

Civil society voices for  
**Better Aid**

CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS FOR CONCRETE COMMITMENTS ON AID  
EFFECTIVENESS AT OECD HIGH LEVEL FORUM

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In the first week of September, more than 800 representatives of multilateral and bilateral donors, developed and developing country governments, and civil society organisations (CSOs) will gather in Accra, Ghana, for the OECD-DAC (Development Assistance Committee)'s Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2-4 September). Just prior to the forum, a civil society parallel Aid Effectiveness Forum will bring together more than 400 CSOs from 30 August to 1 September, to discuss and finalise their recommendations to the High Level Forum (HLF) decision-makers.

At the last High Level Forum, held in Paris in March 2005, donors and governments signed onto "The Paris Declaration", a five-year plan for reform of aid practices that includes five principles to make aid delivery effective – country ownership, alignment to country priorities, harmonisation of the terms for aid, management of aid for results, and mutual accountability for these results – with related goals for action. The Accra High Level Forum will review progress on these commitments, but equally importantly, the Forum may also establish an agenda for deepening these reforms over the next two years, leading to a successor Declaration to be agreed in 2011 in Beijing, China.

**The Reality of Aid Secretariat noted in its 2008 report, "The reality of aid in 2008 is that it continues to fail to promote human development for the eradication of poverty, based on the core values of human rights, democracy, gender equality and environmental sustainability. This is despite the appearance of progress in the form of high-profile debt cancellations, new aid pledges, and the signing of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness."**

The only real test of the effectiveness of aid is its development impact – real changes in the lives and rights of millions of people affected by poverty and inequality. Whether donors and governments will deliver on these critical areas remains an open question.

Civil society welcomed the Paris Declaration and its principles, but questions its narrow and limited focus on technical reform of aid delivery – the efficiency of moving money from donor accounts to those of governments in developing countries. Experiences of aid on the ground raise questions as to whether much has actually changed in aid practice, pointing to weak commitments to untie aid, persistent high numbers of conflicting policy conditions

attached to aid, and limited use of developing country systems. They have called for deeper and more far-reaching aid reform and its measurement.

**"Collaboration on development strategies that includes civil society organisations and other key actors could help achieve the principles of alignment and harmonisation while preserving the rich and powerful diversity that comes with a range of local development participants," said Sam Worthington, InterAction President & CEO.**

Some issues remain unaddressed. **"The Paris Declaration has not given the necessary relevance to gender equality and women's empowerment issues. Gender responsive budgeting should be part and parcel of the aid effectiveness agenda at the High level Forum, because less funding impacts on progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment at country level, especially in Africa,"** said Norah Matovu-Winyi, the Executive Director of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET).

The signs are not good. When donors and governments come together in Accra to measure their progress, for example, there is not one single indicator that explicitly relates aid reform measures to improvements in human development, in gender equality and women's rights, or in the ability of people to claim their rights.

**Kumi Naidoo, Honorary President of CIVICUS: World Alliance For Citizen Participation, commented, "The CSOs gathered in the parallel CSO Forum and the 80 accredited CSO delegates to the HLF, while very critical of progress to date, will be pushing for real aid reform, measures for aid effectiveness that give opportunity to citizens of donor and developing countries to reclaim their democratic mandate to have a say on global public goods and to control their future development."**

The High Level Forum in September is a unique opportunity to set in motion ambitious actions for meaningful aid reform. We, **civil society organisations in support of Better Aid**, have high expectations of the donors and government officials who will gather in Accra in early September.

We need to see concrete commitments to positive reform. After all, the point of aid effectiveness is not aid efficiency or donor harmonisation, but real progress towards sustainable development.

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## Notes to Editors

Since January 2007, CSO networks have worked in an International CSO Steering Group (ISG) to coordinate CSO analysis, proposals and plans for the HLF. The ISG maintains a website, [www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org), as a portal for CSO initiatives on aid effectiveness, including a Policy Paper signed onto by more than 350 CSOs on aid and development effectiveness reform. The ISG have been meeting with the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, based at the OECD DAC, setting out CSO concerns and proposals for the Accra HLF.

Members of the ISG are ActionAid International, Afrodad, American Council for Voluntary International Action (InterAction), Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND), Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), BOND (UK Aid Network), Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), Caritas/Cordaid, CIVICUS, CONCORD (European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development), Eurodad, Ghana CSO Aid Effectiveness Forum, IBIS, IBON Foundation, IPS, ITUC, LDC Watch, SEND (Social Enterprise Development Foundation of West Africa), Reality of Aid, Social Watch, Third World Network, Network Women in Development Europe (WIDE).

CSOs are promoting a deepening of the aid effectiveness agenda, so that it addresses the concerns of all stakeholders in the development process. They argue that the only true measures of aid's effectiveness are its contribution to the sustained reduction of poverty and inequalities; and its support of human rights, democracy, environmental sustainability and gender equality.

CSOs consider aid effectiveness one of a triad of key issues in development financing – the other two key issues being debt cancellation to end the debt crisis in developing countries, and for rich countries to meet their commitments to give 0.7% of GNI as Official Development Assistance (ODA).

More at: [www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org) and [www.aefgh.org](http://www.aefgh.org)