

# Strengthening Civil Society's Roles and Voice: Reflections on CSO Engagement with the Accra Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness

Prepared for  
CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION (CCIC)  
CIVICUS WORLD ALLIANCE FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION  
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Jacqueline Wood  
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Published by:  
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CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation  
IBON Foundation

Layout Design and Copy Editing:  
Jennifer T. Padilla and Josephine Dongail

Printed in the Philippines by IBON Books  
October 2009

ISBN

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# Preface

In January of 2007 several international NGOs and civil society networks gathered in a “side-meeting” at the World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya to lay plans for CSOs to influence the outcomes of the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF3), scheduled for Accra, Ghana in September 2008. These CSOs, along with many others at local, national and international levels, in the months to come, set off along the road of a unique two-year civil society process.

A CSO International Steering Group was created, and was supported by more than 700 CSOs in a Better Aid Platform, which together adopted an agenda for significant reforms in the goals and practices of aid. In the end, these 700 CSOs gathered in Accra during the first week of September 2008, not only in a two-day parallel CSO Forum on Aid Effectiveness, but also as full participants in the Accra High Level Forum, sending an unprecedented 80 CSO delegates to its Roundtables and Plenary sessions.

This CSO engagement has been recognized widely as a political success. CSOs came to Accra with an ambitious agenda, and a realistic set of proposals. They left Accra aware that the HLF3’s Accra Agenda for Action fell far short of their agenda, but also with a sense of accomplishment. CSOs, donors and developing country government representatives alike credit CSO engagement with bringing a renewed momentum for change into the global aid effectiveness process. In harmony with like-minded developing country governments and some sympathetic donors, CSOs advanced some new issues and commitments in the AAA, beyond its original intent of a mid-term review of rather modest commitments on aid effectiveness in the 2005 Paris Declaration.

The Accra process represented CSO diversity at its best. Several independent CSO initiatives, for example among women’s organizations through AWID, or the efforts of trade union activists through the OECD-based Trade Union

Advisory Committee (TUAC), worked in synergy with the ISG in the Better Aid Platform to maximize CSO engagement and created high expectations coming into the High Level Forum.

These efforts were also strengthened and facilitated by the consultations and deliberations of a unique multi-stakeholder Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG-CS). Created by the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, also in January 2007, under leadership of CIDA, it brought together several donors and developing country governments with strong majority CSO membership. The AG-CS played a strategic role in strengthening recognition of the role and voice of CSOs as essential development actors in aid architecture and in shaping aid and development effectiveness. The mandate of the AG-CS was not to represent CSOs to the Working Party, but to facilitate their direct voice in the preparations and deliberations of HLF3.

The organizations responsible for this publication, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC), CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, and IBON Foundation also played leading roles in this CSO process. It was apparent by mid-2008 that it represented a significant and somewhat unprecedented opportunity for CSOs to influence directly and change the political dynamics for the Accra High Level Forum. Unfortunately, a formal proposal to document this process by these three CSOs did not find financial backing at the time. Nevertheless, we were committed to undertake a more modest less comprehensive effort than planned, which has resulted in "Strengthening Civil Society's Role and Voice: Reflections on CSO Engagement with the Accra Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness".

Because it has been largely a voluntary effort, much of the credit for realizing the project must go to Henri Valot at CIVICUS and Roberto Pinauin at IBON Foundation who conducted, transcribed and organized the initial set of interviews, immediately following HLF3. This rich body of contributions was complemented in early 2009 by additional interviews with key informants



conducted by Jacqueline Wood, a Canadian consultant who was contracted by CCIC and CIVICUS to write an introductory chapter on the CSO Accra processes, including the work of the AG-CS. She has written a very clear and concise presentation of highly complex sets of CSO activities leading up to Accra. She also worked closely with the three organizational sponsors of the publication, taking account the interviews, to draw some key lessons from the experience. Jacqueline came to the task with both an independent perspective, and as an “insider”, having acted as a consultant for CIDA in support of the AG-CS. From this vantage point, she was also a close and sometimes critical observer of the independent CSO efforts for Accra.

Her highly readable introduction establishes an essential framework to situate a second chapter that brings together evaluative commentary, in their own words, from different stakeholders and actors in the process. This chapter has been very effectively organized under different topics by Henri Valot, Policy Advisor at CIVICUS. Brian Tomlinson, from the Policy Team at CCIC and member of the Advisory Group, and Tony Tujan, Director of International Programs at IBON Foundation and former Chairperson of the ISG, provided materials, as well as, reviewed and provided editorial suggestions for the introduction.

We also must express our deep appreciation for the coordinating efforts of Josephine Dongail, working in the Secretariat for the Reality of Aid Network, based in IBON Foundation, and for the significant contribution of IBON’s publishing house, for realizing an attractive and readable publication.

These Reflections were not intended to be a systematic and independent “evaluation” of two years of CSO actions to influence HLF3. Rather, they have been organized and offered by some participants who were also deeply involved in the engagement, as a structured reflection on its strengths and weaknesses. They hopefully provide some understanding of its lessons and future opportunities for those who were not so centrally involved.

Our motivation has been to document what was for us a unique experience in local, national and global CSO organizing, systematically building over two years towards HLF3, and which culminated in an over-whelming parallel CSO Forum in Accra. It was also unique because several important aid actors made significant effort to hear CSO voices directly in ongoing parallel dialogue with representatives from donors and developing country governments, particularly within the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, under the very able Chairmanship of Ambassador Jan Cedergren.

In this light, we are deeply appreciative to all the stakeholders who engaged in this process with CSOs, and particularly those who made the time for interviews to share their thoughts on CSO contributions. We hope that the publication in some small way contributes to preparations for the Fourth High Level Forum in Seoul, South Korea, in October 2011, particularly in bringing our shared goal to strengthen the impact of aid on the lives and human rights of poor and vulnerable populations to the forefront of HLF4 in Seoul.

**Brian Tomlinson**

Canadian Council for International Cooperation

**Henri Valot**

CIVICUS

**Antonio Tujan, Jr.**

IBON Foundation



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## Acronyms

AAA	Accra Agenda for Action
AE	Aid Effectiveness
AG-CS/AG	Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness
AWID	Association of Women's Rights in Development
CCIC	Canadian Council for International Cooperation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CONCORD	European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development
CS	Civil Society
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
HLF	High Level Forum
ISG	International CSO Steering Group
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PD	Paris Declaration
RoA	Reality of Aid Network
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TUAC	Trade Union Advisory Committee
UKAN	United Kingdom Aid Network
UNDCF	United Nations Development Cooperation Forum
WP-EFF	Working Party on Aid Effectiveness



# Executive Summary

Starting in late 2006, civil society organizations (CSOs) from around the world undertook an intensive process of engagement with donors, multilateral institutions, and developing country governments, to influence the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF3) in September 2008, organized in Accra, Ghana by the OECD-DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF). The two main avenues of engagement were the independent CSO International Steering Group (ISG) made up of CSO networks and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the North and South, and the multi-stakeholder Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG-CS), established to advise the WP-EFF on CSO roles in aid effectiveness and on ways in which to engage with them toward HLF3.

The Accra HLF3 process drew together a unique gathering of developing country government officials, donors and civil society development actors in a process whose goal was to address complex issues of aid and development effectiveness. Many of those involved in HLF3 commented on the influence which CSOs uniquely brought to these deliberations; the CSO presence in Accra was the hallmark of HLF3.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the story of CSO engagement with the Accra HLF process. This chapter provides a factual background on the ISG-led and the AG-CS avenues of engagement, an overview of key engagement strategies and challenges, and key achievements. It is complemented by a compilation of extracts from interviews with various stakeholders in the Accra process.

In their engagement in the Accra HLF3 process, CSOs managed to consolidate recognition of the importance of CSOs' voice in the aid dialogue, while also influencing the substantive outcomes of the process, most notably seen in its outcome document, the Accra Agenda for Action. In an effort to deepen Paris Declaration commitments, CSOs provided inputs that resonated with the demands of developing country governments on pivotal topics, particularly local ownership, South-South cooperation, transparency, predictability, and policy conditionality. In addition, the Accra Agenda for Action's paragraph 20 specifically recognizes CSOs as development actors in their own right, and commits to greater engagement with them in efforts to address CSO effectiveness and to put in place enabling environments in which CSOs can maximize their contribution to development.

Overall, CSOs' influence on the Accra process launched a shift in the discourse away from the technicalities of aid effectiveness to more squarely addressing development effectiveness and thus the impact of aid on the lives and potential of poor women, men and children.

Key strategies of CSO engagement in the HLF3 process included:

- **Solidarity** – Relationships of solidarity among participating CSOs, with Southern CSO leadership and facilitated by the creation of the Better Aid Platform through which CSOs globally could be informed and get engaged.
- **Quality, consistent analysis and messaging** – Through collective reflection and analysis, the ISG built a global, joint message, articulated in the Better Aid policy position paper and applied repeatedly in dialogue with the WP-EFF and others. Their messaging was ambitious, constructive and often positive, not least of which was the core message on the importance of ‘democratic ownership’. Through the AG-CS, CSOs also brought quality analysis that informed and was fed by a broad consultation process, ultimately leading to a Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations endorsed by the WP-EFF.
- **Balancing insider/outsider tactics** – CSOs chose a dual strategy, ‘playing ball’ both from inside the official aid dialogue framework of the WP-EFF through their involvement in the AG-CS, while maintaining an outsider, CSO-led and independent means of dialogue through the ISG.
- **Multi-stakeholder aspect** – The AG-CS provided a living framework of key principles for multi-stakeholder engagement that were carried over to the broader dialogue with the WP-EFF and to some degree at country-level, contributing to a high quality dialogue with a constructive tone, in an environment of equality and respect.
- **Leadership and commitment** - A convergence of interest and leadership from key individuals and institutions incited and sustained CSOs’ active involvement in shaping the dialogue and its outcomes within a complex and unpredictable environment. Key stakeholders demonstrated a high level of commitment, including considerable time and energy dedicated by CSOs, despite lack of financing.

- **Widespread consultations** – Widespread regional and national consultations were organized under the mandate of the AG-CS and were a pre-condition for CSO participation in it, including the AG-CS International Forum and the CSO Parallel Forum in Accra. The consultation process served to raise awareness of the aid effectiveness debates; inform analysis and messaging; build ownership and ultimately buy-in by stakeholders; mobilize Southern CSO voices; and contribute a critical political momentum to HLF3.
- **Networking and strategic alliances** – The ISG, itself a formal network comprised primarily of networks, broadened its reach and the voice of CSOs through the informal network of CSOs that voluntarily and pro-actively identified with the ISG positions and sometimes participated actively in the dialogue and policy influencing opportunities. CSOs and the AG-CS also advanced their positions synergistically through strategic bilateral alliances with other stakeholders affiliated with the WP-EFF.

Following Accra, CSOs have launched their own processes to ensure effective implementation of the outcomes of HLF3, but they are also now full members of the WP-EFF, planning the next HLF. This overview of CSO initiatives in the lead-up to Accra, accompanied by the reflections on CSO engagement with the process in the interviews, is intended to inform all those involved, not just CSOs, about strategies, effective processes, and potential means for influence that CSOs may carry forward to the Fourth High Level Forum (HLF4), anticipated in October 2011 in Seoul, South Korea.



# Chapter 1



## An Overview of CSO Processes for Engagement with the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness

### Introduction

Starting in late 2006, civil society organizations (CSOs) from around the world undertook an intensive process of engagement with donors, multilateral institutions, and developing country governments, to influence the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF3) in September 2008 held in Accra. The two main avenues of engagement were the CSO International Steering Group (ISG) and the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG-CS). The ISG was made up of CSO networks and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the North and South, and was CSO-led. It created a process and a website<sup>1</sup> through which hundreds of CSOs were able to link in to the ISG's engagement efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org).

Parallel to this CSO-led initiative, the multi-stakeholder AG-CS was launched under the auspices of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF). The WP-EFF is a body housed within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) made up of 23 donors, multilateral organizations and 23 developing country government officials responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Paris Declaration and organizing periodic High Level Forums. The AG-CS was established to advise the WP-EFF on both the substance of CSO roles in aid effectiveness and on ways in which to engage with CSOs toward HLF3.<sup>2</sup>

Through these avenues, CSO engagement took a number of forms including direct advocacy with the WP-EFF and with key donors and governments, a more official 'internal' engagement with the HLF3 process through the AG-CS, and global consultations through the AG-CS and through the ISG member networks and organizations, culminating in a parallel CSO Forum in Accra just prior to HLF3. Eighty CSOs were also full delegates to HLF3. Other important networks, including the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), the Trade Union Advisory Committee (TUAC) at the DAC, and CIDSE, the alliance of Catholic development agencies, also organized parallel, but closely related, processes and events in the lead-up to HLF3.

The Accra process drew together a unique gathering of developing country government officials, donors and civil society development actors in a process whose goal was to address complex issues of aid and development effectiveness. Many of those involved commented on the influence which CSOs uniquely brought to these deliberations. The purpose of this chapter, which is followed by excerpts from a series of interviews conducted by CIVICUS and IBON International following the September 2008 HLF, is to present the story of CSO engagement with the Accra HLF process. This chapter provides a factual background on the ISG-led and the multi-stakeholder AG-CS avenues of engagement, an overview of key engagement strategies and challenges, and a summary of the influence that this engagement had at HLF3.

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<sup>2</sup> Membership of the ISG and the AG-CS is found on page 47.

The in-depth interviews involved not only CSOs who were leading and inside these CSO processes, but also donors, DAC officials, and others who were themselves deeply engaged in the Accra process. They not only inform this overview, but provide their own reflections on the limitations and challenges, the opportunities and accomplishments of CSO strategies and efforts to affect both the process and outcomes of HLF3.<sup>3</sup>

Following Accra, CSOs have launched their own processes to ensure effective implementation of the outcomes of HLF3, but they are also now full members of the WP-EFF, planning the next High Level Forum. This overview of CSO initiatives in the lead-up to Accra, accompanied by the reflections on CSO engagement with the process in the interviews, is intended to inform all those involved, not just CSOs, about strategies, effective processes, and potential means for influence that CSOs may carry forward to the Fourth High Level Forum, anticipated in October 2011 in Seoul, South Korea.

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<sup>3</sup> *The interviews were chosen to reflect a diversity of perspectives on the roles and contributions of CSOs to HLF3. However, due to resource constraints, these interviews were necessarily selective and based on side opportunities during meetings and telephone access. While attempts were made to seek interviews, notably absent is the perspective of developing country government representatives. A number of additional interviews were conducted with several key actors in the processes described in this chapter. These latter interviews informed this chapter but are not reflected in the compilation of interview extracts in the next chapter. See the list of interviewees at the end of Chapter 2. Initials of interviewees identify their use in this chapter.*

## History of CSO Engagement with HLF3

Formal CSO engagement in the HLF3 process, both through the ISG and the AG-CS, came about due to a convergence of interests and energy from different quarters.<sup>4</sup>

### How did the CSO International Steering Group emerge?

The origins of the International Steering Group of CSOs goes back several years in this decade to largely unsuccessful efforts by CSOs to engage formally with donors in the DAC. In the first instance, the Reality of Aid Network (RoA)<sup>5</sup> had for at least five years prior to establishment of the ISG or AG-CS, been in direct contact with the OECD-DAC amongst other bodies, to discuss issues of concern related to aid and development, and to the DAC structure and mandate. CSO engagement with the DAC and WP-EFF was initiated by the RoA, along with several European CSO networks, advocating for aid reform. Seeking a systematic channel for its advocacy efforts, based on the findings and recommendations of its biennial global Reality of Aid Report, the RoA established several informal roundtable dialogues with the DAC.

Over time, civil society's structured and unstructured dialogues with the DAC and its subsidiary units edged open the door to deeper and more formal engagement. The DAC itself was not yet, post 2005, prepared to formally deepen its engagement with CSOs, due in part to its structure as a

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<sup>4</sup> See the *Timeline on CSO Engagement with the Third High Level Forum Process* on page 46.

<sup>5</sup> *The Reality of Aid Network is a Southern-led North/South network of CSOs focusing on the goals of poverty eradication and equality in the policies and practices in the international aid regime. It brings together hundreds of CSOs from more than 40 networks working in the field of international cooperation in 22 donor countries, as well as in Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa. RoA is hosted and led by IBON Foundation, based in the Philippines, supported by an international Management Committee, with a majority of Southern representatives.*

*RoA advocates for effective aid to eliminate poverty and inequality, based on international human rights standards and the principles of solidarity and equity. Since 1992, it publishes a biennial global Report as well as periodic regional reporting and global Reality Checks on key themes in international aid, all accessible at [www.realityofaid.org](http://www.realityofaid.org).*

donor body, and to a perception among some members that the place for CSO dialogue efforts was either within the UN system, or in bilateral fora. Yet questions were being raised as to whether an entry point for broader structured CSO engagement could not be identified, including in an internal DAC document of July 2006. Confidence in CSO involvement was seemingly on the rise, spurred by the solid and creative CSO interventions in discussions on aid and development, such as through the Global Forum on Development, and with DAC subsidiaries such as ENVIRONET and GENDERNET.

In the preparations for the second High Level Forum in Paris in 2005, CSOs involved in the RoA and others convened, with the support of the French CSO platform, Coordination Sud, to attempt to influence this HLF and its Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Representatives from the RoA membership (AFRODAD, Canadian Council for International Cooperation, IBON Foundation), along with EURODAD, CIDSE, and UKAN (UK Aid Network), were also among the 14 CSOs present at the High Level Forum (HLF2) in Paris. Though CSOs present were provided with some opportunity to speak at HLF2, they were not involved in the negotiation of the Paris Declaration, nor were they signatories. In contrast to the later experience in Accra, CSO involvement in Paris was narrow and somewhat of an afterthought in planning.

In its own efforts to engage more widely with CSOs, the DAC leadership saw in the RoA, a Southern CSO-led coalition of critical and constructive thinking on aid issues, a potential ally in the effort to make aid more effective. The WP-EFF too, which was created as a result of HLF2 in Paris, was sensitive to CSOs' critique of the Paris Declaration and their call for greater inclusion, and had a growing interest in engaging civil society. Ultimately this interest was demonstrated in the DAC Development Cooperation Directorate's engagement with a handful of CSOs at a November 2006 meeting to help formulate a strategy for monitoring implementation of the Paris Declaration. Though it had taken a lead in advocating for greater DAC dialogue with CSOs, the RoA did not see itself in a gatekeeping role as regards CSO engagement, thus a broader grouping of CSOs participated in this meeting including some RoA members (ActionAid, BOND, CCIC, IBON, Coordination Sud), OXFAM,

EURODAD, UKAN, and members of the European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development (CONCORD). It was at that seminal November meeting that the seed for a more sustained dialogue, planted over time by CSOs, began to germinate and, as a result, a meeting between a broad range of CSOs and the WP-EFF was set for March 2007.

Meanwhile, other CSOs not involved in the RoA-led process of engagement, but equally eager that HLF3 not repeat the pattern of HLF2 with its very limited civil society engagement, were beginning to mobilize. Alliance 2015 and IBIS, a Danish NGO, convened a CSO meeting at the January 2007 World Social Forum in Nairobi, to begin to outline a plan in that regard. Their interest was two-fold: to launch an international CSO advocacy effort to HLF3, and to work with Ghanaian CSOs, including their local partners in Ghana, to prepare for HLF3. They were also keen to bring those CSOs engaging in the United Nations processes together with those engaging with the DAC. The meeting was attended by 18 CSOs, a mix of international CSOs such as ActionAid International, North/South global coalition such as RoA, Social Watch and CIVICUS, debt networks, national platforms such as CCIC, along with a few Southern CSOs, including IBON, Third World Network and representatives of IBIS from Ghana.

While the CSO - DAC/WP-EFF dialogue and the RoA and the Alliance 2015/IBIS efforts to bring CSOs together with an eye to HLF3 were not organically linked at the outset, these two processes quickly merged. A CSO facilitating group was set up that linked international CSOs and coalitions present at the meeting in Nairobi with a number of Ghanaian CSOs thinking about what CSO processes might accompany the HLF in their country. This facilitating group began to shepherd the CSO engagement process for the next six months, mainly through informal contact and coordination provided by the RoA secretariat and IBIS in Ghana.

Thirty CSOs from all parts of the world were invited to the March 2007 dialogue with the WP-EFF that had been suggested in follow-up to the November meeting on monitoring the Paris Declaration. Participants

included those represented at the Nairobi World Social Forum meeting, as well as others with a strong interest in influencing the aid effectiveness dialogue. CSOs presented 3 position papers to the WP-EFF on critical issues that they proposed be addressed by the WP-EFF in its preparations for Accra, and raised the question of how the need for ongoing direct dialogue between CSOs and the WP-EFF could be addressed. Key points of discussion centred on what consultation and dialogue, or bringing CSOs 'into the tent' meant for CSOs and what it meant for the DAC, and the urging by CSOs for HLF3 to go beyond a mere stock taking exercise into deepening aid effectiveness reforms.

Participating CSOs took the opportunity to meet on their own and plan a more systematic engagement with the WP-EFF and the Accra process. At that time a decision was taken to formalize the facilitating group into a CSO International Steering Group (ISG), and its membership was broadened from the group that met in Nairobi, including two gender and women's rights CSOs, AWID and WIDE, along with others such as CIVICUS and TUAC. The ISG was thus launched to lead the independent CSO parallel process to Accra including contributing to organization of the CSO Parallel Forum and overall dialogue towards HLF3.

Subsequent meetings were held alongside the Civicus World Assembly (June 2007) and at a conference on CSOs and aid effectiveness in Härnösand, Sweden (August 2007). Within a few months, added to the ISG was the open platform concept of the Better Aid Platform supported by a website, [www.betteraid.org](http://www.betteraid.org). The platform was a means through which CSOs could stay informed and, should they choose to, engage in the dialogue and debate via their own efforts, the Better Aid website, and various opportunities to engage in ISG consultations with donors and governments on issues of aid reform, including at the CSO Parallel Forum in Accra. By 2008, the ISG had expanded its reach, and initiated a global sign-on process for its policy position paper, *Better Aid: A Civil Society Position Paper for the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness* (2008) that was drafted by members of the ISG.

## What were the origins of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness?

Simultaneously, from 2005, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) had an ongoing process of reflection on issues related to directions in its own civil society programming within the context of aid effectiveness. Working with and through CSOs has been a distinctive characteristic of Canadian development assistance since its inception, with a breadth and depth of CIDA-civil society relationships and investment mirroring the broader Canadian experience as a federated, decentralized and pluralist nation. CIDA was grappling with how to reconcile the added value of these many relationships with the state-centred framework of the Paris Declaration and with its own notions of effectiveness centred on 'focus' and 'results'. Two panels of international experts including representation from the WP-EFF secretariat, CCIC, CIVICUS, SIDA, amongst others, were held in late 2005 and 2006 and at which a shared interest in further pursuing the discussion clearly emerged. For Canada, this reflection process culminated in November 2006 with Canada's Minister for International Cooperation announcing CIDA's intent to 'modify' the Paris Declaration to be more inclusive of the roles of civil society in development, though the way to implement this intention was not clear.

This up-swell of Canadian interest was happening in parallel to CSOs' call to be brought more firmly into the international aid effectiveness dialogue with the DAC, as clearly articulated by CSOs at the November 2006 Paris Declaration evaluation meeting, and the inklings of interest in the DAC and the WP-EFF to respond to that call. A strong convergence between Canada's domestic preoccupation with civil society and aid effectiveness combined with the international level process unfolding toward Accra motivated the establishment of a formal dialogue structure, which ultimately became the AG-CS. Like-minded members of the WP-EFF, in particular the Chair, Sweden's Ambassador Jan Cedergren, began to discuss ways to address the civil society question. These members, along with CSOs consulted in November, felt the need for an approach that saw civil society not just as one issue among the many to be addressed within the Paris framework, but



requiring a special, distinct process. To this end the AG-CS was launched in January 2007 as a multi-stakeholder body comprised of three members each from developing country CSOs, Northern CSOs, developing country governments, and donors, with Canada taking on a chair role.<sup>6</sup>

In establishing the CSO membership of the AG-CS, CIDA officials consulted with CCIC as a very active CSO participant in aid effectiveness issues globally through its role as Vice Chair of the RoA. In turn, CCIC consulted the RoA and other largely European networks such as EURODAD and UKAN who had been active in the November meeting, both on the goals of the AG-CS, its strategic importance for emerging CSO goals for Accra, and its membership. The CSO members were proposed to ensure continuity with these previous processes, while ensuring North/South balance. Responding to a well-founded critique that CSOs representing women's rights and gender equality, along with these issues, were missing from the AG-CS, AWID and WIDE were added informally as members. The CSOs involved were very sensitive to the limitations of membership in a small body and were insistent from the beginning that the AG-CS provoke wide consultation with CSOs on its mandate at both the regional level and in a global International Forum, from which CSO members could draw their inputs into the final findings and recommendations of the AG-CS.

## Goals of the ISG and the AG-CS and their relationship

The ISG was launched as a coalition of CSOs interested in developing a common platform to influence the international aid effectiveness dialogue toward and at HLF3. Participants in the ISG process shared several common overarching goals to deepen the commitment to reform on the part of donors and developing country governments signatory to the Paris Declaration, and to address more rigorously key strategic issues in aid policy such as development effectiveness, tied aid, technical assistance, and conditionality amongst others. Over time as the importance and

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<sup>6</sup> Over time membership expanded, with two additional CSOs and two developing country governments coming into the mix as 'shadows' to existing members.

opportunities from sustained dialogue became more evident, their mandate put additional emphasis on advocating for more systematic and sustained inclusion in international aid effectiveness discussions. At another level the ISG's goal was to mobilize and channel the "breathtaking diversity of civil society into a process of consultation and strategic direction setting" (SW), through the Better Aid Platform.

The dual origin of the AG-CS, from the Canadian interest in issues of civil society and aid effectiveness and the DAC and WP-EFF's limited formal response to the discussions with civil society to that point, informed its goals and indeed, in hindsight, contributed to confusion over the goals and their evolution. From the WP-EFF's perspective in the early days following their November 2006 meeting with CSOs, the AG-CS was intended to advise the WP-EFF on how to engage with civil society in the lead up to HLF3 and potentially thereafter. "The AG-CS was established with Canada as Chair to begin a more formal interface with CSOs, to ease the process of integrating CSOs into WP-EFF structures." (AG-CS 2008b: 1) Essentially, for donors and officials at the DAC, who hosted the WP-EFF, the overarching goal of the AG-CS was to "bring civil society into the aid effectiveness tent." (RL)

As other perspectives were brought into the AG-CS by its members in its early meetings, the mandate, though still fairly modest and targeted, grew to address not only CSO participation toward HLF3, but also to give profile to an array of issues. With the WP-EFF and Canada together holding the pen, CSOs from the independent CSO facilitating group that preceded the ISG were, from the earliest days, feeding into the AG-CS' terms of reference and therefore able to introduce the idea of *deepening* the aid effectiveness agenda, with an eye to bringing in the concept of development effectiveness in particular. For Canada, there was a strong interest in addressing 'civil society and aid effectiveness', which meant *enriching* the existing Paris Declaration principles to be more inclusive of civil society (e.g. 'local ownership' as meaning ownership by CSOs and citizens as much as by governments; 'alignment' meaning alignment with CSOs' plans and strategies as much as with those of governments), as well as in CSOs' own effectiveness, conditioned by their own practices in addition to that of donors and governments.

From another perspective, as the AG-CS took shape as more of a partnership among its membership rather than an internal WP-EFF body, the group's mandate expanded to have "both an issues focus and a process focus" and "went beyond being about the Accra process...to a set of terms of reference which paid attention to first principles of multi-stakeholder interaction." (SW)

The relationship between the ISG and the AG-CS and the seeming overlap in their goals was, both very constructive and sometimes a source of confusion. While clarity on the respective goals and responsibilities grew over time, it is with hindsight that they are easier to understand for many involved at the time. The ISG represented the independent and direct voice of CSOs in the aid effectiveness dialogue with the WP-EFF and other parties. Its engagement aimed to offer a constructive CSO critique of the aid paradigm, revolving around the Paris Declaration. The ISG sought:

- To enrich and deepen the aid effectiveness concept through:
  - a shift in emphasis and concern away from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness to drive aid reform; and
  - more ambitious targets and inclusion of issues absent from Paris, including for example democratic ownership, human rights, as well as issues of transparency, alignment, country systems, conditionality, and predictability.
- To ensure more and more systematic inclusion of civil society in the aid and development effectiveness dialogue, internationally and at country level.

The AG-CS for its part was seeking:

- To help carve space for a direct CSO voice in the official aid dialogue.
- To enrich the principles of the Paris Declaration, and their implementation, to be more inclusive of civil society and civil society perspectives.

- To address CSO effectiveness, both as an issue of CSOs' own practices, and of the conditions that donors and governments establish that affect CSO effectiveness.

It was this third aspect of the AG-CS mandate in particular that was a cause for some concern and push-back from some members of the CSO community in the early days of the AG-CS. CSOs at first understood the AG-CS as being "to ensure CSO participation in the ongoing donor dialogue on aid effectiveness and more specifically to ensure CSO input at HLF in Accra 2008." (Hansen 2007:2)

As discussion on the AG-CS terms of reference progressed and it became clear that there was also an interest in addressing the question of CSOs' effectiveness, some CSOs were shocked by the entrance of this 'Trojan horse' into the mix, a shock that had an enduring impact: "The original notion of the AG-CS was to talk about CSO effectiveness. This was seen as a threat, while CSOs were trying to reshape the [HLF3 donor/government] agreement." (AT) "The Canadians were mostly concerned about NGO aid effectiveness and how CSOs could sign to something similar to the Paris Declaration." (LH) This concern arose, in no small part, in reaction to the oft-encountered immediate response of donors and governments to CSOs' voice on the Paris Declaration, by questioning CSOs' accountability and thus legitimacy. "You can imagine [at that time] the AG-CS was [perceived as] just an official way of saying "What about your accountability?" (AT)

These early concerns over the AG-CS' mandate and its donor-led nature were significant factors that led CSOs to formalize CSO-led engagement through the ISG as a counter-balance to the AG-CS. This went along with concern that the AG-CS would be seen in official circles as the channel for CSO voices, whereas CSOs were trying to establish a direct dialogue. From the AG-CS' perspective, "the idea was never that the AG-CS would speak for CSOs." (RL)

These concerns required a constant dance between the ISG and AG-CS, the onus for which was placed on the CSOs whose membership spanned both bodies. CSO members of the AG-CS always emphasized the necessity to

consult with and report back to the ISG on the AG-CS process and progress. Over time, constructive dialogue between the two bodies and with the WP-EFF both together and separately, helped dissipate this fear as further discussed below.

## Strategies of CSO Engagement in the HLF3 Process

It was said by Antonio Tujan Jr., chairperson of the RoA and the ISG, that the CSO presence in Accra was the hallmark of HLF3, a statement endorsed by many other Accra participants thereafter. It would be difficult to deny that CSO engagement, through both the ISG and AG-CS, brought its influence to bear in Accra and the lead-up to it. This was visible in the mere fact of CSOs' presence at HLF3, in the unexpected success of the CSO Parallel Forum that drew 1,000 participants, in the nature and tone of the dialogue among stakeholders, in the content of the Accra Agenda for Action, and in the way people think about aid and development effectiveness in the wake of Accra. These achievements, as will be demonstrated below, were attained not through the mere fact of CSO presence, but through a variety of successful CSO engagement strategies in the two years leading to Accra. This section outlines the key strategies of CSO engagement both as a historical record and to share the lessons of experience that they evidence.

### Solidarity

*"A key lesson emerging from this process is about how CSOs can work together based on the principle of solidarity, in new ways....with Southern leadership." (AT)*

In the AG-CS regional consultations, Antonio Tujan suggested that CSOs, in all their diversity, share a common characteristic, that of social solidarity with the people they work with or represent. In the lead-up to Accra, this solidarity carried over to relationships among CSOs. Central to CSOs' strategy of engagement was the solidarity that held the CSO participants together to build a common platform for influencing HLF3 in a way that would deepen the commitment to aid reform, and to do so with leadership from a Southern CSO. The ISG's over-arching goal was "to coalesce and create broad participation of civil society in both setting the agenda and in the event itself at Accra." (BT) Through the Better Aid Platform and CSO participation and awareness-raising in the various consultations, and ultimately the CSO Parallel Forum,

a constituency of CSOs aligned in solidarity behind the ISG's Better Aid policy position paper was created, with 650 CSOs and CSO networks and platforms having signed on to key policy proposals in *Better Aid: A Civil Society Position Paper for the 2008 Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness* by September 2008 and the launch of the Accra HLF.

Relations of solidarity among participating CSOs were aided by concerted efforts to be inclusive of a broad range of CSO types, from North and South, with attention early on to the imperative of bringing in the voice of gender and women's rights CSOs, as well as CSOs of various perspectives and interests. They were maintained in an environment that was respectful of equity and balance, and of complementarity between Northern and Southern CSOs' value-added. "There were lots of debate, but people were open, and willing to learn and to change long-held notions of how to network, or their analysis of development assistance." (AT) Having solidarity and equality as core principles allowed a tactic of raising the bar high when it came to developing CSOs' policy positions on policy conditionality or technical assistance, positions that were originally thought of as rather radical by some Northern CSOs in particular.

## Quality and consistency of analysis and messaging

*"Maybe our most important strategy was that early on in the process we developed a policy position paper, and we used it actively in different engagement processes – in our written comments on the Accra Agenda for Action, and in our bilateral engagement." (LK)*

Critiques of the Paris Declaration had been in place since its inception, emanating from CSO quarters as well as others, such as from the DAC's own GOVNET, which regretted the leap of faith between improving aid management and the substantive development concerns of human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability. At the first formal meeting with the WP-EFF in November 2006, CSOs planted the seeds of their independent analysis of the aid effectiveness agenda as it was then understood, with the over-arching argument that Accra needs to begin

looking beyond aid mechanics to address development effectiveness. At the subsequent March 2007 meeting with the WP-EFF, CSOs presented three briefing papers: Deepening the Paris Agenda; CSO Aid Effectiveness; and Issues in the Implementation of the Paris Agenda.

From that point onward as more and more CSOs joined the ISG, "many heads together helped move the analysis" forward (LK). A first draft of the *Better Aid* position paper was produced relatively early in the process in September 2007 as background documentation for the various CSO-led consultations that took place under the auspices of the AG-CS. Through collective reflection and constructive challenges of each others' positions, building on voices heard and case studies shared at the consultations, and on members' own research and analysis, such as those led by EURODAD, AFRODAD, AWID and Alliance 2015 amongst others, CSOs were able to build a "global, joint and consistent platform", articulated clearly and consistently in the position paper, which was available for all to draw from on the Better Aid website (LK). "The ISG showed a real capacity, notably in lobbying and analysis-providing." (PB)

Having this joint messaging in hand, the CSOs were able to apply it repeatedly in their engagement, both written and verbal. For example, the CSO positions elaborated in the paper were used by the ISG in their commentary to the WP-EFF on various drafts of the Accra Agenda for Action during the months preceding the HLF, in bilateral discussion between members, donors and developing country governments, and in meetings with the WP-EFF and its membership. Before the WP-EFF, ISG members took turns putting forward positions that over time became increasingly thoughtful and crisp. "Their interventions were outstanding." (RL)

One centrally important aspect of CSOs' analysis and messaging was the positive angle brought to the debate in the core message on democratic ownership. No stakeholder group could credibly take a position against the concept of democratic ownership, making it a shared, positive agenda through which analysis and discussion of long-standing issues such as technical assistance, untying, and conditionality could be "reframed in a new



and positive light.” (LK) Combined with this positive, constructive angle was the intellectual rigour CSOs brought to their positions. In order to be critically engaged, and heard, in this environment “you have to craft your positions and engagement in a more sophisticated manner. Instead of just trashing aid for its conditionality, you engage and call for no *policy* conditionality.” (AT)

Another key aspect was the continued ambition of CSOs’ messaging, capped by the one delivered by the CSO Parallel Forum, represented by the ISG’s Antonio Tujan and Rose Mensah-Kutin from NETRIGHT, Ghana, before the Ministerial dinner in Accra. In repeating their call for the Accra Agenda for Action to include measurable and time-bound commitments on a few key and fairly specific themes (predictability, tied aid and technical assistance, policy conditionality, country systems), CSOs’ messaging “helped the efforts of the more progressive donors and partner governments to push the negotiations.” (AT)

Meanwhile, CSO members of the AG-CS also contributed to the analysis that went into its original *Concept Paper* and the *Issues Paper* on key issues and questions, which was prepared as background documentation for the national and regional consultations. They drew extensively from the literature, from thematic papers commissioned by the AG-CS, and with input from an AG-CS editorial committee, they drew out aspects of CSO recognition and voice and CSO effectiveness and began to elaborate the ways in which the enabling environment and donor models of support affect CSO effectiveness. “The AG-CS had a thinking role through issues around the role of CSOs; it put together the paper work; gathered best practices and spear-headed outreach consultations...” (LS) In its final months before Accra, the AG-CS undertook the joint analysis and dialogue that ultimately led to the *Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations*, the final outcome document that simultaneously drew from and contributed to a growing understanding of the issues as Accra approached.

Finally, the sound analysis undertaken by the ISG and AG-CS was not simply conceptual and abstract, but built on real life practical examples of

case studies. "The focus on analysis was important for getting a sense of how things fit within "aid effectiveness"...[as was] the ability to be practical regarding what works and what doesn't through case studies and good practice." (SW)

### Choosing to "play ball"

CSOs' strategy of direct engagement, though seemingly obvious, merits mention. Some of the CSOs involved, such as the RoA and Alliance 2015/IBIS, made a very conscious choice to engage, and to do so in a concerted manner, early on in the process. Others chose to join later, as their awareness grew, as the real and perceived risks seemed mitigated, or for opportunistic reasons. Establishment of the Better Aid Platform, and its practical manifestation in a website through which CSOs globally could be informed and could endorse or not, the CSO positions developed by the ISG, facilitated an informed CSO choice to engage along the way.

### Balancing insider/outside tactics

"The combination of being both outside and inside was, I think, unprecedented. The results out of Accra are owing to that broad approach." (SW)

Part of CSOs' choice was whether to "play" from outside the official donor-developing country government dialogue embodied in the WP-EFF (the 'tent'), or from inside, or both.

In the early days of the AG-CS' creation and operation there was no small amount of concern from CSO quarters to CSO membership in it. Suspicions about the AG-CS' goals, in particular the inclusion of CSO effectiveness as mentioned, were expressed, or this topic was simply ignored as it was not part of the interests and strategies of some CSOs whose agenda focused on aid system reform. Others saw the AG-CS as a "diversion" from CSOs' priority messages of reform, intended to "tie [CSOs] in knots", or, worse, to extract CSOs' commitment to the Paris Declaration (BT).

These concerns were understandable given some of the messages emanating from the donor community. Though the key stakeholders responsible for launching the AG-CS may have had a different vision, the idea of bringing CSOs under the wing of the Paris Declaration was echoed by a number of WP-EFF members, and indeed was evident in early WP-EFF wording regarding the nature of the AG-CS. At an early multi-stakeholder conference in Härnösand, Sweden, for example, CSO speakers were challenged to address the question about whether Northern CSOs were prepared to implement the principles of the Paris Declaration.

Cooler heads prevailed however, in particular under the leadership of IBON and CCIC, two of the CSO members of the AG-CS. For IBON, acceptance of the insider/outsider strategy reflects Antonio Tujan's view that: "You don't just reject something because it is wrong or won't work. But if you believe that aid and development cooperation is essentially correct, and that therefore you can work to make it more effective, then you have to fight all of the conceptual battles to make it correct, and you can actually come up with something... rather than throw it away, or accept it blindly." (AT) CCIC saw strategically that, by not engaging from the inside, donors could use CSOs' reluctance as an excuse to not take civil society messaging seriously. They saw insider engagement as a tool for CSOs to be more effective in achieving their broad goals.

And, over time, the dual strategy of engagement through the independent CSO stream of the ISG, and through the multi-stakeholder stream of the AG-CS which, though effectively an independent body was affiliated to the WP-EFF with its Chair an ex-officio member of the WP-EFF steering committee, gave evidence to being a strategy of great advantage.

*"This was probably one of the most effective insider/outsider strategies that we've ever accomplished at a global meeting." (BT)*

## Multi-stakeholder aspect

*"The multi-stakeholder nature of the AG-CS was extremely important, as were the individuals that made it up." (SW)*

The multi-stakeholder AG-CS was put in place in large part as to establish a means of engaging civil society when the DAC and WP-EFF membership was not yet prepared for direct CSO participation. There was and remains apprehension among some in the CSO community of co-optation, and often resentment at the notion that a multi-stakeholder AG-CS was necessary to intermediate the voice of CSOs. Others, interestingly the Canadian AG-CS chair and CIDA representative were more convinced, by prior experience, of the enduring advantages of multi-stakeholder dialogue to move critical but sometimes contentious issues forward.

The multi-stakeholder format of the AG-CS "generated its own multi-stakeholder reality" with "both an issues focus and a process focus." (SW) As the different voices and constituencies came together to negotiate the AG-CS terms of reference, the objectives it gave itself evolved from something fairly modest to something broader and more ambitious, with buy-in from all concerned. Through the process of dialogue itself "you started to see some attention to the first principles of stakeholder relationships, to the interface between civil society and government and donors, and what that can generate in development." (SW) In a way, the AG-CS provided living evidence of the workability of these principles that were increasingly carried over to the broader dialogue at the international and decentralized levels. "The AG-CS demonstrated that there can be a multi-stakeholder approach, with all its flaws." (LS)

The AG-CS played a role in "defining principles for civil society engagement" with the WP-EFF and more generically (LK). The multi-stakeholder means of communication provided a framework for high quality dialogue with a positive tone that was thoughtful and reflective, rather than finger pointing and defensive. The February 2008 AG-CS International Forum in Gatineau, Canada was for many an unprecedented global multi-stakeholder dialogue

on civil society and aid effectiveness that laid the groundwork for many of the AG-CS findings and recommendations. Yet for others in the CSO community, the multi-stakeholder approach provided too much of a filter for CSOs' hard-hitting messages, seeing the AG-CS as "an antechamber, a filter through which representatives must absolutely reach a consensus between civil society and governments, at the risk of arriving at minimal positions."<sup>7</sup> (OC) Others observed that "the constructive nature of the dialogue at the AG-CS level carried over to the WP-EFF on both sides, in a sort of virtuous circle...the quality of dialogue in Gatineau [at the International Forum] was extraordinary. People came away from that meeting really impressed; they'd never seen that kind of dialogue...before." (RL)

Certain aspects of this particular multi-stakeholder dialogue helped make it work well. For one thing the effort made up front to establish that all parties were working toward a shared objective of "aid effectiveness", interpreted to mean "the extent to which aid resources succeed in producing sustainable development results for poor people" helped to keep the dialogue going even through rough patches (AG-CS 2007, pg. 46). This common objective at the International Forum in Gatineau helped set the stage for quality multi-stakeholder engagement. By early 2008, all parties either came to the table, or quickly developed through osmosis or emulation, attitudes of mutual respect. "CSOs acted on the premise of equality as development actors. They did not consider themselves subordinate...and they acted in collegiality with donors and governments. This actually created the conditions towards working together...Some donors and governments were equally engaged on the premise of equality, which was helped to a large degree politically by the AG-CS." (AT)

CSOs largely fulfill their advocacy role outside the tent; whereas the AG-CS, while maintaining independence of product and process, was considered inside the tent, but also facilitated CSOs' direct dialogue with others in the WP-EFF tent. By advocating from inside the tent and within a multi-stakeholder framework, CSOs were also directly and "officially" challenged to

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<sup>7</sup> "une antichambre, un filtre dans lesquels les représentants dans ce groupe doivent à tout prix arrivé à un consensus, entre société civile et gouvernements, quitte à aboutir à une parole édulcorée." (OC)

look at their own effectiveness. Their willingness to do so “had a level of self-awareness and self-reflection that went along with strongly held and argued points on aid and development effectiveness.” (SW) By seeking to address both aspects, hand-in-hand in a multi-stakeholder format, it may be that both agendas advanced further than they would have otherwise.

It is evident that the multi-stakeholder nature of the AG-CS multiplied civil society's engagement and contribution in a way that was, in the views of some, “extremely important to facilitating civil society engagement and also support of our advocacy agendas, at least opening room for our advocacy effort.” (LK) At the same time and as more room was opened, it became increasingly clear, even among the most sceptical on the WP-EFF itself, that the AG-CS “was no substitute for direct engagement with CSOs at HLF3.” (BT)

## Leadership and commitment

*“While it is easy to get a bunch of CSOs together to talk about things, to actually get continuity and build from one process to another requires individuals to take on the leadership role.” (BT)*

The leadership that actually incited CSO engagement, inside and outside the tent, came from different quarters as previously described. The RoA (in particular IBON, CCIC, AFRODAD), AWID, WIDE, Alliance 2015/IBIS, CIDA officials, and the WP-EFF Co-Chair Ambassador Cedergren along with Hubert de Milly from the WP-EFF secretariat, amongst many others all played a key leadership role that facilitated the converging of interest into action. From there on, both sustained and occasionally injected leadership helped to follow through on implementation of actions on a day-to-day basis.

Taking on a leadership role in a complex and unpredictable process can be a risky business. It requires a leap of faith that, despite a shortage of resources, the strength of personalities, the diversity of CSO voices, and the balancing act required of an insider/outsider strategy, the collective desire to achieve a common goal for the greater good can move small mountains. Clearly the leadership of ISG members, AG-CS members, and in particular those

who straddled both bodies, were a key and successful factor of strategy. "Individuals mattered...there were enough credible people willing to take a chance to see what could be developed, that tried to square the circle on being co-opted or being a shaper...with dedication and courage." (SW)

The leadership emanating from the AG-CS Chair was also noted on many occasions, in particular "the respect he generated in all who came in touch with him on the civil society side." (BT) CIDA demonstrated its leadership and commitment to the AG-CS Chair role in its participation on the WP-EFF Steering Committee, and in its sensitivity to its position as the voice of a multi-stakeholder body, reflecting neither a donor nor a CSO voice. Though this intermediated arrangement was not ideal from CSOs' perspective, who would have preferred to directly represent their concerns on the Committee, influencing indirectly the institutional set-up in a way that was politically possible at the time proved successful. "Paragraph 20 of the Accra Agenda for Action would not exist in its form without the leadership of CIDA that by then clearly understood the distinction between acting for civil society and the need to recognize CSOs as actors in their own right." (BT) This was no mean feat as the AG-CS representative had to consistently fight for paragraph 20 which was inserted, removed and re-inserted countless times. "If CSOs are happy with the results of the Accra Agenda for Action it is more to do with the AG-CS." (HV)

Participating CSOs offered leadership at different points in time by implementing complementary actions, such as the AWID and WIDE parallel consultations on gender equality and women's rights, held in Gatineau, just prior to the AG-CS International Forum, and their effective participation in the AG-CS. And though the analysis that led to publication of the Better Aid position paper was undertaken in a collective manner, the thrust behind certain messages, the task of actually getting it down on paper, and then communicating it, was led from different CSO quarters over time. For instance, the RoA had been pushing the importance of human rights standards to poverty reduction efforts and the concept of development versus aid effectiveness since 2006. AWID and WIDE were central to advance the imperative of integrating gender equality into CSOs' messaging. EURODAD, Alliance 2015/IBIS, Third World Network, IBON and AFRODAD were all central

to the evolution of the Better Aid policy position paper, originally drafted by WIDE, UKAN, IBON, ActionAid and AWID based on input from ISG members.

What must be noted in all of this is that, while the AG-CS processes were sufficiently funded by a variety of donors, the ISG operated for most of two years with no financial resources. IBIS was able to facilitate access to various sources of funding for the Ghana Civil Society Forum to organize and host the CSO Parallel Forum while IBON accessed SIDA funding for some national consultations and to bring CSOs to Accra. Otherwise, AG-CS resources helped support a lot of the CSO-specific processes financially, even simply through piggy-backing CSO meetings, including direct dialogue sessions with the WP-EFF, on AG-CS activities for which travel costs were covered. More importantly, that the ISG was so successful in its efforts demonstrates the commitment of those involved to make it work. "There was amazing energy, with lots of learning and putting in hours on top of what [CSO staff] were already doing." (HV) "A lot of people were committed to the process, even though it was not funded." (LK) The lack of financial resources also had its costs, however, in the abilities of the ISG to communicate in a timely and effective way with a broader community of interested CSOs, in its capacities to undertake sustained outreach at national and regional level, and in its ability to take advantage of all opportunities for influencing the work of the WP-EFF and related donor processes.

## Widespread consultations

One aspect of the evolving mandate of the AG-CS was its support for organizing widespread regional and national consultations which for CSO members was a pre-condition to CSO participation in the AG-CS itself and in the success of Accra. While demanding extra effort on the part of AG-CS members in terms of the time and energy required in implementing them, the consultations served a variety of important purposes.

First, the consultations served to *raise awareness* among CSOs and other stakeholders at decentralized levels regarding the Paris Declaration and aid effectiveness more broadly. In some instances the level of awareness



among CSOs, as well as among donors and governments, was minimal. Most importantly, the consultations helped to “socialize” participants on the connections between the “abstract notions” codified in the Paris Declaration and the associated WP-EFF level discussions toward the Accra HLF3, and the behaviour and impact of donor and government actions on the ground (BT).

Second, the consultations fed into the sound *analysis* previously mentioned. “The [AG-CS] *Synthesis* became richer because we understood, individually and collectively, how you could talk about Paris Declaration principles in a different way, and enrich them without betraying them.” (BT) This understanding evolved over time and emerged out of consecutive regional consultations and the Gataueu International Forum.

Relatedly, but a distinct and important third purpose served by the consultations was that they helped to build *ownership* of the various CSO and multi-stakeholder positions. All consultations were multi-stakeholder in character, at least for one day, if not the full event. They thereby created opportunities to bring people and institutions into the debate which in turn raised the level of buy-in from many players including CSOs, developing country governments, and institutions firmly embedded in the international aid effectiveness agenda, including the World Bank, the DAC itself and its members. “Some of the activities which brought some of the key players together meant that they in the end had to make choices about buying in or not. The more they were involved the more they bought in.” (SW)

In part this success was due to the fact that the consultations helped to break down previous dichotomies between those donors and governments whose position it was that CSOs should simply implement Paris Declaration principles, and CSOs’ position that the principles were either not relevant, or could not be expected from CSOs who had not in fact signed on to the Paris Declaration. They also widened the initial framework of the process making it relevant beyond preparation for HLF3. To coin an oft-heard phrase throughout the process, issues of CSOs’ roles and relevance in aid and development became important in their own right, not just in relation to Accra. So too did the practice of multi-stakeholder dialogue generate its own

momentum such that the process “came to be about Senegal or about Nepal, or about North-South CSO relations”, as attested in the ongoing dialogue processes in some countries. (SW)

The many national and regional consultations also served a fourth purpose of “*mobilizing authentic Southern CSO voices.*” (BT) These voices, along with a less dichotomous standpoint from all stakeholder groups, were further strengthened and at the same time catalyzed the International Forum in Gattineau, and were consolidated at the CSO Parallel Forum in Accra.

Finally and related to the above, the high level of CSO engagement through the consultations contributed a *critical political mass and momentum* that was difficult to ignore and effectively changed the face of Accra. Not least of this was thanks to the 700-plus CSO participants at the Parallel Forum which, though occasionally organizationally challenged, gave solid evidence of the existence of a productive CSO debate and ideas on aid effectiveness in the Better Aid Platform, and brought home the fact that the 80-plus CSOs at HLF3 itself were only the tip of the iceberg.

## Networking and strategic alliances

Clearly the highly networked format of CSO engagement toward the Accra HLF was a contributing success factor taking different forms. At the outset a number of CSOs, some of them networks (RoA, Alliance 2015, CCIC, CIVICUS, UKAN, CONCORD, LDC Watch, EURODAD, AWID, WIDE, Social Watch) came together to create a formal network, the ISG. Over time this core group established a CSO momentum to create the Better Aid Platform, an informal network of CSOs that voluntarily and pro-actively identified with the work of the ISG, and sometimes participated actively in dialogue and policy influencing opportunities on aid and development effectiveness (BACG 2009).

CSOs were also able to advance their advocacy positions through strategic alliances with other stakeholders. This happened sometimes on a bilateral basis when dialogue between a Northern CSO and its donor brought them to joint positions, such as that between IBIS and Danida, or SIDA and

Swedish and Kenyan CSOs. CSOs also linked, albeit mostly informally, to the developing country government Contact Group, a key strategy to identifying the “harmony of interests” on specific issues (RL). In this strategic alliance CSOs chose to overlook a degree of difference on some questions such as democratic ownership and CSO alignment, to focus instead on key areas of common concern such as donor transparency, alignment, donor use of country systems, conditionality and aid predictability. Just as CSOs were the hallmark of Accra relative to the Paris Declaration, so too was the level of participation of developing country governments also a hallmark of Accra relative to the Declaration as reflected in the Accra Agenda for Action, and “CSO positions resonated with their demands.” (AT)

Simultaneously, the AG-CS was able to advance a multi-stakeholder position regarding recognition of CSO roles and voice, and to push as well for greater ambition on some of CSOs’ areas of concern, with the help of ad hoc and dynamic alliances formed between the CIDA Chair or his representative with other members of the WP-EFF Steering Committee, or with other actors such as the Learning Network on Capacity Development. Identifying and building on harmonious interests through networking and strategic alliances all around helped to give additional weight to CSOs’ positions and to mitigate the prospect of opposition arriving in Accra.

## Challenges

The successes of each of the CSO engagement strategies outlined above did not come without their challenges. For instance, the ongoing investment in broadening and consolidating the relationships of solidarity among CSOs took considerable time and energy to reach out, reach in, debate and dialogue among many CSOs of different origins, mandates and values. Balancing the insider/outsider tactics required a delicate walk down the fine line between collaboration and co-optation. Organizing credible consultations at the scale and time-frame in which they were implemented (six months) was an exhausting exercise. While these challenges are fairly obvious to infer from the strategies as described, there were a few challenges faced by CSOs' engagement toward Accra that are worth distinct mention.

### Scarcity of resources

It has been noted that, despite the absence of a dedicated funding base, the ISG was obviously able to engage effectively due to the commitment and leadership of participating CSOs. Still, the lack of resources meant those involved put in plenty of extended hours over the 18-plus months of the CSO engagement process. It also meant that CSOs scheduled their meetings and consultations in order to benefit from AG-CS sponsored activities at which CSO participation was funded. While on the whole this approach brought efficiencies to the process, it did require a fair bit of juggling. "We needed money and always had to make do with less." (BT) The degree of financial flexibility offered by funding available, in particular for the AG-CS process, was critical to CSOs being able to organize and meet outside of the AG-CS. Funding was a main barrier for others seeking to actively engage however. "Funders do not understand the work that we are doing [collecting information and advocacy work]." (AC)

## Communications

The CSO members of the AG-CS had quite a tough job of communicating the nuances and outcomes of the dialogue that took place within the AG-CS to ISG members, though they “always reported back to the ISG regarding the AG-CS process.” (BT) This could not have been easy, particularly as there was at times lack of conceptual clarity even within the AG-CS regarding its mandate, and as this mandate evolved over time. Occasionally these CSOs were perceived by their colleagues as being insufficiently transparent, which, in hindsight, could perhaps have been avoided with more timely and clear communications. Though meeting minutes and core documents were always posted on the AG-CS extranet site, and the Better Aid Platform website was also well maintained with core ISG documents, a more pro-active approach to communications could have helped ensure full and consistent access to information and perhaps even a broader constituency base. According to one observer, “Most of the NGOs did not have a clue of the existence of the ISG and lots of CSOs are still not aware of the Paris Declaration.”(PB)

The challenges of information dissemination and awareness-raising arose in part because of the extremely broad, deep and diverse nature of the target group of global civil society, compounded by a lack of dedicated financial resources for the ISG and its work. “It remains difficult to engage the full spectrum of CSOs. We started with a small group of aid lobbyists and development NGOs. It has opened up the debate to a broader CSO constituency, but with limited reach. Such a process would need more time, more money.” (GE)

Communications challenges were faced in part because of the layers of CSO engagement on the inside and outside, and also because of the complex layers of analysis of the AG-CS’ mandate in particular. “The AG-CS’ goals were confused and confusing.” (LH) “Sometimes, from the outside, the AG-CS appeared so CSO-friendly, and supportive of CSO positions. This led to some

confusion between the roles of the ISG and the AG-CS...as an outsider, the distinction was sometimes very unclear: we could see similar messages and faces." (FZ) Compounding these confusions was the complexity of the WP-EFF and the Accra process itself, which many CSOs continued to identify somewhat simplistically with the DAC, which indeed played a strong secretariat role along with the World Bank. Communications challenges were also due to language barriers which, owing to time and financial constraints were not sufficiently addressed in terms of document translation, or simultaneous translation at the CSO Parallel Forum. Communications just prior to HLF3 could also have been more concerted, in particular with the 80 CSOs officially invited to HLF3, so as to sufficiently prepare them for their participation. "We needed more time to bring everyone to the same level and to divide the roles at HLF3." (HV) "We witnessed some important flaws in our lobbying strategy: a lot was done in the lead up to HLF3, but not at HLF3 itself. Indeed, there was no clear strategy at HLF3, a lack of coordination and division of tasks and of consideration of the resources (financial as well as dedicated CSO capacity) required. Because of this lack of resources, it has always been the same people doing everything. All this suggests that our action at HLF3 could be considered as a missed opportunity." (LS)

## Outreach and inclusion of civil society

A huge challenge for the CSOs engaged in this global process is that they were perceived as trying to represent 'civil society' writ large – an impossible feat given the numbers and diversity of CSOs worldwide. Though some of their messages, in part by virtue of their content (e.g. CSOs are development actors in their own right), came across as representing all of 'civil society', the ISG was "a coalition of the willing" and as with its post-Accra successor the Better Aid Coordinating Group, was "trying to be open, transparent and inclusive, but...not claim to represent everyone." (LK)

Still, there were some limitations in the CSO engagement to Accra that "brings some questions around its legitimacy and representativeness, and the inclusivity of the whole process." (NC) Some observers and CSO participants

alike noted the potential benefit of strengthening outreach such as to smaller CSOs or to social movements. The overall challenge to CSOs is to address “the risk of remaining – even within the CSO community – amongst the happy few, who attend conferences... It will be important to further enhance ties with the field, to broaden and anchor the constituency, establish and maintain governance principles that provide for representation, stability and legitimacy. It is in a way an issue of finding the right balance between remaining lean, competent and efficient and having a solid constituency to whom one is accountable.” (PB)

### Lost opportunities?

With so much on the agenda it is not surprising that some stakeholders thought that opportunities presented by the Accra engagement process were missed or not sufficiently seized. In particular, key ISG members regret that they did not do more to engage directly with the World Bank, given the level of influence of the United States, a key WP-EFF player, on the Bank, and the Bank’s influence overall on WP-EFF and HLF outcomes, including the Accra Agenda for Action. This remains one of CSOs’ engagement challenges for the road ahead. Also outstanding is the challenge of “resolving the tension between the United Nations process [represented in its Development Cooperation Forum] and the DAC/WP-EFF for dialogue on aid and development effectiveness” so that this dialogue can take place in a more equitable environment with higher levels of participation from aid recipient countries. (BT)

Donor quarters on the other hand expressed that more could have been done to tackle head-on some of the “myths, scepticisms and reservations” about the roles of civil society in development, on the ‘demand side’ of state-building, and in coherent partnerships versus “end run” gap-filling (SW). In some respects CSOs were challenged to relate their development roles to the Paris Declaration. At least in the early days, and some CSOs throughout, saw themselves in the role prescribed by the Paris Declaration as advocates and watchdogs. While the AG-CS was advocating for recognition of CSOs as

development actors in their own right, CSOs were at times limited in their views of aid and development effectiveness as being about what donors and governments do. It took some time for civil society "to see itself as a player, as part of it and not just an advocate. So the CSO effectiveness questions got pushed ahead. We could have had a richer discussion but CSO energies were focused elsewhere." (RL)

## Engagement with developing country governments

On one hand, as previously mentioned, CSOs successfully engaged in strategic alliances with developing country governments. On the other, however, broader and deeper engagement was and will remain a challenge to be tackled on the road ahead. "The weakest point was the Southern governments' participation in the AG-CS... a clear lack of ownership which was not properly addressed." (LS)

While there were real moments of multi-stakeholder dialogue involving officials from developing countries, this gap was replicated at the level of AG-CS regional and national consultations where consistent and broad-based participation of government (and, incidentally, donor) representatives was often difficult to organize. There are a number of issues at play here, the most obvious being that civil society-related agendas are not a priority for developing country governments. This is particularly so in an environment where responding to the 'mutual accountability' relationship with donors is already demanding of scarce time and resources, and where the capacity to address civil society-related issues is limited, especially when all things labelled 'aid effectiveness' tend to be centralized in Ministries of Planning or Finance.

Not only are civil society-related issues not a priority, but the existence of suspicion and even hostility between governments and CSOs remains an obstacle. "How to get confidence from partner countries on CSOs? It is still a challenge." (TB)



An appropriate strategy to engage governments at country and regional levels remains a challenge. Whether in future a more concerted effort to raise awareness and broaden the base of invitees to consultations, or even to organize the dialogue in a multi-stakeholder fashion as was done in some countries under the AG-CS process (particularly in West Africa), could help render them more truly multi-stakeholder, is worthy of consideration. "There needs to be greater balance as we go forward to bring in partner governments." (SW)

## Key Achievements

*"Not that we accomplished all that we wanted by a long shot, but we accomplished much more than we probably, in our hearts of hearts, thought we would two years earlier." (BT)*

No doubt there were many small coups along the road of CSOs' extensive engagement to Accra. This section focuses on the main accomplishments that are expected to have an enduring impact.

### Engagement as an achievement

*"One of the major contributions of the ISG is that it built an international dynamic around these questions, and a real process for the long term."<sup>8</sup>(OC)*

Evident in the presentation of CSO engagement strategies above is that the process of engagement in and of itself was an enormous achievement for participating CSOs, for the stakeholders that engaged with them and, one hopes, for the wider civil society community moving forward. "I would say that the most important lesson is the engagement process. The process involved many CSOs and empowered them. Empowered CSOs will continue engaging different parties on different issues at national levels and empowering others including local and grassroots CSOs." (UG) "The format of the dialogue, led by the AG-CS and the ISG, is noticeable and could serve as a model." (TB)

As we've seen, the practice of solidarity and efforts toward inclusiveness were significant feats for a not-inconsiderable swath of the massive and diverse community of CSOs with an interest in aid reform. The sustained combination insider/outsider dialogue process was "dynamic" and unprecedented; much was accomplished "not only because we were there, but because of the synergy between the inside and outside, over an 18-month period." (BT) The mostly equitable and helpful spirit and tone, and the multi-stakeholder

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<sup>8</sup> *"Avoir construit une dynamique internationale autour de ces questions et un processus dans la durée." (OC)*

dialogue format of the AG-CS itself, were “very constructive and mutually respectful, and carried over onto both sides in a way that was synergetically linked.” (RL) Amassing the analysis and publication of the Better Aid policy position paper was an accomplishment that served the ISG and Better Aid Platform membership well over the months of engagement to HLF3. Leading the organization of and participating in the eight regional consultations, along with tens of national consultations, all culminating in the AG-CS Gatineau International Forum was itself also no mean feat especially given time pressures. That participating CSOs were able to maintain their commitment to the process, even under time and resource constraints, with strong leadership always acutely aware of the fine line being walked “between co-optation and strategy” is no question a triumph of vision and collective will, helped along by a respectful and often receptive target audience for CSOs’ messages.

## Changing the paradigm, shifting the discourse

*“All of these processes are about setting norms. A clear outcome is that we began to set the norm of distinguishing CSOs as development actors in their own right.” (BT)*

*“CSOs aimed at changes on specific topics (conditionality, etc.). But they got much more.”<sup>9</sup> (HdM)*

Though the CSO community did not achieve all that they were seeking to influence in the content of the Accra Agenda for Action, the gains achieved were far from insignificant. No small achievement for the ISG was inclusion of “gender equality, respect for human rights, and environmental sustainability as cornerstones for achieving enduring impact on the lives and potential of poor women, men and children” (WP-EFF 2008). This clause in particular, it is hoped, will be the thin edge of the wedge to more squarely addressing development effectiveness versus simply the technicalities of aid effectiveness at the next HLF, to transitioning into a “third generation” of aid reform (AT). Impetus from the ISG, the AG-CS, the processes undertaken independently by

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<sup>9</sup> *“Les OSC visaient des changements sur des themes précis (conditionnalités, etc.). Mais ils ont obtenu beaucoup plus.” (HdM)*

AWID, TUAC and other CSO networks, and from other quarters within and on the fringes of the DAC and WP-EFF, provided the sound arguments and the political impetus to “shift the discourse at Accra to beyond monitoring the Paris Declaration.” (BT)

Overall the ISG’s inputs, official and behind-the-scenes, led to “considerable improvement over the Paris Declaration in terms of ambition” on key questions of conditionality, transparency and predictability amongst others (RL). CSO engagement affected the dialogue process and discourse, opening discussions on key issues that resonated with developing country government concerns but had been given little emphasis by donors. That these CSO inputs resonated with the demands of developing country governments meant that “Accra was the realization of what the Paris Declaration could have been.”(AT) In particular, the ISG was able to influence directly or indirectly the Accra Agenda for Action with some key advancements addressing:

- Local ownership and demand-driven development assistance, calling for appropriate capacity development and technical assistance;
- South-South cooperation, recognizing the evolving aid architecture and the imperative of learning from developing country experience;
- Accountability, including making aid more transparent;
- Predictability, including full and timely information on aid flows;
- Alignment and donor commitments to use country systems; and
- Conditionality, calling for mutually agreed upon policy conditions, and for these to be made public.

In addition, there are remarkably ten citizen or civil society-specific references in the Accra Agenda for Action, a seven-page document, when three years earlier the Paris Declaration itself only contained two narrow references to civil society. That paragraph 20 in the Accra Agenda for Action is dedicated to civil society and recognizes CSOs as development actors in their own right “changes the tone of discussion away from the narrow state focus of the Paris Declaration.” (RL)

Some CSOs would have liked to see a more ambitious paragraph 20, in which the implications of recognizing CSOs as development actors in their own right were more thoroughly articulated, but still see value in the Accra Agenda for Action commitments as a base from which to advance dialogue with their government counterparts. “This recognition of CSOs did not translate into effective commitments in paragraph 20. But the Accra Agenda for Action can still be used as a tool. Many other paragraphs (notably on evaluation, transparency, inclusive partnerships, enlarged policy dialogue, etc.), can be used by CSOs to strengthen their position vis-à-vis government partners.”<sup>10</sup> (AG)

Whatever was collectively achieved in terms of the Accra Agenda for Action, some of the key messages put forward by CSOs through the AG-CS and ISG are also “in people’s heads” and therefore constitute a new norm (RL). For instance, whereas the dominant aid effectiveness discourse had been a narrowly state-centric one, now other actors, parliamentarians, CSOs and citizens themselves are seen to be crucial to realizing the Paris Declaration’s principle of country ownership. The independent role of CSOs is recognized, at least in international circles, and with it the legitimacy of CSOs as development actors has increased. (RL) Recognition of CSOs’ roles and voice and as such the imperative of making space for those roles and voice, are “...now part of the normative framework against which there is some kind of institutional machinery and follow-up. It is embedded and anchored in value statements and institutions.” (SW)

Accompanying this norm is also a shifting normative framework regarding the way in which CSOs and official actors engage. As a process, CSO engagement leading to HLF3 “transformed the nature of dialogue between civil society and other stakeholders” to one between serious, respectful and equal players. (RL)

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<sup>10</sup> “Cette reconnaissance des OSC ne s’est pas traduite par des engagements effectifs dans le paragraphe 20 citant le rôle des OSC. Le Programme d’action Accra peut toutefois être utilisé comme outil. En effet, plusieurs autres paragraphes peuvent être utilisés (notamment, ceux concernant l’évaluation, la nécessité de rendre publics les flux de l’aide, les partenariats plus inclusifs, le dialogue élargi sur les politiques etc.) par les OSC pour renforcer leur position vis-à-vis des partenaires gouvernementaux.” (AS)

Establishing norms does not necessarily mean that these norms will be taken up by all concerned. The 'proof of the pudding will be in the eating', but as with other areas of international norm setting such as in human rights standards or gender equality, norms provide a common reference point even as struggles to achieve them are ongoing.

## Opening space for CSO voice

As just noted, recognition of CSO voice and the imperative of making space for it can now be considered part of the norms surrounding aid and development effectiveness. Concretely, CSO engagement to Accra "opened real space for the direct voice of civil society." (BT) This is most clearly evident in the fact that the WP-EFF has taken up the AG-CS' recommendation that "Civil society organizations should become official members of the WP-EFF, with full and formal participation in WP-EFF deliberations", and that "forward work streams under elaboration by the WP-EFF should also involve CSOs as full participants" (AG-CS 2008a:3). Despite these firm recommendations, even in the lead up to the WP-EFF meeting in November 2008, CSOs expected objections, or at least debate on the subject. Yet all present at the WP-EFF meeting agreed on this key reform to the WP-EFF structure, and which had been formalized at the beginning of the WP-EFF's 2009-2010 mandate in July 2009. "The AG-CS stimulated the notion of multi-stakeholder dialogue", a notion that it is hoped will continue to spread beyond the WP-EFF structure (AG-CS 2008b:2).

There is also evidence of space for CSO voice opening at decentralized levels and experience to build on. The pre-Accra consultation process left some enduring dialogue spaces in select countries such as Mali, with seeds and a taste for ongoing dialogue in others including unexpected places such as Kyrgyzstan. Further opening and consolidation of space for multi-stakeholder dialogue on aid and development at country-level is one of the forward agenda items that CSOs, in collaboration with donors and partner country governments, are focusing on post-Accra.

## Looking Forward

The purpose of this paper is not to map out or make recommendations for a forward agenda, which is already under way. The observations on CSO strategies of engagement in the process leading up to the Accra HLF, however, do offer food for thought in relation to CSOs' engagement toward HLF4, or indeed other efforts of CSO engagement in policy dialogue, whether internationally or at local levels. There is no blueprint, and efforts to repeat formula are usually ill-advised. Nevertheless, learning lessons from the past can serve to constructively shape the forward path.

Some have observed that those involved in advancing a more inclusive aid effectiveness agenda were "pushing on an open door." (RL) For reasons sometimes more and sometimes less virtuous, the international development community, in particular key donors associated with the DAC, were perched between ready and eager to accord at least a degree of rightful space to CSOs and to addressing issues related to civil society, aid and development effectiveness. The coming together of the ISG process with the AG-CS process made for a successful exercise.

The achievements to date from the Accra HLF are nevertheless only a beginning, and continual effort will be required on many fronts. Much can be done by CSOs themselves as noted by one observer: "You must spearhead the whole process. You must demonstrate aid effectiveness. If you manage that, you are in a position to be formally a key actor at HLF4, and to effectively criticize us. The practice must change in the field. We need to show ways, cases and good practices...We need more pragmatism and less debates...Carry on with the global work, but more action [is needed] at the national level...We need you to apply the spirit of the Accra Agenda for Action in the field, and push and pull others to implement it. You need to engage all actors and show emerging good practices, and from these, keep producing outstanding, sharp critiques...Two to three years is a very short time, but starting now, something could be documented for HLF4." (PB)

Norms are continually set and re-set in any policy domain: "I was surprised that together we achieved so much...but it is a continual battle. You have a framework in people's minds...they tend to think in a particular way, so you need to continually be pushing them to think in more comprehensive terms about what really makes for development. That's why this implementation phase now [for the Accra Agenda for Action, the Paris Declaration and the AG-CS recommendations] as we move to HLF4, there's a lot of recommendations and we should be working to implement them, I think that's fundamental." (RL)

Implementation – by CSOs, donors and developing country governments, individually and collectively, is indeed fundamental, and the time to HLF4 is short. Yet we know that "it takes time to make change happen...[and] there seems to be a disconnect between policy discourse and what happens in day-to-day operations, particularly at the level of government donor agencies." (AN) Concerted effort to understand the implications of CSOs' influence in Accra and to put in place forward actions is critical. "One of the clear outcomes of what we did in the AG-CS, and in the ISG, and in Accra, and how these came together is that we began to set some norms that address civil society as development actors distinct from donors and governments. It is how we now are able to work with these new norms, just as donors and governments work with the norms established by the Paris Declaration and those addressed in the Accra Agenda for Action, it's all about how we implement this stuff on the ground." (BT)

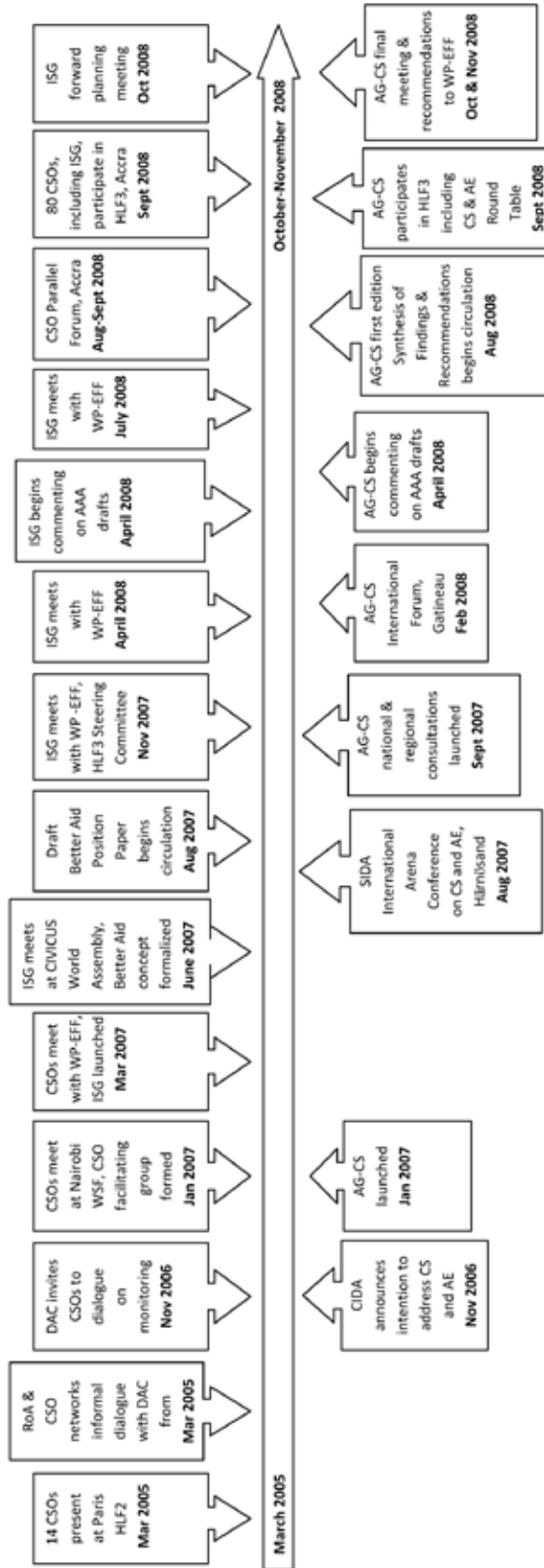
Equally important is the need for a realistic and manageable forward agenda. "Let's not get too carried away. Best if a few of us, moving forward on the basis of already developed principles, would engage with HLF4. The rest of us should focus on enabling greater citizen agency in taking initiative to make things happen, and to hold our own governments to account. That's what will bring far greater change than a set of rules regarding the aid machinery." (RR)

CSOs pushed the discourse and outcomes of Accra to address core issues like conditionality, technical assistance, and "clearly deepening the notion



of ownership.” (BT) Building on the success of these collective efforts, will certainly require continued, concerted CSO engagement in the dialogue with donors and developing country governments. These efforts set in motion a trajectory at Accra that can only serve to further deepen the concepts of aid and development effectiveness and to create new and ambitious outcomes that will focus the impact of aid on core issues of reducing poverty and advancing the rights of poor and marginalized populations.

## Timeline on CSO Engagement with the Third High Level Forum Process



### Ongoing activities of the ISG and AG-CS:

- ISG meetings and telecons
- AG-CS meetings and telecons
- ISG-led national and regional CSO consultations
- AG-CS-led national and regional multi-stakeholder consultations
- ISG and AG-CS participation in regional bank hosted regional consultations (April-June 2008)
- AG-CS participation in HLF3 Steering Committee meetings as *ex officio* member

## ISG and AG-CS Membership

### ISG membership arriving at HLF3:

ActionAid	Alliance 2015
ALOP	ANND
AWID	CCIC
CIVICUS	CONCORD
EURODAD	Ghana Forum on Aid Effectiveness
IBIS	IBON Foundation
InterAction	International Trade Union Confederation
Reality of Aid Network	SEND Foundation
Social Watch	Third World Network
UKAN	WIDE

### AG-CS membership arriving at HLF3:

Stephen Wallace - Chair	CIDA
Serge Snrech	France
Ivar Evensmo/Rasmus Gedde-Dahl	Norway
Wamupu Akapelwa	Zambia
Enrique Maruri Londoño/Tatiana Garcia (shadow to Nicaragua)	Colombia
Dr. Samuel Biroki (shadow to Rwanda)	Cameroon
Valdrack Jaentschke (absent)	Nicaragua
Christian Shingiro (absent)	Rwanda
Charles Mutasa	AFRODAD
Antonio Tujan Jr.	RoA/IBON Foundation
Cecilia Alemany (shadow to A. Tujan)	AWID
Yao Graham	Third World Network
Jesse Griffiths	ActionAid
Liz Steele	CONCORD/CARE International
Brian Tomlinson	CCIC
Nerea Craviotto (shadow to B. Tomlinson)	WIDE
Supported by:	
Goran Eklof	OECD-DAC
Hubert de Milly	OECD-DAC
Réal Lavergne	CIDA
Jacqueline Wood	CIDA Consultant

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As well as various ISG and AG-CS minutes, reports, and email exchanges which, though not cited, provided background information.

# Chapter 2



## Strengths, Weaknesses and Lessons in CSO Engagement with HLF3: Reflections from interviews with some key stakeholders

### Introduction

For its participants, the Accra High Level Forum (HLF3) was an incredibly rich opportunity for engaging on crucial issues of aid and development effectiveness on the part of donors, developing country government representatives and civil society aid activists. In setting out an overview of the CSO engagement with HLF3, the previous chapter drew in part from participant interviews that are presented more fully in their own words in this chapter. These informants include CSOs, donors and DAC officials, who were involved in HLF3 and in varying degrees with the CSO processes described earlier.

The interviews were chosen to reflect a diversity of perspectives, among donors, DAC officials and CSOs, on the roles and contributions of CSOs to HLF3. However, due to resource constraints<sup>1</sup> these interviews were necessarily selective and based on opportunities during other meetings and telephone access. While attempts were made to seek interviews, notably absent is the perspective of developing country government representatives.

The interviews were conducted with a standard set of questions that included self-identification of the interviewee as an informed observer of the CSO initiatives, overall assessment of this engagement, and some reflections on its impact. While each is an important subjective reflection on what happened and why, they should also be read taking account the overview of the actual CSO strategies and processes for engagement described in the previous chapter.

Selections from the interviews have been organized according to the following areas and issues:

1. What did CSOs hope to achieve in ramping up their engagement with the Accra HLF?
2. What were the goals of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG-CS)?
3. What have been the main contributions of the ISG, the AG-CS and other CSO coalitions?
4. What qualities should CSOs be bringing to their engagement with HLF3 and its preparations?

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<sup>1</sup> A proposal was presented in mid-2008 to a number of donors to finance this initiative to document the CSO process of engagement, but was unsuccessful in mobilizing financing. The conduct and transcription of the interviews were done voluntarily by Henri Valot of CIVICUS and Robert Pinauin of IBON Foundation. Henri Valot subsequently organized selections from these interviews for this chapter.

5. What were the main barriers (external and internal) faced by CSOs in ramping up their engagement with the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF) and HLF3?
6. How successful were CSOs in achieving their overall goals for influencing HLF3?
7. What were the most effective CSO strategies during the 18 months leading up to HLF3?
8. What were the most important strengths and weaknesses of the CSO initiatives during this period?
9. What are the perceptions of CSO initiatives on aid effectiveness in the DAC Secretariat, among donors, among developing country government representatives and among other CSOs?
10. What about CSO effectiveness?
11. What lessons can be learned from this experience for CSO engagement on aid and development effectiveness?
12. What advice to CSOs for the process and engagement with the next HLF in Seoul in 2011?

## 1. What did CSOs hope to achieve in ramping up their engagement with the Accra HLF?

*"CSOs hoped to achieve visibility and recognition of their own values and activities. It seems to me that they were calling more for this recognition than really to influence the donor agenda. Their goals were more attention seeking than influence making. But, the goals of the CSO process were poorly communicated. CSOs were inventing their own language, creating principles, inventing buzz words. The Advisory Group Extranet was very complex."*

**(Felix Zimmermann, OECD)**

- I would like to believe that there was a genuine concern on influencing the process and the content towards aid effectiveness for development effectiveness. (Philippe Besson, SDC)
- CSOs hoped to have:
  - Increased access to have a say in the debates around the review of the Paris Declaration and the financial resources essential for realizing their development efforts and to ensure effective participation of CS in shaping the aid effectiveness agenda.
  - Opportunities to advocate for a favourable outcome from the Accra meeting that support the women's rights and empowerment agenda in Africa. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- In my perception CSOs hoped to make real, substantive contribution towards eradication of poverty, improvement of the human rights situation in their countries, establishment of social justice, through active engagement in policy development, implementation, evaluation and monitoring processes.



For these goals, CSOs aimed:

- To attract attention to the significant role of CSOs in development and thus in aid effectiveness;
  - To get from states and donors formal (when possible) commitments on issues, targets, that CSOs are supporting;
  - To make states and donors more accountable through CSOs being present in the process;
  - To organize a CSO-led process of CSO involvement and involve more CSOs in this process;
  - To get the Accra Agenda for Action more oriented on aid development results under strong CSO monitoring; and
  - To help CSOs in countries to understand and get involved in Financing for Development and Paris Declaration processes (Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan)
- From the perspective of Canadian civil society and the trade unions, a primary goal was to gain recognition of CSOs as development actors in their own right. Related to that was the goal to frame the aid discussion in a broader development framework. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
  - CSOS aimed at changes on specific themes (conditionalities,etc). But they got much more. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
  - CSOs hoped to achieve:
    - A strong engagement, presence and visibility in the process, and an opportunity to formalize a relationship with the DAC. Indeed, DAC has not been close to CSOs before, except for some ad hoc meetings; and

- A deepening of the understanding by the broader CSO community of the aid agenda (CSOs had a rather limited understanding of it). (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- CSO aims were broadly to change the perspective of the PD process from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness. Each sector came also with specific demands. This was achieved somehow (concrete actions to take meaningful steps towards development effectiveness were missing), as witnessed by the AAA. The language is there but how do you implement these commitments? The same happens for the gender equality, women's rights steps. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)

### **Are these different or the same as your understanding of the specific goals of the International Steering Group (ISG)?**

- The ISG had fundamentally similar goals, but they also wanted to mobilize civil society, and to build an inclusive process leading up to Accra. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
- The ISG had specific policy demands which aimed to contribute to the framework shifting towards development effectiveness: among others on the 0,7%, tied aid, transparency, predictability, conditionality. The ISG also insisted that the human rights framework be the framework for development effectiveness (and, thus, for aid effectiveness). (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- The ISG policy paper had a much larger agenda than the HLF. CSOs used Accra as an opening and a space to create an agenda. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- Most of the NGOs did not have a clue of the existence of the ISG and lots of CSOs are still not aware of the PD. The ISG appears to have some legitimacy, and it was clear that the ISG's voice was listened to. The ISG was raising issues, in the name of a broad constituency. But there is a risk of remaining – even within the CSO community – amongst the happy few,

who attend conferences. I think it will be important to further enhance ties with the field, to broaden and anchor the constituency, establish and maintain governance principles that provide for representation, stability and legitimacy. It is in a way an issue of finding the right balance between remaining lean, competent and efficient and having a solid constituency to whom one is accountable. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

- It is difficult to generalize, as it depends on which CSOs we are talking about. Different CSOs had different goals at the HLF. Some had the same goals as the ISG; other organizations had different goals, such as: to reach out, to get some aspects into the AAA such as south-south cooperation, or the gender aspects. That is why some were very frustrated. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)

## 2. What were the goals of the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG)?

*"The Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness goals were confused and confusing. The Canadians were mostly concerned about NGO aid effectiveness, and how CSOs could sign on to something similar to the Paris Declaration. Their goals evolved. On NGO effectiveness, CSO participants were successful lobbying on enabling environment. Donor governments kept saying that the Canadians were representing the CSOs in the [Working Party] Steering Committee. And this was confusing. CIDA used it to put forward good messages at times, except for some of the most radical CSO positions, such as on technical assistance, conditionalities. With respect to the Working Party, again a confusing role. The AG represented by the Canadian government had an observer status at the Steering Committee: it worked OK, and was useful at times, but a bit odd."*

**(Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)**

- The AG was trying to give a voice to CSOs in the process and created a precedent. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- The Advisory Group goals, with its multi-stakeholder nature, were mainly to build consensus among various parties, advise the WP and prepare supporting documentation. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
- The AG objectives were to advance the debate, to overcome demands and postures and to reach consensus above oppositions; and to play an interface and facilitation role in the dialogue between the ISG and the Working Party [WP-EFF], to open the debate (from the NGO position on governments and on the role of NGOs in aid effectiveness). (Hubert de Milly, OECD)

- The main objective of the AG was to pilot the consultations in order to enrich the Paris Declaration. The AG was also an interface between the ISG and the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness, and between the CSOs and the WP EFF.

The goals of the AG were:

- To support consultations and consolidate the consultations results
  - To facilitate government dialogue, and
  - To give inputs to the AAA process. (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)
- The AG goals were mainly:
    - To get an internal recognition of the role of CSOs,
    - To increase the awareness of the PD and the AAA process, and
    - To conduct formal consultations. The AG initially had consultations with CSOs on the role of CSOs in aid effectiveness. On this, there were good synergies between the ISG and the AG, with appropriate mechanisms to outreach and engage CSOs. CSOs seized this opportunity, and brought their CSO methodologies.
    - What came to the agenda was the recognition of the role, voice and space of CSOs as development actors in their own right. This was the specific mandate of the AG, and was supported by all.

The AG articulated those demands to the WP. But this was the most non-transparent side of the process, because it was donor-led. At the same time, the CIDA leadership was effective. There were some critical moments, and people thought about quitting it but Stephen Wallace with his qualities, helped to create trust and to build a group. He would never abuse his position. The weakest point was the southern governments' participation in the AG. The AG was donor-led, with a clear agenda, and there was a lack of involvement and engagement of southern governments. (Liz Steele, Care International & AG Member)

- The Advisory Group realized that CSOs channel lots of money (they usually put forward this figure of 40 billion), and are actors in the development business. So the hidden but clear agenda for the AG (I believe at least for the donor side) was to make the CSOs sign the Paris Declaration. By the end of the AG process, it was clear CSOs would not accept to sign the Paris Declaration. More successful goals of the AG were the recognition of the voice, diversity and role of CSOs. The AG process also put on the table again some power relations between CSOs, notably between Southern and Northern. Key result and successful outcome for the AG is paragraph 20 of the AAA, where governments recognized the independent process of CSOs development effectiveness. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- CSOs worked in a somehow defined space by the AG and the WP-EFF. We deplored, at the AG Cotonou Consultations, that CSOs were not properly consulted on the mandate of those consultations. According to the AG, through those consultations, CSOs were to enrich the Paris Declaration. Some spoke out asserting that we needed to be more ambitious aiming at an Accra Declaration. There were then some tensions between the AG and the consultants in charge of the consultations...The ISG had larger aspirations and I felt myself closer to the ISG. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- The AG was about providing voice and room for a group of important actors in the aid system: the CSOs, whose role had been insufficiently recognized so far. The AG also considered the best means to address aid effectiveness with CSOs. The AG organized debates, joint analysis in order to find out the common base. There were some commonalities with the ISG positions, but the AG was a joint venture, whereas the ISG was pure CSO. There were some ambiguities generated by this kind of set up: the overlap, by which the same people could talk different things in different situations. But I don't think this posed a real problem. The AG leadership got branded from the outside: Canadians were seen as the CSO champions, as they did a very good job within the AG. However, the AG was a multi-stakeholder forum. The AG was not representing the CSOs, it did not have the same objectives as the CSOs; and in some areas,

the AG and the ISG analysis clearly differed. The WP Chair and Secretariat were sympathetic to the AG. The DAC members have been progressively influenced by the AG. Even members of the WP, who were reluctant about the presence of CSOs, accepted it in the end. This is a positive trend within the WP. A lot of work has been done. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

- I did have communications mostly with CSO representatives of the AG. My understanding is that the AG made important contributions to show the role of CSOs their strength and weakness through numerous national and regional consultations. Through this process it made donor agencies and governments understand better CSOs and it empowered CSOs. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)

### **How did the AG relate to the ISG and to the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF)?**

- The AG reported to the WP-EFF. A reasonable time was allocated to the AG during the WP-EFF meetings and the AG could be an active participant to the [Working Party] Steering Committee. If the AG had been effective in explaining/advocating for CSO positions, it had been a struggle to include language in the final stages of the AAA negotiations. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- Sometimes, from an outsider perspective, the AG appeared so CSO-friendly, and supportive of CSO positions. This led to some confusion between the roles of the ISG and the AG. As an outsider, the distinction was sometimes very unclear: we could see similar messages and faces. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- I am not as clear on how the ISG and the AG complemented each other as I would have liked. I understand that the ISG was supposed to provide inputs through the AG. But the goals of both and how they related to and complemented each other were not as clear to me. In my understanding, the ISG was doing more indirect inputs. It was mainly doing advocacy towards CSOs, organizing the CSO Forum, and research. (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)

- How did the AG relate to the ISG? There was a complete overlap of CSOs in the AG and the ISG; thus, the AG helped to build contact and relationship between the ISG and the WP. Nevertheless, there were no formal meetings between the WP steering committee and the ISG. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- The relationship between the AG and the WP-EFF: It seems that the AG facilitated the ISG consultations with the WP-EFF. The AG reports to the WP-EFF and assumed, after long discussions within the AG, some of the CSO positions.
- The relationship between the AG and the ISG was also sometimes very confusing because of the overlap of people. At the same time, those people were bridging those groups. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)



### 3. What have been the main contributions of the ISG, the AG and other CSO coalitions?

*"The format of the dialogue, led by the AG and the ISG ... could serve as a model".*

**(Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)**

#### **The Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG)**

- What came to the [Accra] agenda was the recognition of the role, voice and space of CSOs as development actors in their own right. This was the specific mandate of the AG, and was supported by all.

The AG had a thinking role through issues around the role of CSOs; it put together the paper work; gathered best practices and spearheaded outreach consultations and awareness-raising at the national and the regional levels. Broadly, the global awareness-raising was done by the AG, by conducting the consultations process. The AG demonstrated that there can be a multi-stakeholder approach, with all its flaws. But, as said previously, the ISG changed the mandate of those consultations. (Liz Steele, Care International & AG Member)

- The AG played a key role because of its capacity, and its leadership. It achieved recognition and access. And the chair of the WP-EFF was very receptive to exploring the role of civil society. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
- Major contributions of the AG: transmission channel. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- The AG produced the national and regional forums, case book, CSO empowerment processes. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)

- An extraordinary preparatory process at various levels (national, regional and international); made the NGOs think on their own effectiveness, in partnership with other sectors. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- The AG played an important liaison role between the official side and the ISG process. It also produced several good documents. Canadians made lots of efforts but the other actors, especially the southerners, could not match those efforts. They needed more time. (Tomas Brundin, Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy - Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- The AG allowed the recognition of civil society by donors and government signatories of the Paris Declaration, notably through paragraph 20 of the AAA. One has nevertheless to recognize a certain confusion in the role and the situation of the AG: one thing is to be a space which channels the voices of civil society, and facilitates the process (facilitation role); another thing is to act as a filter through which [AG] stakeholders needed absolutely to reach a consensus, with the risk of simplifying the debate (consensus role, where stakeholders need to be legitimate and representative). (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)

## The International Steering Group (ISG)

- To enlarge the [Accra] debate on development effectiveness and to open it to CSO effectiveness. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- The ISG, with its good transparent communication, became a very credible voice of CSOs, from the North and South. It put forward the Development Effectiveness agenda. (Liz Steele, Care International)
- The main contributions of the International Steering Group were:
  - facilitated communication between the ISG, CS and other stakeholders like the AG-WP-EFF members;
  - Conceived the idea and planning for the two-day consultation just before the CSO and High Level Forums in Accra;

- Circulated information to as many CSOs as possible globally to increase awareness about the AE agenda;
  - Generated debate through the internet on some of the key issues of concern and interest to CS that needed to be discussed in the 9 round table meetings in the Accra meeting; and
  - Raised funds and/or organized all the logistics for them to get to Accra in time for the meeting. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- The ISG had a coordinating role, mobilizing/organizing all the different groups, agreeing on a policy paper, communicating through the website notably. But also identifying/selecting the 80 reps: it was a painful process but it went OK, with an effective decentralization. The ISG had also a representation role, and actually making the CSO Forum happen. IBON did an amazing amount of work on this: it was useful having a chair of the ISG [from IBON], who would answer, represent, delegate. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
  - The ISG built an international dynamics on all these questions and a process. If one compares with Paris [in 2005], we moved from an ad hoc participation to a true process. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
  - To have clearly presented the NGO positions on the AAA and an exhaustive preparatory process in the field. Another major contribution: to have brought real CSOs (farmers, southern press, etc). (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
  - The CSO International Steering Group showed a real capacity, notably in lobbying and providing analysis. (Philippe Besson, SDC)
  - Substance: Recognition of CSOs as development actors in their own right, and deepening of the issue of ownership. And the start of the CSO effectiveness process. Dynamics: CSO positions strengthened the European position and particularly the Swedish position. Process: The ISG enabled the participation of 80 CSO representatives to the HLF3, and maintained an effective and close dialogue. (Tomas Brundin, Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy - Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)

- But the ISG work also brought some questions, around its legitimacy and representativeness, and the inclusivity of the whole process. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)

## Other CSO coalitions

- The important CSO contributions in Mali were to :
  - Stimulate a reflection on [donor] budget support; and
  - Challenge the “ownership” concept; we prefer the term “self-determination”. We needed to explain it, and it ended being part of the national recommendations. Southern Governments are in agreement with this term, since it evokes national sovereignty; there were several interventions referring to self-determination at the Round-Table on Ownership at the HLF3. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- Eurodad with its members and southern organizations researched issues on ownership and accountability; Alliance 2015 on democratic ownership; health organizations on aid effectiveness and health. On Eurodad’s contribution: Eurodad gave a lot of time. Being part of the Reality of Aid Network, we worked on content and various publications and reports such as the 2008 Reality of Aid Report and “Reality Checks”, etc. Eurodad also worked on issues relating to vertical funds, and published the “Turning the Tables” Report. We participated actively in the European AG consultation (Brussels meeting). I also supported CONCORD by contributing to the CSO-led process for the Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness in its early stages. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- The Women’s Rights coalition:
  - I was surprised to see how the coalition emerged from this process, the amount of collective work being done and the support from one organization to another in the run up to Accra. Trust I believe was an important element, which could help other future processes. This could be because we have a common goal and we also come from the same framework (gender equality, women’s rights, social justice).

- A major contribution (not only from women's rights organizations) was having gender equality recognized as a cornerstone for development. But this remained abstract since it was not translated into concrete steps / actions throughout the various AAA chapters.

The trade unions also made important contributions, and established a good alliance with the Women's Rights coalition (even more than the ISG). (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)

- CONCORD attempted to play its role at the regional level: to stimulate a debate, to be an interface between the national NGOs and the ISG. CONCORD organized the AG consultation in Brussels, which was open to all OECD. And from the Brussels meeting the CSO development effectiveness [Open Forum] project was initiated. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- In Switzerland: There were a few organizations like Helvetas working on aid effectiveness, especially on the concept of endogenous development; they pushed the aid effectiveness agenda within the CSO community. (Philippe Besson, SDC)
- National consultations, efforts of IBON to involve more than 3,000 organizations. (Tomas Brundin, Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy - Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- Our organization started to talk and network with other Mongolian NGOs on aid issues and how the use of aid needed to be improved in Mongolia. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)

## 4. What qualities should CSOs be bringing to their engagement with the HLF and its preparations?

*"A participatory and democratic way of working, through consensus-building and Information sharing. (In 2007, there was less information-sharing between the AG and the ISG. But trust was built and more bridges were established between the two groups). Very high level of expertise and placement of issues in a Rights-Based framework, especially from Southern organizations (European organizations often had a more technical approach)".*

**(Nerea Craviotto, Wide)**

- They should have been bringing knowledge to the ground, and sometimes they brought instead theoretical models and international jargon. But what they brought successfully was their networks, and more essentially a critical voice, which did not exist in Paris [in 2005]. So many documents were produced: from the AG, from the ISG, from individual CSOs. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- CSOs gain in credibility if they can prove that they are legitimate, that they do have a constituency, and a broad one, agreeing on a common platform but not hiding the existing differences. It would be better than pretending as if everyone agreed: CSOs should be less afraid to show that there are internal divergences. And they should be mindful to promote and present not always the same crowd, the CSO jet set flying around. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- Bringing issues that enrich, notably the development effectiveness agenda. CSOs pushed for a substantive and political agenda. But this was also a weakness or an obstacle since the overall dialogue was on aid machinery.

Being very open and transparent; but it was felt sometimes that CSOs were not ready to accept criticism and to tackle their own effectiveness.

It is a strategic issue for future advancement. CSOs must come with proper self regulation mechanisms (Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)

- Qualities that they should have been bringing:
  - Better transparency, notably with the ISG and AG composition. Also there was seemingly a random participation to the consultations. We did not really know how participants were selected.
  - More coordination. It was difficult for us to help sometimes.

But, the qualities shown by CSOs should be highlighted notably the clarity and consistency of the message and the significant focus on gender equality, with a good added value. (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)

- First of all, it has to be said that CSOs do not constitute a monolithic block. There are political differences and I am not sure that we always take the time to hear everyone and build common understanding. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
- The capacity to innovate, to work and strategize together, to achieve meaningful consensus, and a stronger commitment of time and human resources allocated to these processes. A truly democratic style, very unique to CSOs, and rigour in evidence-based positions. Important research in development cooperation is done by CSOs and academia. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- The quality of the preparatory work, the consultation process, the quality of their analysis and researches (they are credible think-thanks). Their seriousness and self-control: CSOs accepted to be "reasonable". Moreover, CSOs seemed to accept to question their own practices, by starting a process on their own effectiveness. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- Understanding of what consultation means: being able to listen, allowing space for dialoguing and being realistic with the need to find consensus. These qualities were very apparent at the AG. At the same time, there is no need to agree on everything. We are used to the respect of diversity in our environment. We brought the need for transparency and the

respect for time for people to reflect and position themselves. This has created trust between actors and is a way of working, reflected at the Round-Tables. (Liz Steele, Care International)

- Being organized, and prepared at the meetings (talking points, using good examples, with skills). (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- Networking skills, readiness to read and discuss not very easy issues around PD and FFD, lobbying skills, analytical skills and ability to make intervention based on statements and positions from countries or sectors, ability and willingness to work in teams. (Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan)
- Expertise and a good responsiveness during the process, even if we were not always able to have our agenda accepted. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- I think CSOs need to work from data and analysis of their country. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)



## 5. What were the main (external and internal) barriers faced by CSOs in ramping up their engagement with the Working Party and HLF3?

*"Funding! Funders do not understand this work that we are doing (collecting information and advocacy)."*

**(Anabel Cruz, ICD)**

### **Internal barriers (within CSOs, and consultation process)**

- Diversity has pros and cons. It seems very hard to coordinate CSO messages. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- Understanding of the topic: How can organizations understand that these international issues [on aid effectiveness] are absolutely related to the daily work of most of CSOs? Many service-delivery and social services organizations do not have the time to focus on these issues. It is a responsibility of groups like the ISG to disseminate widely the issues. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- The consultations were dominated by mostly NGOs and had less input from social movements. The aid effectiveness debate is quite complex. The technicality loses many of us, and will make some of us professionals in the field, but removed from our constituencies. Some other barriers were also: having enough time to prepare, having materials available in advance, having resources to popularize issues and raise public awareness. There is a need to find ways to connect with and perhaps engage those organizations (urban dwellers, cooperatives, and other social movements) which have broad constituencies. I believe that we made some small steps in this regard in Ghana. However, I also believe that we don't all need to be doing the same things, so we therefore need

strategies, a division of labour, in order to make sure that all aspects that compose a campaign are covered and taken care of. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)

- It remains difficult to engage the full spectrum of CSOs. We started with a small group of aid lobbyists and development NGOs. It has opened up the debate to a broader CSO constituency, but with limited reach. Such a process would need more time, more money. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- On policy, we tried to cover all the issues, and we were not able to do so; the ISG member organizations did not have enough resources (human, financial and time), technical and political skills, and we worked sometimes in breadth, more than in depth. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- Main barriers were: Communication especially due to language barrier and the challenges of getting documents translated within a short time. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- CSOs were both inside, through the AG, and outside of the WP-EFF [through the ISG]; some had years of experience with the OECD, others not. There were consequently different levels of access to information, which may be fine, but it becomes a barrier when the information is not democratized (at least among your partners in the process). Not everyone had the same knowledge on the critical issues and the lobby targets. Within the ISG, one could notice a lack of trust and some competition at the beginning, which I believe didn't help. Many of the members of the Reality of Aid network were very much engaged after Paris, and then a new platform, the ISG, was created for Accra. I felt there was some reluctance from these members to open up the space. This changed a lot after the Ottawa [AG] Forum. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- There was pressure put on CSO effectiveness: a kind of "carrot and stick" from donors. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)

## Main barriers for CSOs at the HLF3

- The Accra preparatory process was not really tripartite, as CSOs were not truly members. Also, the non-negotiation of the CSO participation modalities to the HLF3 was an issue. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- The facilitation of some [CSO] participation has been difficult. But there were no obstacles on the substantive side. Major concerns from CSOs on the draft AAA were somehow addressed. (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)
- The number of CSOs present in Accra was not a barrier. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- We faced a lack of transparency around the decision-making process at the HLF itself. We did not know who was pulling the strings. We had space; we were in the tent but not at the table. Also, we were not in the [developing country] Contact Group with the AG. (Liz Steele, Care International)
- From the OECD itself, as they are not used to talking to anyone outside their institution. Some of the WP-EFF members did not show up at the consultations. At the HLF itself, there were places where we could not speak, and this was where the AAA negotiations were happening. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- CSOs came only with the default mode and seeing only what was negative. (Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- Barriers – limited number of participants accepted to HLF, limited access to ministerial meetings, still existing procedural disempowerment, and limited knowledge of some CSO participants on effective lobbying, and not enough level of team work. (Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan)

## Barriers for CSOs from governments (donors and developing country)

- Reluctance from many governments to listen to CSOs, because they thought it would distract from intergovernmental negotiations. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- Finally, it takes time to make change happen. Also, there often seems to be a gap between policy discourse and what happens in day-to-day operations, particularly with government donor agencies such as CIDA. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
- We noticed the hostility of many Southern governments (and in the AG, Southern governments were the weak link). (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- Was there some resistance from partner countries? No, this was not really seen in the WP-EFF. But the ISG could have met more formally with the partner countries caucus. The participation of Southern countries in the AG was also limited, due mainly to the lack of capacity, and limited staff time. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- Some donor countries and partner countries remain sceptical about the overall role and contribution of CSOs. They may be seen as competitors in the race for aid resources or as permanent partisan critics. (Philippe Besson, SDC)
- How to get confidence from partner countries on CSOs? It is still a challenge. (Tomas Brundin, Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy - Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- Some governments openly questioned CSO participation, arguing on CSOs legitimacy and professionalism. Others clearly shifted throughout the process, like Louis Michel, European Commissioner. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- In terms of results, I believe that we under-estimated the political blockages on a series of questions. We were trapped in a technical agenda; we kept saying that it was not only technical, but we failed to

uncover its deeper political aspects. Donors were usually telling us that the negotiations with the US, the Indian or the Brazilian governments were difficult. We did not anticipate enough the political blockages. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)

## Barriers for CSOs arising from the World Bank

- Some resistance and scepticism from international institutions such as the World Bank, also due to existing CSO defiance and confrontation with the International Financial Institutions. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- We were not sufficiently engaged with the Bank, and we should have seen that earlier. That said, it seems to be very difficult to know where the Bank was coming from. The Bank was a blocker because they were heavily influenced by the US. We could have galvanized EU governments to use their influence in the board earlier. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- Well, the Bank is not a monolith. I did not get the impression that the Bank was stopping the NGOs. But they were showing their own constraints, without bad intention. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

## 6. How successful were CSOs in achieving their overall goals for influencing HLF3?

*"We did not do too badly; at least our voices were heard even if not all the recommendations from CSOs were taken on."*

**(Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)**

### In relation to HLF3

- I would say: "beyond expectations"! Even though the AAA does not say that much, there is a level of explicit recognition that did not exist before. We have to look further than the AAA: CSO participation in the HLF Round-Tables, the impact CSOs had [on issues] beyond RT6 [on civil society and aid effectiveness], and the general CSO participation to the HLF. CSOs were talking with focus and preparation. CSOs put their mark on the mood of the HLF. CSOs proved the usefulness to governments to engage with them. Some proposals from CSOs were very well received. They proved their value. Also, lots of contacts were established, and institutional trust was created between CSOs and national, regional, and global platforms. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- Participation at the HLF Round-Tables: a space was created and the question is now how do we use this space more effectively (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- At the HLF, CSOs were credible and independent stakeholders. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- In the HLF itself, what was interesting was the fact that there was an ISG, with CSOs from the North and the South united, links to southern governments, and CONCORD with a good understanding of the European position. The ISG could draw from all of this, with people monitoring throughout the HLF negotiations. (Liz Steele, Care International)

- Some successes: the recognition of CSOs as development actors in their own right, and of the development effectiveness agenda; the space increase: increasing from 15 in Paris to 80 CSO representatives being present; having a Round-Table on civil society; being at the Ministerial.
- At the political level: being listened to, having a voice, being there: it was very successful, especially if you compare it with Paris 2005 (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- Changes in some donors' and states' attitudes to aid effectiveness as development effectiveness – during Round-Tables, participants from state and donors were debating. Shaking resistance and making visible US positions on conditionalities, and making stronger the rights of developing countries. (Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan)
- The CSOs were excellent in raising their visibility. CSOs contributed substantially, and the issue of ownership is a good example: it is now clear to everyone that governments need to interact with CSOs, Parliaments. The CSO involvement in Accra lacked organization – 80 or 120 [CSO] participants do not matter. The quality was more important. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- A key indicator is the strength and presence of CSOs in Accra itself. They were more vocal and present at the HLF3 than many governments. This means in a way that governments may have a capacity problem, which we need to address too. Other successes: The ISG did a good job, especially on conditionalities. CSOs were in the audience, at the podium; they were in all Round-Tables. They were in the panels, the posters, the side events; government representatives picking up points made by CSOs. CSOs presented well the rhetoric. Now CSOs need to walk the talk. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

## On the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA)

- The best monitoring tool is the evolution of the AAA! And this is even more obvious, if you compare it with the Paris Declaration. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- In the AAA itself. I think that the AAA might not be a revolutionary document, but it is a tool, a framework with which we can work. I did not understand the high level of frustration expressed by some. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- CSOs have been quite successful in achieving official recognition of CSOs as development actors in their own right in the AAA. They were less successful in obtaining changes on important policy issues (conditionality, predictability, use of national systems, etc.) as seen in the language of the final AAA. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
- The AAA can be used as a tool. Indeed, paragraphs [other than para 20 on CSOs] can be used by CSOs, such as those on evaluation, transparency, inclusive partnerships, or the dialogue on development policies. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- Politically, CSOs were quite successful. Their major demands were recognized, although not necessarily in the final AAA outcome. But some issues we have been demanding have been addressed. There was so much push-back in the draft AAA before Accra but we managed to counter some of that. In general, it is positive. CSOs also challenged the illegitimacy of the structure, and there is some language in the AAA that this must change. And the overall dynamics in Accra show that change is really needed. Southern governments support that. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- CSOs were also successful probably in terms of the key issues of democratic ownership, accountability and transparency. There is some time-bound monitorable commitments, and to some extent the recommendation on the use of country systems. The ISG set its



priorities and fed the WP at a very early stage. But they did not move the debate on conditionalities forward. Perhaps CSO messaging around conditionalities was not as clear as it should be. Those issues are much more problematic and political; and one could say that CSO recognition is less critical and contentious. (Liz Steele, Care International)

## On engagement inside and outside

- A critical factor was the long term engagement of CSOs (ISG, AG and the Open Forum GFG). It was an ongoing process: we acquired a good political understanding of the process through the AG, and being on the inside made us very successful in our impact. The AG was supporting CSO presence, and we could influence the HLF itself, the Round-Tables, etc. (Liz Steele, Care International)

## In building coalitions

- In terms of coalition-building, some people were critics of the coalition-building process that they considered not transparent. How much can this global coalition be effective, and exist at the national level? Also, how much were [existing coalitions such as] CIVICUS or AWID members involved in these issues? This would deserve attention and research. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- In the organization of CSOs parallel Forum on Aid Effectiveness and AWID's Women's Forum [at Accra]; in involving CSOs at country level consultations ... I think CSOs were successful. Also successful was the numbers of CSOs involved at these national and international consultations, the collaboration, coordination among and with others, the solid basis of their presentations, debates, and statements. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)

## 7. What were the most effective CSO strategies during the 18 months leading up to HLF3?

*"Being involved in the Advisory Group: magnificent process. CSO parallel Forum: excellent event!"*

**(Hubert de Milly, OECD)**

- All the strategies were effective, but I think that lobbying and having a clear cut vision was very important. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- I think that national consultations were the most important strategies because ... they helped to start the people's process for engagement. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)
- Most important were dissemination of information, lobbying, consultations, including the impressive openness to feedback for the final CSO statement of the CSO Forum. The CSO Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) group convened a meeting of LAC governments in Accra. What was incredible is that it was the first time those governments were actually meeting to discuss common positions on aid effectiveness. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- There were a variety of objectives pursued:
  - In terms of influencing the AAA, and getting space: the ISG main strategies were to have a common position, to make this position public and transparent; and to perform additional lobbying to national northern and southern governments.
  - In terms of formal meetings with the Working Party: the AG was also used to influence the WP, to get a space for CSOs in the whole Accra process.

- One important thing, because it is a political issue, within the AG: it became apparent that it was CIDA-led, with a kind of hidden donor agenda. Donors wanted the CSOs to apply the Paris Declaration to themselves. But throughout the process, with the Brussels meeting, there was a clear signal from CSOs, which opposed the applicability of the Declaration to CSOs. This was a turning point, because it started the CSO development effectiveness process.
- At the same, the ISG was doing the critique of donors as Paris Declaration implementers. Both processes were the winning strategy. We had a powerful position, and we were much more credible. The CSOs influenced the AG mandate and the AG in the end supported our independent process. (Nerea Craviotto, WIDE)
- The most effective strategies were:
  - The use of one consultative space, through the AG consultations. It was used to channel CSO voices and messages, and its outcomes would be read, assessed and considered by the WP-EFF;
  - The use of another space, led by the ISG, which came up with a common position paper, comments on the different drafts of the AAA;
  - The use of media and all forms of communications, including the betteraid.org web site, e-lists, etc;
  - The CSO Forum and all the other forums that took place in Accra (Trade Unions, Gender)
  - The alliance with trade unions was also important and strategic (this was strategic for the women's rights advocates, since the trade union representatives would support many of our positions and messages, and we would do the same with theirs);
  - The Women's Rights coalition made a strategic alliance with UNIFEM;
  - The coordination, and the agreement on a common position;

- The use of media and new media (dissemination and information);  
and
- The consultation processes to build awareness, capacity and mobilization (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- The most effective strategies were to:
  - Unite through the International Steering Group (ISG) and undertake targeted lobbying at various levels, notably in Brussels and at the OECD, by presenting clearly the CSO position and CSO reactions to the draft AAA. I am not informed about any lobbying towards the World Bank;
  - Accept to contribute to the Advisory Group: magnificent process. CSOs established a parallel mechanism with the ISG, and kept an effective participation to the AG. The two were completing each other very well;
  - The direct participation in the [Accra] Round-Tables and in the HLF: the Round-Tables' reports tell a lot, they are brainstorming for the future. But sometimes, CSOs tried to monopolize some Round-Tables, which proved to be counter-productive;
  - The betteraid website united voices and was efficient. The AG website was very rich;
  - CSO comments on AAA drafts were not really efficient, as CSOs did not have real space in the process. We played transparency, but CSO contributions were lost in the mass of reactions. In the negotiation group, CSOs were represented quite well by the Canadians. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- The most effective strategies were a mixture of joint policy proposal (agreeing the joint position paper was very important), the strategic alliance with southern governments, the media work (there were some important media achievements, with big INGOs coming on board at the end), the comments made to the drafts AAA. Also, building on the AG

process, the ISG could consult a lot and deepen the issues of the aid agenda. It was a combination of lots of these things.

The meetings with the Working Party were necessary, but not the most effective, but the informal consultation around these meetings, the letters, etc... were effective. The strategic alliance with southern governments: contacts with individuals, not always with the most likely routes, but using those OECD meetings, having good communication, including contacts with Matthew Martin and K.Y. Amoako. They received our documents, and others that they found useful, such as the EU position paper. There were important commonalities with southern governments: on conditionalities, technical assistance, tied aid, mutual accountability, predictability. There were also important differences: on democratic ownership, transparency, and CSO space. How did these have impact? Indeed, it had some impact on the AAA (para 13). On transparency, there was no objection because we were pushing more on donor transparency. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)

- The series of workshops and seminars at national and regional levels: those supported broad consultations, awareness-raising and education and coordination. These were very important to build the credibility of the CSOs present in Accra. They also achieved a broad and deep understanding of the issues. Good strategies were also: the engagement with the formal process, through the AG and with the WP-EFF; the policy positions: Individual CSOs have been formulating policy positions, which provided the base to the ISG position; the Gender network contribution: it has been determined and successful in using the process, and feeding the formal and the broader processes; and the public outreach. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- Among the most effective strategies were:
  - Statement development from CSOs and wide discussion, AWID preparatory and lobbying efforts, organization of multi-stakeholders consultations. – they gave a clear understanding of what it is that CSOs want from the process and why; they involved national and

local organizations in the process, thematic issues were raised and included. The websites were also a positive strategy for accessing information on CSO plans and positions. The collection of signatories on key policy statements was also important to demonstrate to governments and donors the united position of CSOs. (Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan)

- I am still sceptical about the CSO Forum: is this a parody of consultation? One could see in it an instrumentalization of civil society, notably the southern civil society, to validate a position elaborated by others. It is a mistake to do a parallel Forum, just before the political High Level Forum. We have de facto an over-centralized organization and our consultation capacities are limited to the participation in workshops. The CSO Forum was a show, but many people did not know what they were doing there. From my point of view, we needed to manage two series of regional consultations: a first one for information (this was successfully managed until the AG Nairobi CSO consultation), and a second one aiming at a political positioning, with participation of all actors from across civil society. The two days just before the HLF could have been better used to strategize with the group of 80 accredited representatives: preparation, information sharing, division of tasks, and finalization of an advocacy strategy. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- The most effective strategies were:
  - Serious analysis, reporting and evaluation combined with lobbying DAC, partner countries and donors
  - Putting issues in the press (notably in the Financial Times during Accra)
  - Engaging debate, and doing it pretty well. CSOs were part of the process and were remaining at the same time independent. This was accepted by the WP-EFF Chair.
  - Those strategies were very effective. If you look at the AAA, CSOs were instrumental in putting some key points in the AAA. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

- The most effective strategies were a parallel process and an engagement; a dialogue, with representation in the Advisory Group and a link with the Working Party. This was a good set up, the ISG discussions could be brought to the WP-EFF. Individuals at the HLF3 played an important role: Tony, Kumi, CONCORD representatives. But, the CSO Forum could have been organized in a better way, there were too many logistical issues. (Tomas Brundin, Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy - Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- Networking meetings, publications, communications, personal lobbying were the main strategies. Communications were effective: betteraid.org was a very good site and well advertised. CSO presence was impressive, with dedication, organization. CSOs raised their voice. The direct participation in the Round-Tables and the HLF itself: good, well covered by CSOs, but messages should have been coordinated better. The BBC debate [at Accra] was good; Kumi Naidoo was a good CSO spokesperson and at the same level of the officials. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)

### **Did CSO strategies effectively address issues of gender equality and women's rights in the HLF process, and in CSO processes?**

- Gender issues were really well covered; women's organizations were effective, with a strong participation. They had space, their voices were heard. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- Thanks to the women' movement, gender equality and women's rights issues were properly addressed. Trade unions contributed a lot with our decent work perspective, to moving beyond the focus on only aid. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
- Issues related to gender and women's rights were carried by a small part of CSOs, which succeeded in expressing their position in Ottawa [at the AG's International Forum] and at the parallel CSO Forum [in Accra]. But vigilance is required to ensure that those questions are intrinsically part of the agendas. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)

- The issues of gender equality and women's rights were addressed, and it is very clear in the AAA. It has been one of the most successful messages. AWID and Wide have done a lot, as have others, and they have been vocal on how aid effectiveness is directly related to issues of gender equality and women's rights; and how the aid architecture will affect funding to gender equality and women's empowerment. Did CSO strategies effectively address issues of gender equality and women's rights: yes, the gender equality and women's rights network was very strong and made very visible inputs. They were extremely successful to get in the agenda. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- The issues of gender equality and women's rights: not at the beginning, and certainly not at the Advisory Group in its first months. However, because we were flexible, they were addressed. But one has to recognize that there are limited references in the AAA, and in this sense, we were not so successful. (Liz Steele, Care International).
- CSO strategies did make some efforts to address the issues of gender equality and women's rights, clearly included gender as a principle and as a value, and highlighted its importance in development. But this didn't translate in concrete proposals. As CSOs, on gender equality and women's rights, like the governments, we are still in the preamble (framework), but not in the level of concrete recommendations, and even to be there, we needed to negotiate a lot. But this is already a step forward, probably small when we think of the number of years women's rights advocates have been voicing these issues. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- A lot to be done, but CSOs made tremendous and visible efforts on reflection of gender equality issues. CSOs were addressing gender equality issues because women's organizations were part of the process and in fact led this part. But southern NGOs were not that well involved, and one of the reasons is limited access to discussions and networking and language was a barrier too. (Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan)
- On gender equality and women's rights: not really. Some positions were schematic and dogmatic. I saw certain confusion between gender



equality and feminist agendas. The broad gender equality issue sometimes appeared to be kidnapped by the feminist agenda. I would have preferred a common understanding on gender equality. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

- Yes, they did but there is room for improvement. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- Yes, the issues of gender equality and women's rights were addressed, but we should have a discussion on the overall mainstreaming issue. (Tomas Brundin, Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy - Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)

### **Did CSOs successfully engage southern CSOs as well as northern CSOs, and effectively take into account all contributions?**

- North/South engagement: In some moments of the process, even if the leadership was located in the South, there was a stronger presence of northern NGOs. At the Latin America and Caribbean CSO/Governments meeting at the HLF, ALOP invited Spain and Canada, and this was not well taken by the LAC countries. Spain started lecturing. This North/South tension was many times tangible throughout the process.

Based on that experience, it seems that we had a limited impact on southern governments. Much more work would have to be done in Latin America; not all countries are engaged in the process. The Colombian government co-chaired the Round-Table on Ownership and is offering Colombia as the site for the HLF4. But Brazil has never signed the Paris Declaration and in the case of Uruguay, we just had a parliamentarian who was totally lost at the HLF. Another important question is: To what degree are Southern governments lobbying Northern governments to fulfil their commitments? Mostly it is done by CSOs. And CSOs can play a growing role there. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)

- CSO strategies engaged successfully Southern and Northern CSOs, but there is an urgent need to clarify the relationship between Southern and Northern CSOs. We need to foster strategies for alliances. In Mali,

the process could create trust between Southern and Northern CSOs. In this context, we are implementing the recommendations coming out of the national consultations with regard to financing and strengthening Southern CSOs. We have the project of a pooled fund for local CSOs, with contribution of some international cooperation agencies, which should be put in place before the end of 2008. We also know that we should avoid conflicts that can arise from a competition for resources: Northern CSOs do implement capacity development, but should not capture the available resources in this pooled fund. Otherwise, the trust can be broken. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)

- Yes, I believe the process did successfully engage southern CSOs and northern CSOs. Tony and Kumi functioned well [in Accra] and they did reduce the gap between South and North. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- North/South: I don't know for certain. It seems that this was by and large a genuinely open and equal process. There was a conscious effort to involve everyone. But power relations exist there also. (Philippe Besson, SDC)
- Even the Southern CSOs seemed to be a limited group of organizations without reaching out to smaller [CSOs]. Some Northern CSOs have not coordinated enough how they work at the country level, giving ownership to smaller Southern CSOs while providing complementarity. I am also not sure how much the ISG contemplated the important question of how Northern CSOs are undermining and competing with local CSOs. Balance North/South: Are we engaging the usual suspects? Have we engaged other Southern CSOs and not only working with those Southern CSOs that have links with the North? (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)
- It seemed a bit imbalanced, in terms of level of engagement in the AG and also, but less, in the ISG. But all CSOs had an efficient engagement through the process of regional workshops. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- In terms of visibility and participation: yes; in terms of policy and political input: no. There were lots of Southern CSOs at the consultations, at the

CSO Forum, at the HLF 3, but with a limited political contribution. (Liz Steele, Care International).

- Was there a North/South divide? I think so. The regional consultations helped. But there was a quite low engagement from Africa in the ISG. Sometimes, the ISG comments on the drafts AAA were too European led. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- With the consultation process, the AG managed to bring Southern CSOs, and this also served the ISG. In terms of organizations actively involved, the ISG leadership, besides IBON, was mainly Northern. There has been Southern organizations presence within the ISG, but they were not taking leadership. Maybe, this is why some organizations thought that the ISG was Northern-led. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- The ISG was politically led by the South, but by only a few influential networks from the South. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- Southern CSOs and Northern CSOs were effectively included, but the question of power relations remains strong. (Tomas Brundin, Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy - Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- Engagement of southern CSOs was good. But the quality of engagement was different because their experience was different. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)

## 8. What were the most important strengths and weaknesses of the CSO initiatives during this period?

*"The most important strength of CSO is their work experience at grassroots level, the fact that they bring analysis from these organizations. The most important weakness is lack of enabling environment for their activities. CSOs should advocate collectively to build this environment at country level."*

**(Urantsooj Gombosuren, CHR, Mongolia)**

### **The strengths of the CSO initiatives were sometimes also their weaknesses:**

- The ISG lobbied more donor representatives because of certain commonalities – we could say that it is one philosophical family. And this philosophy is not always shared by partner governments. There were unfortunately not sufficient enough [preparations] at the country level. There is again here a huge capacity problem. CSOs have a long way to go to be conducive, to be able to accompany the governments and at the same time, to criticize them. We need, for instance, CSOs to engage Parliaments. (Philippe Besson, SDC)
- Strengths and weaknesses: the AG and the ISG and the overlap of people; the organization of the ISG: an ad hoc, flexible group, with people committed and a division of labour, but also its shortfalls: a lack of leadership and sometimes a lack of delegation; people sometimes did not assume tasks. People mobilized voluntarily and took up roles.

The AG: Composed of donors, CSOs and southern governments, it was a painful but positive experience as a multi-stakeholder forum, but there was a lack of participation from southern governments. The CIDA leadership gave some weight to some CSO concerns, but created also confusion.

The IBON leadership and commitment to ISG: this sometimes created tensions. Some meetings could have been better chaired; some practical questions sometimes were left hanging. People were not involved enough in the practical matters, but people took decisions and reacted. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)

- Challenges were the coordination between several initiatives. The ISG needed to have on board both the most radical and the most complacent CSOs. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)

## Weaknesses

- For me, a major weakness was the relationship between the local, national and global levels. We were strong at the global level, but there was not much awareness of it at the national level. It is a weakness for all of us who have participated in the HLF. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- Our engagement capacity to bring the issues down a notch to the national level, in the North and in the South. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
- All CSOs did not have the same weight, at the national and regional levels and all do not advance at the same pace. There is always the risk of seeing some CSOs left behind; thus the feeling that the process is only supported by a "CSO elite". (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- A major weakness remains the bad perception of CSOs by Southern governments. NGO are established following the model of Northern NGOs. Northern NGOs are also natural allies of Southern governments. Therefore, there is a major gap between local CSOs and Southern governments and an important question put on them. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- Some defensiveness on procedural things, during the Working Party dialogue meeting (when those could have been solved by the chair). The CSO process has been dominated by a certain category

of CSOs represented by the Reality of Aid Network, and international development NGOs. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)

- We witnessed some important flaws in our lobbying strategy: lots were done in the lead up to the HLF, but not at the HLF itself. Indeed, there was no clear strategy at the HLF3, a lack of coordination and division of tasks and of consideration of the resources (financial as well as dedicated CSO capacity) required at the HLF3. Because of this lack of resources, it has been always the same people doing everything. All this means, that our action at the HLF3 could be considered as a missed opportunity.

The ISG did not engage enough with the US NGOs, in the lead up and at the HLF3. Those US NGOs felt excluded.

We underestimated the importance of the World Bank. They were not a target. We have not developed enough a relationship; we were not talking with the right people there.

There was on our side a lack of intelligence of Southern countries position.

A lack of clarity around role and responsibilities between AG and ISG, notably with the overlap of individuals involved in the AG and the ISG. Some issues around representativeness can be raised at the ISG and the AG and their linkages with other organizations and platforms. A good example is how these groups relate with gender equality and women's rights organizations! When those entered the AG, it was good but very superficial: questions were around: how many women spoke, etc. Did this really change people's mindsets?

A lack of dedicated resources for the ISG. Insufficient preparations for the CSO Forum and the HLF3, notably for the Secretariat. There were not enough resources, and lots of pressures. There was a lack of strategy regarding translations, notably at the CSO Forum. (Liz Steele, Care International)

- Important weaknesses were our lack of capacity to build in a transparent and inclusive way a shared political position and the lack of financial resources. The ISG worked by cooptation and this is not enough: this is how we start processes, but things must be redefined after some time. The CONCORD representatives at the ISG had no mandate. There were also weaknesses in the political advocacy strategy, and in the civil society engagement process. Finally, we reacted during the process, but we were not always able to impose our agenda. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- I believe that we all expected a better commitment on CSO's own effectiveness. Sometimes, it was not clear in the documents if what was discussed was development cooperation in general, with the risk of losing the technical issues at stake. (Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- Limited outreaching. Although an open platform in theory, the ISG worked very much as a closed group. Some of the criteria like the level of engagement, active participation, could also have discouraged organizations to join. Its name didn't help either. A lack of clarity of who does what, in the name of whom, and the way people were mixing hats. The leadership was very good, but the experience suggests clearly important leadership challenges for the future. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- Weaknesses? Most people are not appreciative, they are blind to the successes and only see the challenges and shortcomings. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)

## Strengths

- Strengths: collaboration, networking, openness and development of joint positions and joint lobbying before, during and now after. (Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan)
- The engagement in an inclusive and enlarged process and the capacity to unite under common goals, although there is great CSO diversity. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)

- Being vocal, constructive, critical, and the double strategy ISG/AG. (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)
- The capacity to engage such a broad number of CSOs in the process. This undoubtedly gave high levels of credibility and legitimacy to the ISG, and to the CSO positions. CSOs presented their position in the WP-EFF in a very constructive way, never confrontational. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- Transparent positioning and information sharing; Flexibility and adaptation to a changing context; Committed individuals to a common goal, despite insufficient resources. Professionalism and credibility of the approach; Good quality analysis; and good women's group preparatory conference in Accra. (Liz Steele, Care International)
- The use of media and new media (dissemination and information); The consultation processes to build awareness, capacity and mobilization. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- Speaking with one voice in spite of various diversities. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- Openness to have a constructive dialogue on the Paris agenda. (Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)



## 9. What are the perceptions of CSO initiatives on aid effectiveness in the DAC Secretariat, among donors, among developing country government representatives and among other CSOs?

*"Absolutely, there is now a huge increase in the appreciation of the value of dialoguing with CSOs. The DAC sees the CSO engagement as one of the main successes of Accra! And it is recognized that CSO participation is not only required for participation, but that it actually contributes to the agenda."*

**(Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)**

### Developing Country Government Representatives

- Yes, they are more perceived as relevant actors by state and donors, they showed their role and voice and capacity to make significant contributions and they are now on the way to prove they are development actors as governments and donors are. (Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan)
- The impact could be much better among governments' representatives. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- During the preparations of the Round-Table One [in Accra], some countries were critical, and affirmed that we should be careful with this notion of democratic ownership. But if you look at the AAA, it is in it. Nobody dares anymore to say that Parliaments and CSOs do not have a role to play. (Philippe Besson, SDC)
- From governments' perspective: also, a better understanding that CSOs are development actors, that those technical agreements should include the CSOs. Governments also understood the shift from an aid issue to a development issue. (Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)

- There are now potential alliance spaces between CSOs and Southern governments. But, we are not yet united in official declarations. In Accra, we felt that many Southern governments were in agreement with the CSO positions, and were supportive, but they could not hold officially the same positions. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- Accra did not change the situation with Southern governments; on the contrary, it showed the profound divide between Southern governments and Southern NGOs and Northern NGOs (for different reasons). NGOs have tended to minimize this aspect for many years. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- Southern governments in the contact group did see the value of using the CSOs as much as we use them. Southern governments are perhaps less suspicious of talking to CSOs now. But then it is a risky thing for [Southern] CSOs. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- Partner governments' representatives still question though the role of CSOs at country level: they are sceptical, they see CSOs as opposition; and do not believe in participatory processes and the necessity to engage. Some Southern governments see CSOs as competitors for donor's money and voice. There is still a long road to go. This is a weakness in terms of CSO engagement over the last 18 months. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- Some southern governments, Mali for instance, have established positive relationships with CSOs. The same in South Africa, where the situation is complex, but one can see lots of commonalities. The same in Asia, in Latin America/Caribbean. But let's not hide the fact that some governments see CSOs as competitors. Some partner countries clearly did not want to engage in some of those discussions. We witness also collusion and opposition: Government officials have their own CSOs. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

## Donors

- Donors will be more sensitive to multi-stakeholder spaces and will gain a different perception on CSOs, as partners in the dialogue on development policies, and not only as service providers. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- However, this is still personal recognition, more than a formalized institutional position. For instance, the Belgium Minister speech in Accra still focused on the Paris Declaration application to CSOs, even if there was a CSO representative in the Belgium delegation. In the Advisory Group, I saw donors shifting their position. And the AG recognized the independent CSO process. (Liz Steele, Care International)
- It depends on which countries. For some countries like the UK, Spain, and Denmark: yes. The last negotiations in Accra raised the profile of CSOs particularly for European donors: the European government representatives were looking to CSOs for ideas and strategies. CSOs' profile is now much higher and they are taken more seriously. The US was upset (by the naming and shaming by CSOs), but I don't think that this will necessarily have a negative impact in the future. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- Donors became aware of the need to talk with CSOs and the fact that the aid channelled via CSOs needs to be assessed for its effectiveness. They also know that they will not solve everything through budget support, and that they need to broaden the ownership, and find a way to support local CSOs. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- Yes and no. CSOs changed the perspective for many donors and some government representatives on the role of CSOs, on how the Paris Declaration should apply to CSOs, on the issue of democratic governance and CSO participation as development actors in their own right. At the EC, it raised our profile. (We are currently providing training programme to EC professionals!) We also provided inputs to the EC position paper,

and progressive donors saw us as strategic allies in Accra. The concrete demonstration of this was the last day of the HLF3 [and the final negotiations over the AAA]. (Liz Steele, Care International)

## Development Assistance Committee (DAC)

- Yes. The DAC and governments witnessed a quite structured process, with a quality of inputs, a high level of expertise, and professionalism. CSOs were recognized as watchdogs and development actors. I think that the DAC is not used to have CSOs as interlocutors, and thus learned a lot. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- From the DAC secretariat: they never had this kind of dialogue. They had experienced, and they learned a lot. It will be hopefully followed up in the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness. (Tomas Brundin, Deputy Director, Department for Development Policy - Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- Surely, because the DAC was focused on aid effectiveness and knows now that it needs to treat the wider question of development effectiveness. We already felt this tendency in Accra. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- Yes, it changed the perceptions among the DAC Secretariat, donors and Northern governments' representatives. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- Absolutely, there is now a huge increase in the appreciation of the value of dialoguing with CSOs. The DAC sees the CSO engagement as one of the main successes of Accra! And it is recognized that CSO participation is not only required for participation, but that it actually contributes to the agenda. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)

## Among CSOs

- A lot remains to be done among CSOs themselves. (Anabel Cruz, ICD)
- And it has encouraged a more horizontal reflection in the labour movement, making links with trade issues and financing for development. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)

- Some [CSOs] got involved because of donor's money. Some questioned if it is worthwhile to engage. Will this engagement have impact, and will it produce change? Lots of CSOs started thinking that those discussions are important. This makes this agenda more political. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- To what extent is our message going to the right people [among CSOs]? Policy people understood that we need to respond to the aid effectiveness issue. But do the programme people understand how this applies to their programmes? There is more awareness, but how this is being translated into real commitments [remains]? (Liz Steele, Care International)

## 10. What about CSO effectiveness?

*“The CSO effectiveness process has an explicit objective: to reach a tripartite agreement at the next HLF. The Global Facilitating Group (GFG) [for the Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness] is committed to a multi-stakeholder process, but remains CSO-led”.*

**(Liz Steele, Care International)**

- You must spearhead the whole process. You must demonstrate aid effectiveness. If you manage that, you are in a position to be formally a key actor at the HLF4, and to effectively criticize us. The practice must change in the field. We need to show ways, cases and good practices.

We need to show that the aid system really is changing. Therefore, we need more pragmatism and less debate. Less talk, carry on with global work, but more action at the national level. Demonstrate this and push donors and partner countries to move. We need you to apply the spirit of the AAA in the field, and push and pull others to implement the AAA.

You need to engage all actors and show emerging good practices, and from those, keep producing outstanding, sharp critiques. You will be even more successful at the global level if you prove that you are at the very front of the transformation of the aid system at the country level. There is tremendous work to be done at the local government level. Two or three years are a very short time, but starting now, something could be documented for the HLF4.

But there are already very relevant practices: for instance, in West Africa: the Public Finances management and the engagement with local governments in Mali and Burkina-Faso. These are projects supported by the Swiss, but essentially nationally-triggered by national CSOs. They sometimes do it in cooperation with Northern CSOs. The same is happening in Bangladesh, but also in Bolivia, in Colombia. This needs documentation. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

## In preparation for Accra

- There was pressure put on CSOs, with the CSO effectiveness: a kind of carrot and stick from donors! (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- It was a political issue within the Advisory Group: It became apparent that it was CIDA led, with a kind of hidden donor agenda. Donors wanted the CSOs to apply the Paris Declaration themselves. But throughout the process ... there was a clear signal from CSOs, which opposed the application of the Paris Declaration to CSOs. This was a turning point, because it started the Development Effectiveness process. The Advisory Group consultations triggered the CSO effectiveness issue, and CSOs decided to work on it first alone. The Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness can also be considered as an outcome of the AG process. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- CSO participation has been very successful. But CSOs did not deliver their aid effectiveness; this still needs to be developed. I believe that we all expected a better commitment on CSOs' own effectiveness. Being very open and transparent is a CSO quality; but it was felt sometimes that CSOs were not ready to accept criticism and to tackle their own effectiveness. It is a strategic issue for future advancement. CSOs must come [to HLF4] with proper self regulation mechanisms (Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- Up to Ottawa [the AG International Forum in February 2008], there was the feeling that the CSOs were avoiding the CSO effectiveness issue, but this was corrected after Ottawa. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- CSOs appeared to accept to question themselves by undertaking a process on their own effectiveness. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- CSOs keep demanding transparency on the side of the donors, but there are situations where one can doubt that CSO behaviour is consistent with the values they put forward. CSOs gain in credibility if they can prove that they are legitimate, that they do have a constituency, and a broad one, agreeing on a common platform but not hiding the existing differences. CSOs should be less afraid to show that there are internal divergences. As

CSOs we have come up with many recommendations to the donors and the governments. I feel we should ... try to put our own house in order so as to be able to hold them accountable. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)

## Post-Accra

- In terms of CSO effectiveness, Accra did not advance it, and I am still waiting to see the outputs of the Open Forum. CSOs should show visible progress in their own effectiveness by HLF4. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- You need to work fully on the CSO effectiveness question, and deliver early, before 2010, the principles and the Paris Declaration of NGOs. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- Many CSOs also know that they have to put their house in order. Enhancing their legitimacy is needed. Indeed, there is a question of power relations. Who has the resources? If the CSOs want to access funding in five years time, CSOs have to show that they concern themselves with their own effectiveness. They will be in a much better position to lobby, exercise criticism, propose themselves as a key actor in their own right. CSOs have to start inducing effective change, in their practice as well as in others' practices. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

Look more at CSOs' own effectiveness – in different aspects, clarified and with set standards (downward and upward accountability, accountability to peers and internal accountability) – this cannot be only a question of how they manage their funds. Here there is a corresponding donor role since much of the accountability of NGOs can be said to be to those who fund them. (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)

- We need to assess how good is the CSO enabling environment in the country and undertake strategic advocacy to improve it in terms of legal status, financial sustainability, access to information, legal standing, etc. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)



- From the AAA, an important CSO priority should be managing well the CSO effectiveness process, notably addressing the issue of CSOs as donors! We are still defensive on this. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- The Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness may prove to be an important forum for discussions at the national level that may be the key in the next period. I suspect that organizing and coordinating work at that level will be a major challenge, however. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)

## 11. What lessons can be learned from this experience for CSO engagement on aid and development effectiveness?

*"On the Governments/Donors side: the funding of the consultation process towards the HLF3 was not at all in accordance with the Paris principles! This needs to be addressed."*

**(Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)**

- Professionalism, organization, seriousness, work and creativity do pay off. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- The AG and ISG consultations opened the space for actors and it has been remarkable in terms of information and dissemination. It is the first time that national, regional and international consultations were organized on an international agenda, relating to development. It is therefore important to document the process. It would also be important to know the cost effectiveness of such a process; we would then realize that it was not so expensive. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- It takes a lot of time, energy and commitment, but it is worth all this, because if there is a real shift from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness and real space for CSOs' monitoring of the AAA, then we are also achieving CSO results. (Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan)
- On the CSO side, it proves to be very difficult to find one leadership, and to balance it with the need of internal dialogue in order to have ownership. On the Governments/Donors side, the funding of the consultations process towards the HLF3 was not at all in accordance with the Paris principles! This needs to be addressed. (Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)
- I would say that the most important lesson is the engagement process. The process involved many CSOs and empowered them. Empowered

CSOs will continue engaging different parties on different issues at national levels and empowering others including local grassroots CSOs. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)

- CSOs must try to maintain the momentum, and establish a formalized relation with the DAC and with the Working Party, using the Accra process as leverage. CSOs must continue to broaden the CSO spectrum, and correct some gap and problems in representation. CSOs should better tailor their message to the audience. I understand the development agenda but the WP is working on aid. That is why CSOs need to engage with the full DAC to talk all the issues with different parts of the DAC. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- Some key lessons:
  - Get started early: IBIS helped get the ISG going at the World Social Forum in 2007 and the AG started in early 2007;
  - Make sure that you are informed, based on evidence from the ground and common positions;
  - Do we need a structured institution or an ad hoc steering committee, such as the ISG? It is better to have a loose structure, with commitments from supporting organizations, and clarity on roles and tasks;
  - Media is still challenging, because the topic is not so sexy for media. The media group did a good job, with the tool-kit, the logo, and the stunt. But we did not get enough coverage for our press releases;
  - Communications need to be improved. We did not get the most of the website, though it had some good elements; it could still have been used more effectively by being a bit better structured. The blog was meant to be a joint effort, but in the end it was a Eurodad blog. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)

- Some main lessons:
  - The importance of trust between CSOs, and this has been a clear strength within the Women's Right Coalition;
  - The importance of ownership: people need to be included and consulted and the diversity must be recognized;
  - On the CSO forum: it was good to build a common position to the HLF. But there was not enough time to explain, disseminate this position, especially among the CSO delegation to the HLF;
  - On the selection of the 80 CSOs: I understand the criticism from many people. The process was not the ideal one, but it was the best the ISG could do, given the time and capacity constraints. However, clearly this is something that we need to improve for the future, with a proper outreach strategy; and
  - It would have been very useful to have one day preparing and coordinating the 80 delegates for the HLF. During the HLF, there was a lack of coordination and coherence. We could have a stronger impact. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- But the real question is that [donor] resources given were tied to the theme of aid effectiveness. For many of us, the Doha [financing for development] agenda appears more important. The scope of the consultations remained fixed by the donors. But we need the resources and the ability to determine our own agenda. So, how can we make the link today with Doha? There is actually an important opportunity today to seize, with the financial crisis and the current political statements on global governance. We missed a larger advocacy strategy. We were just watching in front of us and followed the DAC. We are not able to determine ourselves the agenda. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- Overall, my feeling from the HLF3 is that it is astonishing that stakeholders managed to listen to each others. Any kind of appropriate institutionalization of the dialogue is good, but we should not create

fixed and rigid mechanisms. We are different, and should remain different. That is how we can reach common positions and practices. But on all sides, there is the major challenge of competence and capacity. We all have to enhance our capacity. CSOs need to keep showing that that they are professional, as you have been in Accra. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

## 12. What advice to CSOs for the process and engagement with the next HLF in Seoul in 2011?

*"You must spearhead the whole process. You will be even more successful at the global level if you prove that you are at the very front of the transformation of the aid system at the country level. You must demonstrate aid effectiveness."*

**(Philippe Besson, SDC)**

- First of all, it is necessary to continue regional or global coordinated actions to advocate for aid effectiveness. Secondly, establish a firm local CSO platform to advocate for aid effectiveness at national, local, grassroots levels. Thirdly, collect data on how aid is used, make analyses, assess impact at country level by different sectors, state agencies and donors. Fourthly, assess the enabling environment for CSOs in the country and undertake strategic advocacy to improve it in terms of legal status, financial sustainability, access to information, etc. (Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia)
- The practice [of aid] must change in the field. We need to show ways, cases and good practices. We need to show that the aid system really is changing. Therefore, we need more pragmatism and less debates. Less talk, more action at the national level. We need you [CSOs] to apply the spirit of the AAA in the field, and push and pull others to implement the AAA. You need to engage all actors and show emerging good practices, and from those, keep producing outstanding, sharp critiques. On all sides, there is the major challenge of competence and capacity. We all have to enhance our capacity. CSOs need to keep showing that that they are professional, as you have been in Accra. (Philippe Besson, SDC)

## Coordinating CSOs for HLF4

- Many people raised their eye-brows in Accra asking how the ISG is structured and its legitimacy. This is something I think we should also discuss so that it is clear to all. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- There is obviously a merit in keeping the ISG [for HLF4], but one needs to ensure that it remains representative and legitimate. Its membership might need rotation, and new cooptation. The OECD-DAC and donors appreciated to have an interlocutor. Still the constituency must support you and you must report back. You cannot claim to represent everybody, but you should be able to claim that you represent a large constituency. You need to demonstrate that you apply to the ISG the governance values you want to see in donors and partner governments. (Philippe Besson, SDC)
- Does the ISG need to continue? Maybe some umbrella organization could take the role of the ISG. We do need a representative body which is in a position to engage with the DAC in a coordinated manner. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- We [CSOs] need clarity of roles and tasks, and more involvement from Southern organizations. Define early a common branding. Build a strategy for the key things people want in the agenda in 2011. Prioritize! UNDCF role? (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- CSOs [organizing for HLF4] must take seriously gender equality and women rights issues and translate [broad statements] into concrete recommendations. Clarify (especially for those outside) the platform, its role, as well as have an outreach strategy (with a clear signal of openness) and have a clear view on the strategic goals for 2011. Pay attention to capacity building needs and take consequent action. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)
- I see essentially a watchdog role for the ISG. But it will need a clear mandate, a clear strategy, and structured and transparent governance. There will then be two processes [Open Forum on CSO Development

Effectiveness and the ISG], and the Global Facilitating Group [for the Open Forum] and the ISG will need to agree on a common agenda, and mechanisms to develop a future strategic vision: [potentially] a multi-stakeholder agreement, under the auspices of a co-sponsored UN/OECD HLF4, focusing on the development effectiveness agenda. (Liz Steele, Care International)

## CSO relationships

- Northern CSOs must question themselves on their work with Southern CSOs; it requires collaborative tools, support to empowerment, without competition and without ever replacing local capacity for advocacy. Northern CSOs must accompany, never substitute. We then need to follow up on the goal of common positions, and to clarify the role of Northern CSOs towards Southern CSOs. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- Further develop capacity in the South, with less dependency on the North. Develop a division of labour in the different countries and within countries to ensure better partnerships between North and South and 'twinning' arrangements for capacity development (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)
- What would be the solutions in terms of process? Would it be the structure of an international movement of national and regional platforms, as proposed by Coordination Sud (French CSO platform] and four other Southern platforms? Could this structure contribute to consultations, in the long term? (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- We [CSOs] need a strategy at the national level, with better links with existing national and regional platforms. Many platforms have this capacity, and are doing budget monitoring, etc. CONCORD is a good example of linkage between international and national levels. Would it work in other regions? But there are still capacity and resourcing issues. Those should be addressed in the mandate of the GFG [Open Forum] and the ISG. (Liz Steele, Care International)



## Awareness-raising among CSOs

- For all of us, an important question remains: How do we take this technical discussion [of aid effectiveness] and make it relevant to our members? How to make it user-friendly? Also, CSOs in the North should do more to reach their public with the development effectiveness discourse. In the South, a priority would be to strengthen the collaboration between specialized NGOs and social movements, and to encourage their engagement. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)

## CSO and developing country governments

We need to multiply the interactions between CSOs and governments and between Northern and Southern CSOs. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)

- We need to open a real process on the relationships between CSOs and Southern governments. (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- If Northern and Southern CSOs are to be effective in supporting Southern governments' voices, there should be more links between CSOs and Southern governments, in order to clearly identify common interests. CSOs should be actively working on institutional mechanisms for CSO engagement and dialogue with governments at the national level. (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)
- I feel that we should try to help them [Southern governments] to carry out their work in any way we can, rather than keep asking them to do a list of things. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- Is it a shortcoming of our strategy? This should have been ISG's role: to identify "friendly" countries with whom we could have established alliances. We should have defined ten strategic southern countries, and look for an active engagement with them. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)

- Let's not get too carried away. It may be best if a few of us, moving forward on the basis of already developed principles, would engage with the HLF. The rest of us should focus on enabling greater citizen agency in taking initiative to make things happen, and to hold our own governments to account. That's what will bring far greater change than a set of rules regarding the aid machinery. (Rakesh Rajani, Twaweza East Africa)
- A huge effort has been done by CSOs, and donors need to answer to it. It is a joint challenge. Two high priorities for Sweden: CSOs and aid effectiveness; and harmonization goals and modalities to support civil society. (Tomas Brundin, Swedish Foreign Affairs Ministry)

### **Forum for political dialogue on aid and development effectiveness**

- The Advisory Group was set up for a very specific purpose and has been dissolved [following the Accra HLF]. The need for a new AG depends on the purpose, and on how the contacts between the Working Party and CSOs will be formalized. It is now clear that there is a need for a permanent engagement between the WP-EFF and CSOs, or even between the DAC and CSOs [subsequently CSOs have taken up full membership in the WP-EFF]. CSOs, as well as other actors, need an open platform to discuss the HLF4. (Goran Eklof, AG-CS, OECD-DAC)
- There is a need for some form of formal interaction with the WP at a global level but perhaps as well at the national level with its WP-EFF member representatives. (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)
- We need to engage into a political debate on where these aid debates should take place, OECD vs. the UN DCF, as it will inform our advocacy work. In my opinion, as CSOs, we should be pushing the OECD to deliver the aid effectiveness agenda to the UN DCF, as a more democratic and inclusive space. (Nerea Craviotto, Wide)

- The key issue here is: what happens next? If there is now an open door for civil society: do we want to be in the tent or at the table? How do we want to take up the space created? Also and especially in the context of the development effectiveness agenda: will we limit ourselves to an engagement with the Working Party? Or do we want to influence the DAC as a whole? More thinking is needed about the space and mechanisms we would prefer to pursue: The UN or the OECD? (Liz Steele, Care International)
- The UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) question is not the most important. And it may run counter to CSO interests and agenda (basically, it is an inter-governmental forum). You have a space now in the Paris Declaration process, which is the result of the huge work made these last years. (Philippe Besson, SDC)
- We need to build a truly tripartite preparatory process for the HLF4 in 2011, where CSOs will be true stakeholders. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- You need to confirm your participation to the Working Party. Why not an observer seat at the DAC? (Hubert de Milly, OECD)
- How do the CSOs see their role in linking the aid effectiveness process and the overall UN Financing for Development process? They are not well linked and CSOs could work on this. On the HLF 2011, co-hosted by the UN? First of all, it has to come from member states of the UN. Then, one should also recognize that OECD has increasingly learned how to deal with non-DAC members. (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)
- It seems that we need to engage with the DAC, but on the whole agenda: development effectiveness rather than aid effectiveness. But we are ambiguous on this question: we want to be part of the DAC, but also to move out from the OECD the question of aid effectiveness, in order to place it at the UN DCF. But actually, we are, by our behaviour, strengthening OECD control of this agenda. How can we build a strategy towards the HLF4 and move the aid out of the OECD? Shall we

disengage progressively, change our approach, explain that we are going to another space and invite the OECD to follow us? The Working Party, from its current leadership position, would become a stakeholder in a space led by the UN DCF. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)

## The future of multi-stakeholder processes

- How should we follow up today in terms of multi-stakeholder engagement? Our ambition is that the DAC opens up to civil society, as all other OECD Committees are open to the private sector and the trade unions. If this was our objective, then civil society membership to the DAC would allow evaluating the impact of the AG's work. (Olivier Consolo, CONCORD)
- In any case, the AAA implementation should be multi-stakeholder. There might be the need to establish an official multi-stakeholder process/ environment (a kind of fusion of the AG and the Working Party, ending up with a taskforce), with joint participation by the ISG and the [Open Forum's] GFG. Indeed, the AG was so important to influence the WP, and this is a major learning from this process: to influence, we need to engage. We could consider therefore, and propose, multi-stakeholder biannual meetings, with three days devoted to CSO effectiveness, the Paris Declaration and AAA implementation, and a joint agenda. (Liz Steele, Care International)

## AAA implementation and towards the HLF4

- We need to pursue our advocacy in a development effectiveness framework. We need to work on the roles of CSOs in democratic ownership and on development models rooted in local realities. Obviously, this takes us outside of the frame fixed by donors, but we are slowly negotiating some space for it. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)

- From the AAA: CSOs priorities should be:
  - Deepening and showcasing the issue of democratic ownership;
  - Managing well the CSO development effectiveness process, notably addressing the issue of CSOs as donors! We are still defensive on this.
  - Improving clarity on conditionality; and
  - Challenging more specifically the technical assistance and the tied aid questions. (Lucy Hayes, EURODAD)
- Look more at CSOs' own effectiveness – in different aspects, clarified and with set standards (downward and upward accountability, accountability to peers and internal accountability) – this cannot be only a question of how they manage their funds. Here there is a corresponding donor role since much of the accountability of NGOs can be said to be to those who fund them. (Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA)
- We need to do a proper follow up toward 2011, at the international but more and essentially at the national levels. Numerous recommendations coming out of the consultations and researches must be implemented at the national level. (Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali)
- Some lessons towards HLF4:
  - Remain engaged, as CSOs can achieve gains provided we have clear objectives and space to develop strategies;
  - Seize opportunities (political and others) when they come our way, as was done with the establishment of the Advisory Group;
  - Work on appropriate selection of participants from the CSO sector;
  - Make sure the development effectiveness perspective underpins our work on aid effectiveness;
  - Keep on deepening our understanding of gender and equality issues;
  - Mobilizing national CSO constituencies is important and creating/ suggesting enabling frameworks for engagement;

But, there are issues about accessing adequate resources to continue to work on the post-Accra agenda, in the North and in the South. How do we do that? Who does it? (Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress)

- My advice will be that the time to start preparing for the HLF4 is now, but in addition to preparing for the HLF4, we should help to carry out the recommendations from the HLF3, so that our organizing is not narrowed to what outcomes we want to see from the HLF. We have to admit that it is hard work and it is very engaging. There will be need for organizations that will work on this full-time. (Roselynn Musa, FEMNET)
- Could the HLF4 be truly multi-stakeholder? CSOs will be more organized, and governments will also be doing the same. The fact that donors are asking critical questions about CSO engagement is a sign of success. (Felix Zimmermann, OECD)
- On the international architecture, we need to build a common vision and agenda among CSOs on AAA implementation, CSO development effectiveness, and the multi-stakeholder nature of the process, and propose some clear proposals for multi-stakeholder follow-up mechanisms. But how to do this remains the question. (Liz Steele, Care International)

## List of Interviewees

Note: Interviewee quotes are referenced with the interviewees' initials.

### Key informants:

Antonio Tujan Jr., RoA/IBON Foundation (AT)	Brian Tomlinson, CCIC (BT)
Stephen Wallace, CIDA (SW)	Réal Lavergne, CIDA (RL)
Henri Valot, CIVICUS (HV)	Lars Koch, IBIS (LK)

### CIVICUS/IBON interview informants:

Philippe Besson, SDC (PB)	Roselynn Musa, FEMNET (RM)
Nurgul Djanaeva, Forum of Women Organizations of Kyrgyzstan (ND)	Felix Zimmerman, OECD (FZ)
Anna Nitoslawska, Canadian Labour Congress (AN)	Hubert de Milley, OECD-DAC (HdM)
Goran Eklof, OECD-DAC (GE)	Nerea Craviotto, WIDE (NC)
Lucy Hayes, EURODAD (LH)	Anabel Cruz, ICD (AC)
Urantsooj Gombosuren, Centre for Human Rights and Development, Mongolia (UG)	Anne-Sophie Gindroz, Helvetas-Mali (AG)
Gert Danielsen, UNDP ASRO/ESA (GD)	Liz Steele, CARE International (LS)
Tomas Brundin, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden (TB)	Olivier Consolo, CONCORD (OC)
Rakesh Rajani, Twaweza East Africa (RR)	





# Annexes

## Civil Society Statement in ACCRA Warns Urgency for Action on Aid

1 September 2008

## Speeches Delivered at the Ministerial Dinner on Behalf of CSOs

3 September 2008

- Rose Mensah-Kutin
- Antonio Tujan, Jr.

# Civil Society Statement in ACCRA Warns Urgency for Action on Aid

1 September 2008

## Introduction

2008 is an important year for development financing and an opportunity to move the international community to a more equitable, people-centred and democratic governance system. Today 1.4 billion people live under the new poverty line of US\$1.25, and the majority of them are women. The current financial, food, energy, and climate change crises make evident the urgency for action.

Accra is an opportunity to advance towards a broader agenda of development effectiveness. The High Level Forum in Accra will be followed by major United Nations meetings in New York and Doha that will confirm the huge gap between what has been promised and the lack of progress in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals.

Development aid is only one part of the equation, and has to be analysed in the broader context of its interactions with trade, debt, domestic and international resource mobilisation and the international governance system. When donors and governments met in Paris three years ago, technical debates masked deeper political differences around the broader vision for aid. Some donors wanted to hand a lot more power, a lot more quickly to developing country governments. Other donors didn't. What was achieved was a compromise and has been criticised for its narrow technical approach.

It is urgent that human rights, gender equality, decent work and environmental sustainability are made explicit objectives of aid.

We call on officials present in Accra to respond with urgency. What we need in Accra are clear time-bound commitments to deliver real results for people on the ground, towards the eradication of poverty, inequality and social exclusion. This is a political not a technical challenge, and should be treated as such.

## What is our 'bottom line' for Accra?

So far, the Paris process looks like a failure. The 2008 Paris Survey shows that donors in particular have a long way to go in delivering what they pledged. Accra must deliver a major change in implementation and change how "effectiveness" is measured by setting new targets and indicators. All donors must set out detailed plans and individual targets showing how they will meet their commitments.

But the Accra High Level Forum must also deliver real measurable and time-bound commitments to address some of the problems which are not adequately dealt with in the Paris Declaration. Donors must take responsibility for improvements which only they can deliver (e.g. untying aid and improving medium-term predictability of aid) and all governments must increase the democratic accountability and transparency of their use of aid resources, policies and activities. If the Accra High Level Forum is to be seen as a credible response to the serious challenges of making aid more effective, the Accra Agenda for Action must at a minimum:

1. Commit to broadening the definition of ownership so that citizens, civil society organisations and elected officials are central to the aid process at all levels.
2. Set time-bound and monitorable targets to:
  - Stop short-term aid and commit to ensuring that 80% of aid is committed for at least 3-5 years by 2010.
  - Reduce the burden of conditionality by 2010 so that aid agreements are based on mutually agreed objectives.

3. Set a more ambitious target to make all technical assistance demand-led by 2010.
4. Commit to end tied aid, including food aid and technical assistance, by 2010.
5. Commit donors and recipients to make the aid system more accountable by developing and implementing new standards for transparency by 2009 which ensure that accurate, timely, accessible and comparable information about aid is proactively communicated to the public.
6. Commit to improve the monitoring of aid effectiveness by adapting existing Paris indicators and by integrating new indicators from the Accra Agenda for Action by 2009; by supporting independent and citizen-led monitoring and evaluation systems and by agreeing an inclusive evaluation process to assess the impact of Paris on poverty reduction, gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability.

## Who are we?

Over 600 representatives from 325 civil society organisations and 88 countries have met here in Accra to debate what actions must be taken to reform aid. 80 civil society representatives have participated for the last two days in roundtables at this Forum to communicate those messages and ensure that our voices are heard. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have engaged energetically with the preparatory processes for Accra – organising consultations in every region, attending meetings of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and commenting on drafts of the Accra Agenda for Action. Although we have welcomed these opportunities, we are very disappointed that our views on previous drafts have not been taken into account, and that the Accra Agenda for Action as it stands promises little change.

As development actors we are committed to making all aid activities more effective in addressing poverty and inequality. We recognise the need for continual improvement in our performance and our own responsibility for

this. To this end, we have initiated the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness, which is an inclusive, CSO-led, multi-stakeholder process. The Open Forum will create a space for agreement on principles to guide the effectiveness of CSOs, on guidelines for applying such principles and for documenting and sharing good-practices. We appreciate the acknowledgement of this process in the Accra Agenda for Action and we expect its outcomes to be based on a vision of development effectiveness that is relevant to all actors.

However, our effectiveness is also shaped by the environment in which we work, which is often determined by donors and developing country governments. Appropriate financing, democratic and effective states and enabling environments, including legal frameworks based on human rights, are crucial to our work being more effective with the most marginalised communities.

## Our vision for change

Our vision is of a world where aid is no longer needed; where poverty is no longer a daily reality for billions of women and men; where decent work is a reality for all; where global resources are fairly distributed; where social and gender inequalities are ended; where indigenous populations are respected; where strengthened democratic states fulfil economic, social, and cultural rights; and where global public goods including environmental sustainability are secured by multilateral international institutions with equal participation of all countries.

We believe that aid can play an important role in moving us towards this vision, and that more and better aid is urgently needed to respond to the scale of the challenges of poverty, inequality and exclusion. Aid will be effective when it can be clearly demonstrated that it is indeed addressing those challenges. The effectiveness of aid should be assessed under a universal, more democratic and representative platform than the OECD/DAC, such as within the Development Cooperation Forum at the United Nations.

Effective aid must be based on the principle of democratic ownership and have poverty reduction, the fulfilment of human rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability and decent work as its objectives. When donors impose their own policies, systems and priorities, they drown out citizens' and recipient communities' voices, and they undermine the principle of alignment with developing countries' priorities and systems.

Effective aid should support democratic accountability between citizens and their governments. Democratic institutions are the result of national processes for social and political dialogue and donors should not undermine these efforts or the need for policy space. Rural development, regional integration and decentralisation processes in developing countries should be supported by donors when defined as national priorities.

Effective aid supports the development of transparent and accountable systems. It needs to be predictable to allow recipient countries to make medium and long-term plans, and then be aligned to those plans. It needs to be untied. Yet many donors continue to deliver aid in order to promote their own interests – tying aid to the purchase of goods from their own national firms, or setting conditions which promote their own economic interests.

At the heart of many of these problems is a lack of accountability and transparency. There is not enough reliable and timely public information about aid flows, or the policies and conditions associated with them. There is not enough independent evaluation of donor performance or the impact of aid on the ground. There are not enough opportunities for citizen, and civil society organisations to make their voices heard in decision making processes. This constitutes a systemic obstacle for citizens to hold governments in donor and recipient countries to account.

The Paris Declaration recognises many of these problems in principle, but donors have proved unwilling to resolve them in practice. Even where developing country governments have improved their performance, donors have not met their side of the bargain. The slow progress in implementing

the Paris principles should be a source of acute embarrassment and concern for the governments represented here in Accra.

Both donors and developing countries have responsibilities to make aid work. However, the process of improving aid effectiveness needs to move away from conditionality, and not introduce new ways of imposing conditions, which undermine the right to development and democratic ownership.

Accra is an opportunity for you, ministers of donor and recipient countries and high-level representatives of donor agencies, to demonstrate your commitment to poverty and inequality reduction through effective aid, and a test of your credibility in living up to your commitments.

Your decisions tomorrow are important to set the stage for a more ambitious agenda for change towards real development effectiveness. As civil society organisations we will continue to work energetically to improve our own development effectiveness. We will continue to work – hopefully closely with you – to improve the impact that official aid has on poverty and inequality. Aid will ultimately be judged on the extent to which it contributes to positive change in people's lives. Only then will we really be able to talk about aid being effective.

# Speeches Delivered at the Ministerial Dinner on Behalf of CSOs

3 September 2008

## Rose Mensah-Kutin

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### **Convenor**

Network for Women's Rights in Ghana (NETRIGHT)

His Excellency, The Vice-President of Ghana, Aliu Mahama; His Excellency, The President of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya; Distinguished co-chairs, Henrietta H. Fore, Director of Foreign Assistance and Administrator, USAID, and Abou-Bakar Traore, Minister of Finance, Mali; Honourable Kwadwo Baah Wiredu, the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning, Ghana; your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great pleasure for us of civil society here in Ghana and the rest of the world, to have this opportunity to interact with you, Ministers and Heads of Delegations, who as policy makers have responsibility to make those critical decisions that will determine the direction of the Paris Declaration and Aid Effectiveness here in Accra at the ongoing High level Forum 3 and beyond. This space is important for us within civil society because of our own commitment and active engagement with the Paris Declaration process on the urgency to deliver on democratic governance and social justice.

Your Excellencies, co-Chairs, we of civil society consider the year 2008 as critical for development financing and an opportunity to move the international community to a more equitable, human-centred and democratic governance system. In addition to this Paris Declaration and Aid Effectiveness Process, there is also the UN Financing for Development initiative which we all need to prioritise in order to make those critical linkages between aid, trade, debt and



investments to address poverty and promote real development. Today, we are faced with an unprecedented combination of natural, political, economic and social crises that increase poverty and the burden of survival for poor women and men especially in developing countries. According to recent figures, 1.4 billion women and men live under the new poverty line of US\$1.5. Of this figure, majority are women. Indeed poor women and men bear the brunt of rising food and fuel prices, as well as, the impact of climate change. They also bear the brunt of conflicts, war, displacements and the negative impacts of privatization of basic services. The persistence of the neo-liberal economic policy model is clearly failing to deliver the promised results of growth for all, bringing instead, discrimination, social exclusion, injustice and inequalities.

As development actors, it is crucial that we understand the political context and unequal power relationships within the aid architecture, and the challenges posed by the implementation of the Paris Declaration. For this reason we have actively engaged with the process since 2006 at all levels from the local to the international levels highlighting the issues of development, gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability as the components of sustainable development. With specific reference to the HLF3 in Accra here, our efforts around the Aid Effectiveness and Paris Declaration agenda have culminated in two important initiatives. On the 30th of August, 2008, over 250 women's rights organisations, gender advocates and experts from all the regions of the world attended The Accra International Forum to discuss the gender implications of the Paris Declaration (PD) and Aid Effectiveness (AE) and how we could make strong recommendations on gender equality issues in the AAA. This was co-hosted by NETRIGHT, FEMNET, AWID, WIDE and IGTN and sponsored by AWDF, UNIFEM, ACTIONAID and Urgent Action Fund. There has also been The Civil Society Organisations Parallel Conference on Aid Effectiveness organised here in Accra from 31st August to 1st September, 2008. The objectives of the parallel event sought to consolidate CSO preparations for its participation and interventions in the HLF3, and to promote our efforts towards development effectiveness. In the CSO parallel conference, there were more than 600 representatives from 325 civil society organisations and 88 countries. Within the two days, these civil society representatives participated

in roundtables to communicate our messages and amplify our voices. More than 80 representatives are also participating in the HLF3.

The sum of our message is very clear: change has to happen to ensure that issues of poverty eradication, gender equality, human rights, disability and environmental sustainability are the real pillars of development effectiveness. We need to use international agreed human rights provisions as the basis for global governance and relationships so that aid will one day become unnecessary.

We appreciate the space given us to share our concerns. Some progress has been made and we do appreciate that. However whether our concerns can really lead to that transformational change we are calling for, remains to be seen.

I thank you for your attention.

## Antonio Tujan Jr.

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### Chairperson

#### Reality of Aid Network and the CSO International Steering Group (ISG)

His Excellency President Manuel Salaya of Honduras; His Excellency Vice President Alieu Mahama of Ghana; Your Excellencies, Honorable Ministers and Heads of Delegation of Donor Agencies, colleagues and friends.

May I first express our gratitude to the Government of Ghana and the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness for giving the CSO Parallel Forum the opportunity to speak to this Ministerial dinner.

We bring the voices of CSOs from around the world who have made unprecedented achievements in the scale and breadth of preparations in the road to and here at Accra. We have organized consultations, forums, and workshops in more than fifty countries, embarked on researches and prepared materials to present our analysis on aid effectiveness. All these preparations in the past two years have resulted in unprecedented gains, from a mere 14 CSOs present in Paris during HLF II to the 700 who participated in the CSO parallel forum bringing together important CSO organizations from more than 80 countries.

We have come to an agreement and our statement has already been distributed. May I emphasize our bottomline positions: 1) We need real, measurable and time-bound commitments to accomplish the targets and the Paris Declaration commitments by 2010. 2) In particular, we need clear, time-bound commitments as regards a) predictability of aid flows, b) elimination of tied aid including food aid and technical assistance, c) an end to policy conditionality, and d) use of country systems.

In light of the seriousness of the present conjuncture of global crises in food, fuel and climate change plus recessionary threats, what the world needs badly is leadership in addressing poverty and development.

We need an Accra Agenda for Action that sends the right political message

of commitment to change and to action. This is what is at stake and what we are negotiating for -- not so much technical commitments for implementation of the Paris Declaration but a message to governments of the South, the CSOs and the citizens of the world that we are serious in delivering reform to end poverty.

I understand that it is difficult to get a compromise agreement in aid quality reform where we are addressing voluntary efforts for behaviour change. Being a stock-taking exercise, some of you may not agree to the bit of retooling requested by developing country governments and CSOs meant to ensure genuine implementation of the Paris Declaration principles.

I feel that if this is the case, then maybe we do not need an Accra Agenda for Action. The world does not need at this point a bad AAA that is full of words but lacking in commitment for action.

These negotiations are no longer simply the politics of diplomacy or the politics defined by our national concerns and interests. The world needs the politics of peace and development focused on achieving the Millennium Development Goals and ending poverty.

We expect that these challenges will also be addressed at the Doha stock-taking meeting of the Monterrey consensus on Financing for Development. We hope that good outcomes of Accra will be able to complement the results of Doha.

We know that there are no quick fixes to development and poverty reduction. We can only take millions of steps as we share the journey of countries and their poor to claim their rights and achieve development.

The two hallmarks of Accra are the participation and achievements of CSOs in addressing the issue of CSOs and aid effectiveness, and the effective participation of developing country governments whose voices have been much louder and helping to shape the discussion.

It is important to learn to listen to the voices of the developing country governments and CSOs who are directly involved in the task of development and are directly accountable to the poor. As we have learned to include more and more development actors towards a common commitment to aid reform, the challenge now is to listen to their voices and to commit to action.

CSOs also look forward to 2011 with the hope that aid effectiveness reform can be framed within the overall goal and principles of development effectiveness and where CSOs may participate fully as equal partners in working for aid effectiveness.

Thank you.

