

CSO Hearings of the 9th April 2015

Intervention at the Roundtable Discussion 2 on “International public finance, including ODA and innovative sources of finance”

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My name is Mbathio Samb, I am part of the DAWN team and I am speaking on behalf of the Women’s Working Group on Financing for Development.

In times where economic inequalities among and within countries are increasing and worsen by structural patterns of intersecting social, geographical and economic inequalities (for instance based on gender, age, race, etc.), the principle of international cooperation remains a key duty of developed countries in the framework of the global partnership for development. While welcoming the reference in the FfD Zero Draft to increase the Official Development Assistance (ODA) by 2020 (para 56), I would like to highlight several concerns: 1) The need to ensure additionality and predictability of ODA flows, 2) the need to remove policy conditionality and strengthen ownership of development strategies 3) the need to agree on strong regulation and accountability mechanism before promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships and 4) the need to enhance the role of the UN in the monitoring and compliance of development cooperation commitments.

1. Ensure additionally and predictability of ODA flows

Studies have shown that development cooperation is decreasing in countries with large numbers of people living in poverty, that there is an insufficient priority given to and significant underinvestment in gender equality and in the realization of the human rights of women and girls (see the CRS Report: Aid in support of gender equality and women's empowerment or CSW58 para 38). Moreover, it is important to draw attention to the volatility of development assistance flows as well as the new attempts to change the definition of ODA

with the aim to inflating aid or leverage private sector (i.e para 58), or including various types of costs or shuffling funds from an old to a new item without any real topping up of finances or counting debt relief as part of ODA should be avoided. Those trends are likely to negatively influence the capacity of developing countries to achieve long-term equitable and sustainable development patterns. So at the FfD Conference developed countries should “commit” to meet the 0.7% of GNI by 2020 with clear and “binding” timetables. Additionally, the share of ODA for achieving gender equality and women’s human rights should be scaled up ensuring that there are year-to-year increases by some agreed upon level and new and additional official funding should be secured to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As well, the increase in ODA should not lead to a cycle of debt for the recipient country but it should rather fall in its grant component instead of in the loan component.

2. Remove policy conditionalities and strengthen ownership of the development strategies for Developing countries including LDCs, MICs, etc

It is important to remember that Developing Countries including MICs, LDCs, and others can no longer bear the conditionalities of aid which to some extent hijack their policy space to pursue structural transformation towards sustainable, equitable and gender-just development patterns. For instance, macroeconomic conditions associated with ODA impose constraints for tax and monetary policy which have a detrimental effect on equitable development. Ownership of the process of development aid negotiations by debtor countries and inclusive and meaningful participation of civil society organizations is of paramount importance. Moreover, ODA processes must uphold the mutual responsibility and obligations of governments to fulfil existing internationally agreed development agendas and goals included in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA), the Program of Action of the International

Conference on Population and Development (PAICPD), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), among others, without resorting to impositions and conditionalities within the narrow framework of aid giving. So we support the reference in the FfD Zero Draft “to fully untying aid, strengthening its results orientation and use of country systems” (Para 72). However without an explicit commitment to set up an inter-governmental accountability and follow up mechanism, this remains rhetoric. Country development planning systems must be strengthened and engendered for more effective use of development support.

3. Agree on strong regulation and accountability mechanism before promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships

The Principle of International Cooperation and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities is eroded when at the “international public finance” chapter of the FfD Zero Draft paragraphs to promote multi-stakeholders partnerships in specific areas such as health, education and food (Para 69, 70, 71) are included. These partnerships with private sector usually promote vertical approaches without a clear link with human rights obligations, comprehensive development agendas which include national and regional strategies. In addition, this is more serious when they are not discussed and approved by governments in an intergovernmental space at the UN and since it depends on voluntary commitments from private and corporate sector, its funding is unpredictable and volatile. Before promoting the multi-stakeholders approach, it is necessary to establish an open, transparent, and participatory intergovernmental space for oversight, monitoring and review of any partnership developed within the framework of the UN. It should set criteria for eligibility as well as dismissal taking into account accountability, gender equality, human rights and environmental ex-ante assessment and appropriate safeguards principles to reduce risk and long-term costs and to ensure that target beneficiaries are being met. It should be supported by public disclosure and conflict of interest policies.

4. Enhance the role of the United Nations in the Coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the compliance to and quality of development cooperation commitments

The establishment of a framework for monitoring and evaluation of compliance to and quality of donor countries' commitments proves to be more than necessary to make them binding. Moreover, such a framework will facilitate: (a) monitoring that what is not ODA is not recognized as such to avoid swelling the numbers without reaching commitments; (b) centralizing coordination of ODA for the purposes of assessing the achievement of SDGs; (c) avoiding duplication and overlap; (d) ensure additionality and build overall consistency. The definition of gender-sensitive indicators, tools and quality assessment methodology and effectiveness of the contribution of aid on development is needed to make ODA as inclusive and participatory as possible. The impact of ODA to reduce structural inequalities, including gender inequality and poverty must be demonstrated at all level while remaining within the framework of respect for the key principles of transparency and accountability under the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum.

Thank you very much.
