



## Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness and Beyond: What next for Gender Equality, Women's Rights and Aid Effectiveness?<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this briefing note is to:

- Share information about the Fourth High-Level Forum (HLF-4) on Aid Effectiveness that will take place in Busan, South Korea in November 2011 and its implications for gender equality and women's rights
- Support women's organisations and gender equality advocates to engage with and influence the debates leading up to HLF-4 and beyond

### Introduction

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In 2005, the **Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness** (PD) committed governments to improve the effectiveness of aid delivery in a timely and coordinated way. It put in place a series of specific implementation measures and established a monitoring system to assess progress and ensure that donors and recipients of aid hold each other accountable for their commitments.

Three years later, the 2008 **Accra Agenda for Action** (AAA) set out to strengthen and deepen implementation of these commitments and accelerate progress. The **Fourth High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness** (HLF-4) that will take place in Busan, South Korea, from 29<sup>th</sup> November – 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 will look back at progress made in implementing the Paris and Accra agendas and forwards at a new or amended framework for delivering aid. The HLF-4 therefore represents a critical juncture in the global aid effectiveness and development co-operation agenda.

From the outset, women's rights advocates have voiced their concern at the largely gender-blind Paris Declaration and the overly technical and opaque language and processes surrounding it, which they say ignore the political dimensions of aid. Research has also raised questions about the impact that changes in the approaches to delivering aid have had on the funding available to women's rights organisations and for work on gender equality.<sup>2</sup>

Some progress has been made in addressing these concerns: women's organisations have made themselves more visible and raised the profile of gender equality in aid effectiveness processes, notably securing a number of commitments to gender equality in the AAA; a group of donors has been working together to assess the impact of the PD and track aid in support of gender equality and women's empowerment<sup>3</sup>; and there have been efforts to map innovative donor practices and approaches to funding women's organisations and gender equality work.<sup>4</sup>

However, it is a challenge to ensure both the inclusion of a gender equality and women's rights perspective in the Busan discussions and greater transparency, accountability and coherence in donor policies on gender equality. It also remains to be seen how the post HLF-4 framework will address other major global shifts, such as the financial, climate and food crises and the

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<sup>1</sup> This Brief has been prepared and written by Ceri Hayes.

<sup>2</sup> See Fund Her reports carried out by AWID in 2006 and 2007 (<http://www.awid.org/Our-Initiatives/Where-is-the-Money-for-Women-s-Rights>) and the 2008 GAD Network research (<http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/storage/gadn-publications/GAD%20Network%20Report%20-%20New%20Aid%20Modalities.pdf>)

<sup>3</sup> See OECD-DAC Gender Net 2011 report: Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment [http://www.oecd.org/document/6/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_34447\\_37461446\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/6/0,3746,en_2649_34447_37461446_1_1_1_1,00.html)

<sup>4</sup> See Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Issues Brief 3, Innovative Funding for Women's Organisations, July 2008 <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/12/40954592.pdf>

need for a revitalised global effort towards reaching the MDGs, all of which have a gender dimension, as well as the involvement of new donors, such as China and private foundations such as the Gates Foundation.

### Frequently asked questions

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#### ***Why should women's organisations and gender equality advocates be concerned?***

The Paris Declaration and so-called 'new aid modalities' have been heavily critiqued by women's organisations and gender equality advocates.<sup>5</sup>

#### **New aid modalities**

Aid modalities refer to the way in which aid is provided by donors to partner governments. Over the past decade, donors have developed a range of new aid modalities to complement traditional, stand-alone aid projects. These include:

- **Budget support** – money is given directly to a recipient country government through the national budget
- **Projects** – aid is delivered through dedicated management structures
- **SWAps** (sector-wide approaches) and programme-based approaches – support is provided to a specific sectoral or thematic strategy, with close donor coordination
- **Technical cooperation** – through which development partners provide assistance, such as advisory services, to strengthen national capacity in specific areas

#### **Paris Declaration**<sup>6</sup>

The 2005 Paris Declaration (PD) was developed as a follow up to the Monterrey Consensus, which emerged from the United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development in 2002, a major reference point for international development cooperation and the 2005 G8 Summit, where donor countries pledged to increase aid as a percentage of GNP. The Declaration calls for donors to increase aid and to adopt concrete actions that can be monitored while aid delivery and management is reformed. It also put in place a series of specific implementation measures and established a monitoring system and roadmap to assess progress and ensure that donors and recipients hold each other accountable for their commitments. It established aid effectiveness targets and progress indicators that were endorsed by member states at the UN World Summit in 2005. The Declaration sets out five core principles for the approach:

- **Ownership** – developing countries set their own strategies for poverty reduction, improve their institutions and tackle corruption
- **Alignment** – donor countries align behind these objectives and use local systems
- **Harmonisation** – donor countries coordinate, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication
- **Results** – developing countries and donors shift focus to development results and results get measured
- **Mutual accountability** – donors and partners are accountable for development results

#### **Accra Agenda for Action**

The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), which was designed to strengthen and deepen implementation of the PD, emerged out of the 3<sup>rd</sup> High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, Ghana in 2008. It set the agenda for accelerated progress towards the PD targets and proposed three main areas for improvement:

- **Ownership** – countries have more say over their development processes through wider participation in development policy formulation, stronger leadership on aid co-ordination and more use of country systems for aid delivery

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<sup>5</sup> See AWID and GAD Network research cited above and also WIDE report: 'EU Donors under Women's Watch – WIDE checks up on Gender Equality and Women's Rights in the Aid Effectiveness Agenda on the Road to Busan' <http://62.149.193.10/wide/download/WIDE-AE%20briefing.pdf?id=1500>

<sup>6</sup> Access more information about the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and related documents here:

[http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_3236398\\_35401554\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html)

- **Inclusive partnerships** - all partners, including donors in the OECD Development Assistance Committee and developing countries, as well as other donors, foundations and civil society - participate fully
- **Delivering results:** Aid is focused on real and measurable impact on development.

Whereas previously women's NGOs were able to seek funding direct from donors, they are increasingly having to rely on the good will of recipient governments to put gender equality<sup>7</sup> high on their agendas and allocate funds accordingly.<sup>8</sup> Additionally there are concerns that, despite governments' recognition of NGOs' watchdog role in monitoring their policies, they are more likely to fund NGOs who play a service provision role, such as running a health clinic or providing basic education.

Further, the principles of efficiency mean that, even where donors, INGOs and other intermediary organisations are still channelling aid directly to organisations, huge cuts in administrative staff mean they are only able to make large sums available, which are often beyond the level that can be absorbed by small NGOs. The emphasis on achieving results also means that organisations are less and less able to apply for core funding and instead are obliged to seek short term project funding which come with heavy reporting and evaluation commitments.

### **Efficiency and value for money**

Constrained public spending and the economic downturn are putting donors under pressure to achieve efficiency and value for money. In the U.K, for example, the government is asking departments, including the Department for International Development (DFID), to make efficiency savings by, for instance, reducing its administration spending. UK civil society organisations have voiced concerns about the approach to efficiency savings DFID is being asked to take, such as reducing absolute administration spending and benchmarking itself against other UK government departments instead of other donors, particularly at a time when the UK aid budget is rising and being expected to deliver more results-focused aid.<sup>9</sup> They underline that a wider focus on value for money should not be at the expense of a narrow focus on cutting administration costs. Gender equality advocates would argue it's also important that efficiency savings are planned in ways that take into account the goal of equality between women and men and really do result in improvements in productivity.

### **Results**

Increased competition for resources has in turn led to donors having to work harder to demonstrate 'results', in other words the impact and outcomes of their spending. 'Results' is one of the five principles outlined in the Paris Declaration and is critical to efforts to ensure aid supports better development outcomes. However, there are concerns that the focus on results is not always sensitive to the complex issues aid aims to address.<sup>10</sup> The barriers to gender equality and women's empowerment, in particular, are multiple, deep-rooted and challenging to address: impacts are harder to measure in quantifiable terms and rarely fit neatly into traditional, linear, results-based monitoring and evaluation frameworks favoured by donors. It is important that the approach to results is responsive to such realities and challenges, is long-term focused and includes measures of progress that are rooted in international and regional women's human rights agreements, such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

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<sup>7</sup> Gender equality is understood as women having the same rights and opportunities as men, including entitlement to human, social, economic and cultural development, and an equal voice in civil and political life. Women's rights are an essential component of universal human rights, but reflect the fact that women and men have very different experiences – and women and girls often experience gender-based discrimination that places them at increased risk of poverty, violence, ill health and poor education.

<sup>8</sup> See for example AWID's action research project, Where's the Money for Women's Rights: <http://secure1.awid.org/eng/About-AWID/AWID-Initiatives/Where-is-the-Money-for-Women-s-Rights>

<sup>9</sup> Written evidence submitted by the UK Aid Network to the International Development Committee: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmintdev/605/605vw16.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

***How are women's concerns and rights being raised in these processes?***

A group coordinated by **Women in Development in Europe (WIDE)** and **Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)** has continued momentum on the issues of gender equality and aid effectiveness since Accra both independently and as part of **Better Aid**, (under the banner 'Women's Groups at Better Aid'), along with other groups such as **The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)** and the **Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)**.

The group has held regional consultations and an international consultation to ensure that women's voices are heard in the HLF-4 and beyond. It is a member of the Better Aid Co-ordinating Group that leads civil society processes of engagement with the HLF-4 and will seek to ensure that women's rights and gender equality concerns are raised in both the official High Level Forum and in the CSO (civil society organisation) Forum that will take place on 26-28<sup>th</sup> November, with one day potentially devoted to a Women's Forum.<sup>11</sup>

There is also a proposal, led by the South Korean government, with support from UN Women and OECD-DAC Gendernet, for a gender and development 'building block'.<sup>12</sup> The proposal suggests establishing a country-level gender platform led by a partner country and involving all development stakeholders in the country to help: identify gaps in commitments and implementation; decide the priority areas for actions; and evaluate and monitor progress in order to ensure actual implementation of gender equality and women's rights commitments on the ground.

This proposal will, however, have to compete with other 'building block' proposals and its endorsement will depend on the level of support it receives from partner countries and donor agencies. To date, there has been little support for this proposal and gender equality more broadly in the EU's block negotiating position or in the UK government's lobbying. This contrasts with the very active and explicit support from the UK government and others on the inclusion of gender equality three years ago in the Accra Agenda for Action.

To contact the Women's Groups in Better Aid, e-mail Kasia Staszewska: [Kasia@wide-network.org](mailto:Kasia@wide-network.org). The Google group listserv hosted by AWID is also a useful space for sharing relevant information about the aid effectiveness agenda and related processes, particularly from a gender equality and women's rights perspective: [the-road-to-accra-and-beyond@googlegroups.org](mailto:the-road-to-accra-and-beyond@googlegroups.org)

***What are women's rights advocates calling for?***

The key demands from women's rights advocates include:

- A **new development cooperation architecture** that is inclusive and responsive to women's rights and gender equality and located within the UN, with the full participation of all relevant actors, including civil society organisations and women's groups;
- **Development effectiveness**, that goes beyond institutional aid and requires democratic ownership of all stages of the development process and systematic participation by civil society, including women's organisations
- A shift to a **'multi-accountability' approach** to aid and development co-operation that involves all development actors, including parliamentarians, local governments, the private sector, women's organisations and a move away from traditional bi-lateral development relationships;
- **Financing for development that goes beyond gender mainstreaming** to ensure dedicated funding is made available for targeting women's rights issues and support to local women's groups;

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<sup>11</sup> A one day Women's Forum for women's rights organisations and gender equality advocates was held prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in 2008. More than 200 organisations attended and produced a statement setting out their main demands and recommendations to donors participating in the HLF-3 and strategised around their engagement in the official and civil society proceedings. It is hoped that a similar Women's Forum can be organised and funded in Busan.

<sup>12</sup> Governments have been asked to propose 'building blocks' which could constitute the future aid/development effectiveness architecture.

- Special attention in development co-operation to the differential and disproportionate **impact of armed conflict on women and girls**.<sup>13</sup>

#### ***What are others doing?***

**Better Aid**, which unites over 700 development organisations from civil society, has been working on development cooperation and challenging the aid **effectiveness** agenda since January 2007. BetterAid is leading many of the civil society activities including in-country consultations, studies and monitoring, in the lead up to the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-4) in 2011.

The **Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness** has also led a process to develop an international framework and principles for CSO (civil society organisation) Development Effectiveness to define the standards to which CSOs can hold themselves accountable. There will be a global agreement on these standards in Busan.

In the U.K, UKAN (the **UK Aid Network**), a coalition of UK-based development NGOs working together to advocate for more and better aid, are carrying out joint policy, lobbying and advocacy work mostly focusing on the U.K's overseas development assistance policy and practice. UKAN is a member of Better Aid.

#### ***What will happen after Busan?***

Much will depend on what is agreed in Busan, but in the meantime women's rights and gender equality advocates and other civil society actors should continue influencing and working towards strengthening the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) in 2012. The DCF is a body mandated by the United Nations which works to support and enhance the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. It is currently the only international organisation that is fully multilateral, inclusive and participatory, involving governments, international organisations, local authorities and civil society organisations.

Unlike the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), which currently hosts the aid effectiveness agenda, the UN offers both developing and developed countries equal representation. The DCF, grounded in the normative UN framework of human rights, offers a space to discuss these issues holistically, moving beyond the current aid effectiveness debates to a broader framework for development co-operation that is inclusive of women's rights.

The Women's Working Group on Financing for Development, an alliance of women's organisations and networks that advocate for gender equality in Financing for Development-related UN processes are actively engaged in this process. The DCF Civil Society Task Force, co-ordinated by Action Aid, is also involved in promoting coherence and synergies between the two policy processes taking place with the OECD and the UN.

#### **Actions You Can Take**

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Women's rights organisations and gender equality advocates can engage by:

- **Identifying information gaps:** BRIDGE and the GAD Network are keen to promote the generation and exchange of accessible gender information to ensure gender is central to all development thinking and practice. We would like to know what information you have about aid effectiveness processes and the Busan HLF, whether you have been consulted as part of the Busan process and what you would like to recommend to donors. Please answer these questions and send your response to [Gadnetwork@oneworldaction.org](mailto:Gadnetwork@oneworldaction.org).
- **Talking to your government officials:** talk to them about your ideas for strengthening aid policies and funding for gender equality and women's rights and what you want to be sure happens in this major review of aid policy. To send a message to the U.K country delegation,

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<sup>13</sup> Taken from: 'Women's organisations key demands for Busan and 2012 Development Co-operation Forum,' October 2011 draft

please contact: Jackie Peace, Acting Head, Aid Effectiveness and Value for Money Dept, DFID East Kilbride, [j.peace@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:j.peace@dfid.gov.uk) and Penny Innes, International Directors' Office, DFID East Kilbride, [P-Innes@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:P-Innes@dfid.gov.uk).

- **Sharing your stories with us:** what is your experience of applying for and receiving aid, and of reporting to donors? Have you noticed any differences in the past five years? Do you think women's rights issues are being addressed sufficiently in aid effectiveness processes? Why or why not? What is needed at the country level for enhanced and more effective integration of gender equality and women's rights issues in aid effectiveness? What good models of donor funding have you experienced?<sup>14</sup> Please send your stories to [Gadnetwork@oneworldaction.org](mailto:Gadnetwork@oneworldaction.org). Please also recommend southern partner organisations we can contact directly for their stories. We will be posting the stories on the GADN and BRIDGE websites to share 'voices from the field' with policy-makers.
- **Telling us what messages you would like to share with donors on aid effectiveness –** what would really effective aid look like for you and your organisation? We will then post some of these messages on our website and convey them to policy-makers in Busan via the Women's Groups in Better Aid.

### **Related Websites**

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Association of Women in Development:

<http://www.awid.org/Our-Initiatives/Influencing-Development-Actors-and-Practices-for-Women-s-Rights>

Better Aid:

[www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org)

BRIDGE<sup>15</sup>

<http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/>

GAD Network<sup>16</sup> Aid Effectiveness Working Group:

[www.gadnetwork.org.uk/the-aid-effectiveness](http://www.gadnetwork.org.uk/the-aid-effectiveness)

High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness official website:

[www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhlf4](http://www.aideffectiveness.org/busanhlf4)

OECD-DAC Gendernet:

[http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_34541\\_42288382\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,3746,en_2649_34541_42288382_1_1_1_1,00.html)

Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness:

[www.cso-effectiveness.org/spip.php?page=rubrique&id\\_rubrique=67](http://www.cso-effectiveness.org/spip.php?page=rubrique&id_rubrique=67)

UK Aid Network:

[www.ukan.org.uk](http://www.ukan.org.uk)

UN Women:

[www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_poverty\\_economics/financing.php](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_poverty_economics/financing.php)

WIDE (Women in Development in Europe):

[www.wide-network.org/index.jsp?id=346](http://www.wide-network.org/index.jsp?id=346)

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<sup>14</sup> This might include: reducing the time you need to spend on reporting, matching project funds with core funding for your organisation, encouraging feedback on their own policy and practice on women's rights and gender equality etc.

<sup>15</sup> Part of the Institute of Development Studies, BRIDGE seeks to transform development practice by supporting global gender advocacy and mainstreaming efforts down to the operational level, by bridging the gaps between theory, policy and practice.

<sup>16</sup> The GAD Network is a membership network made up of leading UK-based non-governmental organisations (NGO) staff, practitioners, consultants and academics working on gender, development and women's rights issues.