

# Human Rights Central to Aid Effectiveness: Civil Society Statement

*At the 3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, the Parallel Civil Society Forum highlighted the fundamental issues that concern CSOs in developing countries. The Accra Agenda for Action was modified to incorporate CSOs' concerns about the relationship between aid and development effectiveness. Below is the CSOs' concluding statement, written by Reality of Aid (RoA).<sup>1</sup>*

HERE IN ACCRA, CSOs held a parallel forum on aid effectiveness with 700 participants from over 80 countries, and there were 80 CSO participants in the official high level forum.

CSOs, and many present in Accra from the Reality of Aid Network, are determined in making human rights, gender equality, decent work and environmental sustainability explicit and central to the aid effectiveness agenda. We have consciously set the bar high in recognition of the urgency for immediate and concrete action if the AAA is to make any progress towards improving implementation of the Paris Declaration (PD) and genuinely realizing its principles by 2010. To this end we have come to Accra with a CSO position paper that puts forward 18 clear and definite recommendations.

Although CSOs have been intensively engaged in the process of drafting the AAA and have influenced the debate on various issues, we are nonetheless disappointed that our views and proposals have in the main been ignored in the final AAA. We have advanced clear, time-bound and realistic commitments on policy conditionalities, tied aid, predictability, transparency and debt. However in the final AAA we see only limited or no progress at all on these vital issues. This is deeply disappointing for us.

The AAA recognizes the poor performance of donors and countries in many areas of aid reform and unfortunately uses this poor performance to justify conservative targets. On the contrary, we believe that the AAA should have been made more ambitious if the PD's targets for implementation by 2010 are to be achieved.

We also acknowledge that the AAA in some respects introduces progress beyond the PD. The rigorous process of debate and consultation in its preparation—which saw the active participation by developing country governments and CSOs—has been productive. There has been significant progress in terms of greater commitment to be inclusive of CSOs, parliamentarians and other actors. As noted, there has been also some limited but important movement on the issues of mutual accountability, transparency, predictability and conditionality. Although falling short of delivering time-bound reforms

this is a good starting point. We also appreciate the active efforts by some donors and developing country governments who have persisted in pushing for reforms to be put in place and in thwarting efforts to water down what has already been achieved.

The hallmark of the High Level Forum and the AAA is the intensive process of preparations and engagement by CSOs and governments. The CSO Parallel Forum and the Better Aid open platform for CSO voices are particularly important achievements. However the official HLF itself still leaves a great deal of room for improvement. Notwithstanding greater CSO participation compared to the past, this still cannot yet be fully celebrated by CSOs. We need to take advantage of new opportunities for comprehensive aid reform posed by the increased involvement of new donors and other actors.

An unprecedented array of development actors is now engaged on the vital issue of aid and aid effectiveness and there have also been some unambiguous gains. Much remains to be done. The challenge is how to build on the gains achieved towards a new multilateral High Level Forum in 2011, framed by the core issues of aid and development effectiveness.

<sup>1</sup> Reality of Aid is the only major North/South international non-governmental initiative focusing exclusively on analysis and lobbying for poverty eradication policies and practices. It aims to contribute to more effective international aid and development cooperation strategies to eliminate poverty.

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