) and targets to monitor and evaluate progress. A baseline monitoring survey was conducted in 2006 involving 31 countries. While the current set of indicators and targets are not gender responsive and the baseline survey focused chiefly on partnership building blocks and management capacity, some of the indicators could be expanded to incorporate gender dimensions. And even as it stands, information from this survey can help gender specialists identify where they can add value. Some examples are suggested in earlier paragraphs of this paper related to Paris Declaration principles.

An evaluation is underway, led by the DAC Evaluation Network, which will look at lessons to date from implementation of the Paris Declaration, and development outcomes. While gender equality is not explicitly addressed in phase 1 of this evaluation, there may be scope within country-led evaluations and donor evaluations to address such issues. Furthermore there may be possibility to augment Phase Two of the evaluation with thematic studies, for example, on gender equality and women’s empowerment. But this is likely to require advocacy work.

What evidence do we have for the High Level Forum in Ghana?

Much has changed over the last year and there is now more (though not yet sufficient) guidance for gender advocates in donor and recipient countries on how to engage and where we can add value to this agenda. As well as the fora indicated in section 10 above, the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNIFEM (as well as some other multilateral and bilateral agencies) have been active in disseminating information on the Paris Declaration at regional and country level and to key stakeholders⁵. The OECD-DAC held a dedicated workshop on ‘Development Effectiveness in Practice: Applying the Paris Declaration to Advancing Gender Equality, Environmental Sustainability and Human Rights’ in Dublin, April 2007. This event brought together representatives from the Aid Effectiveness Working Party and the three DAC networks dedicated to these issues, practitioners from donor agency headquarters and field, recipient government and civil society organisation representatives. Through case studies, it showed the value added that gender equality (and environmentally aware and rights focused) tools and approaches can bring to work on effectiveness; it provided a forum for voicing concerns about space to influence the agenda and it gave a wake-up call to the collective assembly to engage more actively, to monitor more carefully,

⁵ See, for example, report from a workshop organised by DFID, UNIFEM and The World Bank in South East Asia: Eyben R et al (April 2007) *Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness Challenges and Opportunities for International Practice: Experiences from South East Asia*.

gather evidence and prepare to influence upcoming key events, such as the Third High Level Forum (HLF) in Ghana in September 2008⁶. This momentum needs to be kept going in meetings of the Aid Effectiveness Working Party, in the DAC Networks and amongst their members, as well as the HLF3 Steering Committee to ensure a high profile for these issues at Ghana.

Another key forum for action on gender equality and the Paris Declaration is that of civil society. One such is the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness created to include CSOs' perspectives in preparation for HLF3 in Ghana. The Dublin workshop explored possible avenues to maximise the space and impact created through this forum. Other civil society initiatives include, for example, work undertaken by the Gender and Development Network exploring what is happening to civil society organisations who work on gender equality under the new aid environment. The findings should be available soon and can inform country-level and macro-level influencing strategies.⁷

Other key initiatives which help take forward the agenda include the planned Mapping Studies of the EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace. The objective of the mapping studies (covering 12 countries) is to provide baseline information on gender, national development planning, and the aid effectiveness agenda. The mapping studies will identify a set of indicators that can be used to assess and monitor the extent to which new aid modalities take into account gender equality and women's empowerment and the intention is to use this to identify entry points for multi-stakeholder groups to secure greater commitment to gender equalities in countries and at HLF3 in Ghana in September 2008. One particularly valuable feature of this exercise is that it makes links with the existing Paris Declaration twelve monitoring indicators and brings out the gender dimensions of these or otherwise complements their focus. The future challenge will be to have these dimensions incorporated in on-going PD monitoring surveys.

Another initiative aimed at gathering evidence and spurring action at field level is a research project launched by DFID, with support from other donors, to generate an evidence base for HLF3 in Ghana and to provide practical recommendations to strengthen the poverty impact of the Paris Declaration through attention to gender equality, human rights and social exclusion. This project offers opportunities for in-country and cross-country collaboration on experiences and identification of lessons and good practice. Phase One of the project has produced a Conceptual Framework and Partnership Strategy and includes a literature review which identifies processes and entry points with which to engage and influence, including the aid effectiveness Working Group of the Strategic Partnership for Africa and the international conference on Financing for Development in Doha in October 2008, which this meeting will feed into.⁸

The European Commission and Member States have committed to promotion of wide discussions with partner countries and other donors on complementarity and division of labour, based on the EU Code of Conduct (March 2007). Guiding Principle 1 recommends that in their selected sectors, donors should mainstream crosscutting issues. It proposes (paragraph 15) that there should be case studies on cross-sectoral issues in the follow up and review report. This is an opportunity to engage with.

⁶ Key messages and summary record from the workshop can be accessed from www.oecd.org/dac/gender

⁷ See www.gadnetwork.org.uk for research report forthcoming in Autumn 2007

⁸ Fleming, Sue et al (June 2007) Conceptual Framework and Partnership Strategy: Background documents for Phase 2, DFID

Over and above these special initiatives, the approach of recipient countries and of donor agencies to engage citizens, ministries and staff of agencies more widely in addressing gender dimensions of the Paris Declaration agenda has, so far, been fragmented and insufficient. Given that gender specialists have only recently focused on making these connections explicit, this is perhaps not surprising but we should not lose any more time. Several bilateral agencies have had recent workshops and seminars for their gender advisors/focal points on the Paris Declaration and relevance to them (e.g. Finland and Netherlands), and more are planned (e.g. Denmark). Canada has provided guidance sheets for practitioners in the field and some have interactive websites and discussion fora. OECD DAC Networks, including that on gender equality, have supported analytical papers and guidance on the Paris Declaration, gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability. Departments in the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs concerned with these three areas prepared a joint memorandum prior to the Dublin workshop committing their energies to working horizontally and collaboratively rather than singly to advance these issues in implementation of the Paris Declaration.

Next steps and by whom

Work remains to raise awareness and influence countries, particularly those which are leading the process on aid effectiveness, to address gender equality in emerging aid modalities and processes and to monitor impacts. In line with the Paris Declaration this is best done collaboratively and through agreement between recipient governments and in-country donors. It should engage civil and private sectors, parliamentarians, the media and women's groups as well as line ministries and decentralised levels of government.

The aid environment has changed considerably and there is need for gender advisors in donor agencies, in central and line ministries and in civil society to acquire the language, skills and approaches to be effective in this new environment. Donors need to support and create demand for such training within their capacity building plans and programmes.

We need to review our influencing strategies and approaches. For example, one sentiment strongly expressed at the Dublin workshop was that calling fundamental cornerstones for effective development, such as gender equality, 'cross cutting issues' may not speak adequately to those we want to influence. We need to assemble the evidence and present these priority issues as, in the words of Richard Carey, Director, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD *'functionally essential to achieving the overall goal of the Paris Declaration'*.

The Paris Declaration is also about scaling up of aid. So far the money has not matched commitments. We need to advocate for living up to commitments made within donor agencies. But we also need to improve accountability and tracking of expenditure on gender equality and women's empowerment. Tracking is something that the DAC Network on Gender Equality is attempting to simplify, together with the DAC Working Party on Statistics. But there is need also to foster this culture of tracking donor agency budgets as well as national recipient budgets with respect to gender responsiveness.

Donor agencies that engage in specialisation and division of labour through new aid modalities, such as Joint Assistance Strategies, should ensure that their decision-making and future recruitment of staff is guided by their gender policies and commitments and informed

by adequate country and sector level gender analysis. Gender specialists need to anticipate and advise on how to minimise the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that new modalities and processes provide.

The Paris Declaration offers five essential principles that will enable us to be more effective in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. We should engage actively in implementing them, while also showing that gender specialists have an understanding and tools that can do much to deconstruct these principles and advance their practical implementation.

We should continue with the spirit of the Dublin conference and collaborate with colleagues who work on other key areas of development such as human rights and environmental sustainability to add essential qualitative dimensions to implementation of the Paris Declaration principles and to ensure that there is attention to development policy and not just efficiency in aid reforms. This will require colleagues within agencies – multilateral and bilateral to break down 'silos' – something easier said than done but which will only happen through experimentation and incremental steps. The Nordic Plus partners might take a lead on this.

Ultimately addressing gender equality and women's empowerment is challenging. There will always be tension between those who want to detach the technical elements of aid reform from messier, value-driven areas such as gender equality and those who believe that substance cannot be divorced from practicalities when the end goal is development. We don't want a super-duper aid machine that can travel at high speeds if this means that women cannot get on board and whole sections of society get left out. We have to show the designers and architects of aid reforms that we can add value to these new mechanisms to complement the very essential work they are doing on developing a smooth running, fuel efficient and well directed machine. This will require from us anticipation, engagement, collaboration, identification of particular value-added, gathering evidence and presenting this in a timely and user friendly fashion to influence the main agendas. Sounds much like business as usual but there is an opportunity now, provided through this Paris Declaration agenda, to influence structures and institutions – something we know is critical for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Paris Declaration needs gender expertise in order to realise its principles, while we can help advance gender equality and women's empowerment by working with these principles.