



ICSW

# **Can Aid be Effective without Civil Society?**

The Paris Declaration, the Accra  
Agenda for Action and Beyond

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## **Foreword**

This paper is ICSW's contribution to the ongoing discussion and debate surrounding aid effectiveness and the role of civil society in development. It has been prepared for the High-level Forum in Accra. The intended audience for the paper includes all actors in the realm of aid effectiveness. The paper aims to add to future aid discussions and inform ICSW members about the past and present state of aid effectiveness. It includes a summary of events and issues that are pertinent to fully understanding the dialogue surrounding the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda. Many of the events and issues summarised have been the centre of great debate and the subject of numerous publications. Thus, the abridged versions presented are necessarily selective. The dialogue and rhetoric on aid effectiveness is constantly changing. Positively, this means that aid effectiveness is an active policy area and a sphere in which diverse actors are demanding progress. This means that while contemplating the current state of aid effectiveness, we must also look to the future developments. The Paris Declaration was seen by many as an attempt to revolutionise international aid by combining the concepts of country ownership and accountability. However, the resulting Declaration has been criticised by civil society organisations (CSOs) as ignoring the unique and essential role of civil society in executing the principles of the Declaration. CSOs' discussions up to this point have been productive and have resulted in changes to the Accra Agenda for Action. While the Accra Forum is a time to discuss which of CSOs' criticisms have been taken into account and which remain unrecognised or unresolved, it is also an opportunity for CSOs to step back and consider the larger picture. In doing so we analyse not only the directions of current policies but also the next steps for civil society.

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## **List of Acronyms**

AAA: Accra Agenda for Action  
AG-CS: OECD Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness  
CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency  
CSO: Civil Society Organisation  
DAC: OECD Development Assistance Committee  
EURODAD: European Network on Debt and Development  
EU: European Union  
HIPC: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries  
HLF: High-Level Forum  
HLF3: Third High-Level Forum (Accra, Ghana)  
ICSW: International Council on Social Welfare  
INGO: International Non-Governmental Organisation  
IMF: International Monetary Fund  
ISG: CSO International Steering Group  
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals  
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation  
ODA: Official Development Assistance  
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
PBA: Programme Based Approach  
PIU: Parallel Implementation Unit  
PFM: Public Financial Management  
PD: Paris Declaration  
PIU: Project Implementation Unit  
PRSP: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper  
TA: Technical Assistance  
UK: United Kingdom  
UN: United Nations  
WP-EFF: OECD Working Party on Aid Effectiveness  
WB: World Bank  
WSSD: World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen)

## Executive Summary

Like Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in the 1990s, the Paris Declaration of 2005 promised increased ownership and better coordination in the aid donation process. However, despite promoting desirable principles, the Paris Declaration raises a number of significant concerns, most of which fall into one of three categories: 1) concerns that the provisions of the Declaration do not remedy known pitfalls in the current donor-developing country relationship, 2) concerns over the role of civil society and civil society organisations (CSOs) under the Declaration, and 3) concerns over the choice of indicators measuring progress towards implementing the Declaration. Despite the variety of concerns touching on different aspects of the Declaration, there is a substantial connection between them. Many of the concerns raised by CSOs are united by a single underlying criticism of the Paris Declaration: It fails to understand the form of ownership necessary to improve aid effectiveness.

Democratic ownership, a CSO ideal, requires broad participation, not merely ownership by a small number of government officials. Civil society requires a framework that ensures governments are creating national policies that reflect the needs of its citizens. Giving developing country governments a larger role does not guarantee greater democratic ownership. The Paris framework views ownership as government and donor focused. As a result, it fails to acknowledge that civil society's participation is not only valuable, but also necessary to enhance ownership. Ownership must be shaped from the bottom-up, yet the limited perspective of the Paris Declaration largely ignores this reality. Furthermore, the Declaration takes a weak stance on ownership of any kind by failing to address some of the most problematic aspects of aid donation. These weaknesses could potentially result in the same failure to ensure the participation of the poor and reduce inequalities that plagued most PRSPs.

CSOs have been active and vocal in their criticism of the Paris Declaration and the result of their activism has had some positive outcomes. The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) now reflects a number of changes based on CSO feedback. However, as it currently stands, the AAA still does not explicitly acknowledge CSOs as more than aid funding sources and recipients and has failed to make a number of the changes demanded by CSOs. In doing so, the AAA continues to ignore the vital role of indigenous CSOs as democratic actors essential to country ownership. Even after Accra and the broad CSO consultation process preceding it, criticism of the state of international aid policy will most likely remain. CSOs will again have to decide whether they can support the Paris Declaration in light of modifications made at Accra.

While it is important that CSOs continue to advocate for improvements to the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and future international policies, this is not the only place where CSOs can influence aid effectiveness. Aid effectiveness can also be improved by changing CSOs' actions. CSOs have their own difficulties with coordination and accountability, affecting both aid efficiency and efficacy. Aid effectiveness is highly relevant to CSOs and even apart from the PD there is still much for CSOs to do.

# Can Aid be Effective without Civil Society?

## The Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and Beyond

### I. Introduction

#### Poverty, Power, and Aid Solutions

In recent decades many democracies in developing countries have survived socioeconomic conditions that have made their path to democracy a difficult one. However, owing to the increasing optimism and zeal associated with each success and the effects of a general trend towards neo-liberal economics in the 1980s, nascent democracies adopted increasingly orthodox economic policies (Mkandawire, 2006). These policies entailed near complete reliance on the “free market” as a means to solve economic woes and strongly discouraged government involvement, reflecting the influence of the Washington Consensus within international financial institutions including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In addition, these policies focused almost entirely on economic growth, theorising that growth at any level of society would benefit individuals at all levels over time. In subscribing to a market-centred approach, the new governments largely neglected the accompanying social policies necessary to meet the diverse needs of the citizenry themselves. Moreover, national economic growth is not necessarily accompanied by a reduction in poverty (Manning, 2007: 42-3). Consequently, even in new democracies that achieved economic growth, poverty continued to afflict large portions of the population (Manning, 2007: 43). As a result of the adoption of neo-liberal policies, many people in poverty across the globe face national policies that are insensitive to their situation but lack the social, political, and economic power necessary to lobby for policy change. The continued prevalence, inequity, and powerlessness associated with poverty in developing countries creates a demand for better national policies. Additionally, it emphasises the need for the continued involvement of civil society organisations (CSOs) as a unique source of empowerment and democratic participation for impoverished populations.

However, while the role of CSOs in developing countries remains clear to CSOs and their constituents, recent innovations in international poverty alleviation policy seem to largely ignore, if not exclude, CSOs in form and practice from areas where they could and should be involved. An examination of the IMF and World Bank’s introduction and implementation of PRSPs in the 1990’s sets the stage for a lengthier examination of the most recent of these policy revolutions: The Paris Declaration (PD) of 2005. This paper will cover the history, scope, implementation and reception of the Paris Declaration, as well as explicitly discussing what the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action means for both international and indigenous CSOs.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In material related to aid effectiveness most authors do not differentiate between international civil society and indigenous civil society. In this paper international civil society includes international NGOs or civil society organisations that operate at a global level and usually within developing countries. For this type of INGO or international civil society organisation national activities and services are largely controlled from the global organisation. The expression “indigenous civil society” or “indigenous NGOs” refers to organisations that are constituted in a country and are controlled entirely by citizens of that country. Where it is relevant in this paper, a differentiation will be made. The differentiation between INGOs and indigenous NGOs is developed in the section on ‘Recommendations for Civil Society: An ICSW Perspective’, page 17-18.

## **The Advent of PRSPs and the Role of CSOs**

In the 1990's international financial institutions including IMF and World Bank were under increasing pressure to reduce poverty via economic solutions as it became clear that for a number of impoverished countries, external debt dwarfed their GDP and made it impossible for them to escape economic challenge and achieve prosperity (Mestrum, 2006: 63). In the face of mounting pressure and dissatisfaction with their previous debt relief policies, which employed means to sustain but not reduce or forgive external debts, IMF and World Bank started a programme of Poverty Reductions Strategy Papers (PRSPs). PRSPs were novel in their approach to the problem of poverty in that they required developing governments to generate strategic plans for poverty reduction, placing a high value on country ownership. Developing country governments were given the task of deciding upon the substance of the plans, purportedly based on broad consultation with country parliaments and civil society. The stated motive behind PRSPs was to produce more successful strategies in reducing poverty by relying upon the knowledge of developing country governments and civil society. Ideally this internalised process would encourage dedication to implementing the papers by instilling a sense of ownership. While Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) were required to draft PRSPs to receive continued IMF and World Bank assistance under the HIPC initiative, in time virtually all developing countries have prepared PRSPs.

However, while the concept of country ownership remains commendable in the eyes of CSOs, the implementation of PRSPs has been heavily criticised by civil society for a lack of precisely that characteristic (Curran, 2008: 2). In practice, research suggests that the IMF and World Bank's role in creating PRSPs was a heavy handed one, evidenced by near formulaic similarities between PRSPs and telltale emphasis on privatisation, growth, and structural adjustment (Mestrum, 2006: 3). In hindsight many governments complained that the process was rushed and that they did not have a meaningful role (Bread for the World, 2002: 16). For civil society, PRSPs in practice have meant minimal CSO involvement. It has been remarked that while PRSPs provide civil society with a "seat at the table," only in a few limited cases has this input affected the resulting national policy (Bread for the World, 2002: 20). This is perhaps unsurprising given that PRSPs on the whole failed to engender country ownership as promised. Whereas country ownership described in PRSP rhetoric was a participatory, uniquely national affair, the reality of the powerful external influence from the World Bank and IMF precluded the need and desire for participation. In summary, while PRSPs touted promising and innovative principles, in most countries these principles were not put into practice. As a result, numerous policies at odds with country ownership and democratic stability were implemented and continue to be relied upon in international policy today.

Years after the introduction of PRSPs, international policymakers again faced tensions related to development and poverty alleviation. In 1995 international development experts and governments met at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) to discuss global development. Together they produced a list of commitments intended to advance development efforts by addressing economic, social, cultural, legal and political contexts simultaneously. Each of these commitments was accompanied by a government-developed "Programme of Action," delineating what governments would do to realise each commitment. Action programmes were made up of four components: 1) An enabling environment for social

development; 2) eradication of poverty; 3) expansion of productive employment and reduction of unemployment; and 4) social integration.

Borrowing from the Copenhagen Summit, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996 and adopted by the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. However, unlike the comprehensive commitments made at Copenhagen, the goals adopted at the Millennium Summit focused on largely numerical targets. To reduce poverty, they set a goal to halve the global rate of extreme poverty by 2015. In effect they reduced the WSSD's commitments at Copenhagen to a series of minimum numerical targets and divorced poverty eradication from the larger discussion of development, including the action programmes crucial to achieving sustainable results (Correll, 2008: 453). Regardless of their desirability, concern that the MDGs will not be achieved has mounted. Several studies suggested that as late as 2003 aid donation made little, if any, impact on macroeconomic growth in developing countries, with growth believed to be closely tied to poverty reduction (Roodman, 2007: 6-19). The concern over unmet goals generated by proponents of the MDGs aligned with related concerns of international donors. Donors had become increasingly aware that the aid donation process was overridden with redundancies; multiple donors were making uncoordinated efforts to solve the same problems, while requiring developing country governments to meet different stipulations and produce multiple monitoring reports. As a result of this alignment of concerns between MDG proponents and frustrated donors, discussion increasingly turned to increasing "aid effectiveness", under the hypothesis that the nominal impact of aid was tied to how it was being delivered. Importantly the phrase "aid effectiveness" itself encompasses several meanings in the international context. For CSOs, aid effectiveness is generally defined in terms of substantive results in the lives of CSO constituents. However, as discussed below in greater detail, key actors in the aid arena (e.g. OECD) have come to discuss aid effectiveness largely from a mechanistic standpoint focusing on the efficiency and effectiveness of the structure in place for aid. The donor-recipient focused Paris Declaration is the result.

Several international conferences and instruments prior to the Paris Declaration in 2005 crafted and articulated various means of improving aid effectiveness. They did so primarily through increasing oversight by international aid institutions and forcing rigid guidelines, stipulations, and conditions for receipt of aid. Alternatively they set unenforceable goals with no instruments with which to measure improvement. The Paris Declaration was truly revolutionary in this context. It sought to alter the balance of power between aid donors and aid recipients and provide a mechanism for monitoring progress. The underlying aim was to reduce the amount of uncoordinated effort. This was to be achieved by giving greater power to the aid recipient countries. Donors would be committed to align their policies with the developing country's national strategies. Donor policies would then be in greater harmony with one another. The important role given to the developing countries' national strategies would provide an incentive to both donors and recipient countries to strengthen the developing country's national institutions and policies, making the results more sustainable. Unfortunately, dedication to "country ownership" is not the only similarity between the PRSPs and the Paris Declaration. In neither PRSPs nor the Paris Declaration was there a clear role for CSOs. ICSW, in joining the debate over the Paris Declaration, offers both praise and criticism to be shared at the High Level Forum



and CSO Parallel Forum in Accra, at which the Paris Declaration will be reviewed. The essential outcome is a clearer agreement on the role of civil society in aid effectiveness.

## **II. The Paris Declaration**

### **What is the Paris Declaration?**

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was designed, drafted and negotiated by the OECD and presented at the High Level Forum (HLF) in Paris on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2005. The Declaration was signed by more than one hundred donors (bilateral and multilateral) and developing country governments that promised to work together for greater aid effectiveness. The signatories agreed to regularly monitor their success using indicators laid out in the Declaration (OECD, Fact Sheet, 2008a). Since that time a number of additional parties have signed the Declaration (see Appendix A for a list of current PD signatories).

The stated purpose of the Declaration contained in the opening “Statement of Resolve” is to reform the delivery and management of aid for better aid effectiveness in order to make greater progress towards reaching the MDGs. Relying on values and concepts established at previous international forums, the Declaration proceeds to set out five key principles: 1) ownership, 2) alignment, 3) harmonisation, 4) management for results, and 5) mutual accountability. These principles are elaborated below. The PD includes twelve indicators created to measure progress towards achieving those principles (see Appendix B for list of indicators).

While there is certainly room for criticism of the PD, particularly in the realm of civil society involvement, it is crucial to understand the importance of the principles that the PD establishes. Taken together the five principles send the message that the current state of donor-partner country relations is ineffective and must change. Previously it was common practice for donors to create aid programmes composed of a series of stand-alone projects that were largely donor-driven, circumventing national institutions and delegating little responsibility to developing country governments. The result was that once the projects were completed they were rarely sustainable because the developing country government had not allocated the budget, resources, or support necessary to maintain them. Donors are understandably reluctant to rely on weaker partner country institutions and policies. Donors must please their own stakeholders with the understanding that self-sustaining democracies will never emerge until greater trust and reliance enter the donor-recipient relationship (Herfkens and Bains, 2007: 13). As discussed below, most critics of the PD do not criticise its aims but rather the mechanisms for implementation and measurement of progress.

The PD includes five essential elements, each described below in a brief summary and accompanied by the textual quotation most relevant to CSOs:

1. *Ownership*- Developing countries are delegated the power to determine their own national policies, priorities, and strategies. These are to be respected by donors. For many partner countries this will include relying on their PRSP, among other policy frameworks. This section of the PD contains the only direct mention of civil society in the Declaration: “Partner Countries

commit to take the lead in coordinating aid at all levels in conjunction with other development resources in dialogue with donors and encouraging the participation of civil society and the private sector” (PD, Para. 14).

“Partner countries commit to exercise leadership in developing and implementing their national development strategies through a **broad consultative processes**” (PD, Para. 14, emphasis added).

2. *Alignment*- Donors agree to align themselves with the policies put forth by partner countries as a part of ownership, summarised above. In addition, to ensure that alignment is beneficial to aid effectiveness, partner countries agree to strengthen their country systems with donors support. Alignment also includes strengthening public financial management capacity and the national procurement system, and finally, untying aid.

“Donors commit to link funding to a single framework of conditions and/or manageable set of indicators derived from the national development strategy. This does not mean that all donors will have identical conditions, but that each donor’s conditions should be derived from a **common streamlined framework** aimed at achieving lasting results” (PD, Para.16, emphasis added).

3. *Harmonisation*-Donors will work to “implement common arrangements” and simplify the procedures required to receive aid. Ideally donors work jointly on analysing and monitoring aid, resulting in fewer country visits, fewer reports for partner countries to complete and less redundancy that normally results in the duplication of efforts by both donors and partner countries.

“Donors commit to align to the maximum extent possible behind central government-led strategies or, if that is not possible, donors should make maximum use of country, regional, sector or **non-government systems**” (PD, Para. 39, emphasis added).

4. *Managing Resources and Decision-Making for Results*-Donors and partner countries should implement systems to collect data that reflects whether aid is having an effect towards the desired result.

“Partner countries and donor countries jointly commit to work together in a **participatory approach** to strengthen country capacities and demand for results based management” (PD, Para. 46, emphasis added).

5. *Mutual Accountability*- A major priority for partner countries and donors is “to enhance mutual accountability and transparency in the use of development resources.” The PD states that doing so will help to “strengthen public support for national policies and development assistance” (PD, Para. 47, emphasis added).

“Partner countries commit to reinforce participatory approaches by systematically involving a **broad range of development partners** when formulating and assessing progress in implementing national development strategies” (PD, Para. 48, emphasis added).

These five principles are matched to twelve indicators intended to allow progress towards implementing the PD to be monitored (see Appendix B). Monitoring is carried out by the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF), established by the OECD in 2003 in recognition of concerns about aid effectiveness and the need for better global partnerships to achieve the MDGs. During monitoring, partner countries and donors fill out surveys measuring the twelve indicators using methods outlined in the PD. A baseline measurement for use in future comparisons was taken in 2006. The first measurement for use in evaluating progress was taken in 2008 and it will be an important topic of discussion at the Third HLF in Accra. A second monitoring is scheduled to occur in 2010 (OECD, 2008a).

## **A Brief History of the Paris Declaration**

From a historical standpoint, each of the five PD principles has a predecessor in international policy: Country ownership is a concept largely borrowed from PRSPs as discussed earlier; harmonisation was specifically emphasised at the first High-Level Forum in 2003 by the Rome Declaration on Harmonisation; alignment was emphasised at the Monterrey Conference on Financing Development in 2002; and finally, the concepts of result-based management and mutual accountability echo the MDGs' focus on results and a system of accountability (Meyer and Schulz, 2008: 4).

The Paris Declaration is said to go beyond predecessors like the Rome Declaration in that it was endorsed by a significantly larger and more representative group and involved broader consultation. Additionally, it emphasises taking action to achieve results, not merely making more commitments. It employs the indicators of success to measure fulfilment of the commitments made (Herfkens and Bains, 2007: 8).

Now, in 2008, the PD will be reviewed for the first time since its implementation. In September, country ministers, heads of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, donor organisations, and civil society organisations from across the globe will meet again for the Third High-Level Forum (HLF3) on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, Ghana. The agenda includes discussion of the present impact of the Paris Declaration and mapping a future course for international policy on aid effectiveness. The Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), a statement to be signed as an addendum to the Paris Declaration, will be presented to everyone in attendance at the forum. At the HLF3, the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG-CS), a multi-stakeholder organisation formed by the WP-EFF, will present a broad CSO perspective. In addition, CSOs will hold their own discussion on aid effectiveness at the CSO Parallel Forum on Aid Effectiveness. This will take place immediately prior to the HLF3 and will be led by the CSO International Steering Group (ISG). Further defining the role of CSOs under the Paris framework will be central to this discussion.

## **Implementation of the Paris Declaration**

The Paris Declaration has been in place for three years. In 2008 monitoring data was collected for the second time and is ready to be compared with baseline data collected during the first round of monitoring in 2006. The HLF3 will be the first real opportunity to determine

whether progress towards implementing the PD has been made. Until this year, the only report on progress was the “Survey on Monitoring the Paris Declaration,” published by the OECD in 2007, just one year after the Declaration was introduced. It surveyed thirty-four self-selecting countries and a comprehensive list of donor organisations covering 37% of the aid programmed globally (OECD, 2007a: 9). It purported that there was still “a long road ahead,” but also evidence that some advancements towards fulfilling the PD had already taken place (OECD, 2007a: 9). In terms of country ownership, it appeared that developing governments were more likely and more able to take leadership roles in aid planning than they were in previous years. However, one of the most pressing concerns recognised by the report was the need for stronger national development strategies. The survey showed that only 17% of the countries sampled fulfilled the criteria for a sound development strategy. While many countries relied upon their PRSP as the main component of their development strategy, in most cases a PRSP alone will not satisfy all of the indicators measuring country ownership. PRSPs often do not contain the key element of prioritisation or the explicit steps necessary to make the strategy a reality, and for that reason are not completely satisfactory (OECD, 2007a: 17-8).

Reporting on achieving donor-partner country alignment reflects some of the concerns discussed above in relation to country-ownership. The report found that nearly all of the donor countries now base their aid on established country frameworks. However, since these frameworks are underdeveloped and overly broad in most cases, alignment with them does not necessarily mean that donors are greatly influenced or restricted in their actions. A key aspect of alignment is that developing country systems become more reliable. Unfortunately important indicators on improving aid procurement systems are absent from the results of the report because data was unavailable in 2006. However the report does discuss the progress made on public financial management (PFM). It suggested that better leadership and improvements at the sub-national levels would allow a number of countries to progress in the area of PFM and that with encouragement, the PFM target could be reached. Other indicators relating to alignment include measurement of parallel implementation units (PIUs), which are units created outside the existing developing country structure. The existence of PIUs is discouraged because they signify a lack of reliance upon developing country systems. These were found to be difficult to measure and it is not clear that all countries applied a uniform definition of what constituted a parallel unit. For this reason it is uncertain how much progress has really been made, although it is clear that a more precise definition of PIUs is necessary to obtain a meaningful measure.

Harmonisation, managing for results and accountability are all areas in which serious improvement is needed if the targets agreed upon in Paris are to be reached. Harmonisation is monitored by indicators measuring the increased use of common arrangements within programme based approaches (PBAs), the number of joint-missions, and the amount of shared reporting. The 2006 Survey found that using PBAs as a proxy measurement of increased harmonisation may not provide an accurate depiction of harmonisation. Regardless, the number of PBAs was far from reaching the target figure set in Paris. The survey results on the proportion of joint missions and shared reporting were also dour, and again the need for major improvement to reach Paris targets was emphasised. Managing for results requires that countries collect and share information on the results of their strategies with donors and then use this information to shape future decisions. In Paris donors agreed not to require additional reporting but to rely on the information and results obtained by the country government. The survey

reported that only a small number of the countries surveyed had substantially or largely developed reporting and assessment frameworks to be used by donors and country governments. Again, much work remained to be done. Finally, accountability is measured by looking for mechanisms created by partner governments for mutual review of fulfilment of commitments made under the PD. As of 2006, 41% of the surveyed countries had some sort of mechanism in place. This minority of countries must become more than simply the majority, as the target set for the 2010 review is 100% (OECD, 2007a: 36).

Importantly, in a report titled “Turning the Tables” authored by a number of international CSOs, we are reminded that these results, and future monitoring results, must be analysed with an eye to the meaningfulness, reliability, precision, and integrity of the indicators used to measure them (Eurodad, 2008a). The authors of “Turning the Tables” assert that the indicators discussed above have some serious flaws in every one of these areas. They make these assertions based on their own case studies in Nicaragua, Honduras, Cambodia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Mali, and Niger, and other case studies carried out by the African Network on Debt and Development, Oxfam (Mali and Malawi), Ibis (Ghana) and Cordaid (Ghana, Zambia and Uganda), making similar inquiries into the character of PD indicators. They write that, “Some indicators are constructed in ways which make it difficult to assess donor and government performance, and there are strong indications that some donors and governments have provided inaccurate data. The official monitoring system makes it difficult to judge the performance of individual donors....The impact of the Paris Monitoring survey will be limited by the fact that the 2006 baseline suffers from having been politically negotiated at the country level. Interviews with donor officials in Cambodia for this study confirmed that donors are able to flatter their own performance. One donor official observed for example, that donors are able to claim that they are undertaking joint research simply by adding other donors’ logos to their own reports, with no reduction in transactions costs for the recipient government” (Eurodad, 2008a: 14). These concerns are clearly very serious and hopefully will be discussed openly at the HLF3. They are considered again in some greater detail below in the discussion of the PD’s reception.

### **Reception of the Paris Declaration by CSOs and Other Development Actors**

The reception of the Paris Declaration by donors and developing country governments has generally been positive. For the time being it enjoys the support of the numerous donors and developing country governments that signed it and it continues to be signed by additional donors and governments. Although there is concern and criticism over how to best interpret, implement, and measure the five principles of the Declaration, this often follows general praise and support for the principles themselves.

Historically, CSOs have been among the greatest proponents of country ownership and accountability, so a declaration pressing on both of these principles looks to be a success for the CSOs who have fought for them. Nonetheless, the PD raises a number of significant concerns, most of which fall into one of three categories: 1) concerns that the provisions of the Declaration will not change the current donor-developing country relationship 2) concerns over the role of civil society and CSOs under the Declaration, and 3) concerns over the choice of indicators measuring progress towards implementing the Declaration. Despite the variety of concerns touching on different aspects of the PD, there is a substantial connection between them. Many of

the concerns raised by CSOs are united by a single underlying criticism of the Paris Declaration: The PD fails to understand the form of ownership necessary to improve aid effectiveness. While it is true that greater trust, reliance, and coordination between donors and recipient governments are essential to ownership and the creation of a sustainable democracy, it is a mistake to think that these elements of ownership can be discussed in isolation from the other side of the equation, namely civil society involvement. As the AG-CS explains it, “Although the ownership principle is key to understanding the Paris Declaration, the Declaration itself does not develop this principle in any depth. The reference is in fact to ‘country ownership,’ which is associated in turn with government leadership of a country’s poverty reduction strategy” (AG-CS, 2008: 8). Democratic ownership, a CSO ideal, requires broad participation, not merely ownership by a small number of government officials. Without a framework that ensures that governments are creating national policies that reflect the needs of its citizens, giving developing country governments a larger role provides no guarantee of greater ownership. Recently the CSO International Steering Group (ISG), in responding to the Accra Agenda for Action, took this position: “It is imperative that the [Accra Agenda for Action] agrees a new way to measure ownership, which recognises that ownership must be driven by countries’ own citizens, not by donors or the World Bank. Indicators of ownership must measure the participation of citizens, civil society and parliaments in deciding, planning, implementing and assessing national plans, policies, programmes and budgets” (ISG, 2008b: 1). The PD framework currently views ownership in a manner that is government and donor focused. In doing so it fails to acknowledge that civil society’s participation is not only valuable, it is *necessary* to achieve ownership. The result of this fundamental failure is that the PD paints an unbalanced picture of the actors involved in aid effectiveness, provides a skewed understanding of what aid effectiveness means, and does not provide for measures of success that ensure advances towards democratic ownership. Consequently, the series of policy choices made in creating the PD are criticised by CSOs at almost every stage.

On the most general level, CSOs are concerned that the PD takes a “top-down” approach to improving aid effectiveness. ISG writes that, “By basing the assessment of ownership on World Bank analyses of national strategies, the Paris Declaration imposes a top-down model of ownership which fails to recognise the importance of democratically-formulated country strategies, and which can lead to donors imposing yet more conditions on developing countries. Ownership can only be built from the bottom-up, based on each country’s institutions and structures....” (ISG, 2008b: 1). The Paris Declaration’s top-down approach focuses on the relationship between donor governments and developing governments, in contrast to a bottom-up approach focusing on the relationship between civil society and developing governments. World Vision asserts that in adopting this top-down approach, there is an underlying assumption that programmes developed at the national level always reflect the needs of the people and can be delivered at the community level unobstructed. In reality, national governments are frequently out of touch or insensitive to the needs of their citizens, and even the best policies are not able implemented without impediment (Phillips, 2008: 8). Filling this gap between community needs and national policy is one of the key roles of parliaments and CSOs. However, because the PD does not address the relationship between civil society and the national government, it fails to ensure that improved donor-recipient relations will have any positive effect on the lives of the citizenry (Phillips, 2008: 8). Consequently, international donors, including international CSOs acting as donors, remain uncertain about whether the aid they provide to governments will ever

be seen by those they are trying to assist. This uncertainty destroys the incentive that donors have to align aid by giving aid to governments directly because it means that their aid may not be effective, despite a framework intended exactly for that purpose. In turn, this increases the chance that parallel aid structures will continue, where donors divide funds between governments and indigenous CSOs.

Another related concern raised by a number of CSOs questions the meaning of aid effectiveness itself. Many CSOs worry that the PD reinforces a definition of aid effectiveness that is focused on the mechanism of aid dispersal itself rather than on the substantive effect of aid on the ground (Rajani, 2008). This definition is more synonymous with aid efficiency than aid efficacy. The concern is that such a definition may focus attention away from improving social policy and achieving results in the lives of aid recipients. By focusing on the mechanism of aid effectiveness, the PD ignores the important issues of poverty reduction, gender equality, human rights and social justice. This mechanistic viewpoint mirrors the top-down approach because the form of effectiveness at issue in the donor-recipient government relationship is largely mechanistic. However, once the need for including civil society in this relationship is accepted, the definition of effectiveness must be broadened to include the improvement of social welfare.

Concerns regarding the PD definition of aid effectiveness and the top-down approach are closely related to concerns over what is left out of the Declaration. The Declaration's focus on the donor-partner country relationship in isolation resulted in little discussion of civil society and CSO involvement. Many CSOs feel that the PD ignores CSOs' valuable contribution and the essential nature of civil society participation in enhancing country ownership (AG-CS, 2008: 10). As discussed previously, without addressing how the diverse voices of civil society will be incorporated into national policies, there is no guarantee that the policies generated by the country governments will be democratic or representative. Moreover, there is no protection for minorities and groups that face discrimination that often need to organise and operate from the bottom up to be heard. The AG-CS echoes an argument made by many CSOs that CSOs provide a valuable diversity of perspectives, represent a diversity of needs, stimulate innovation, and help the poor to organise (AG-CS, 2008: 10). These roles are not only important but also unique, meaning that no amount of improvement in donor-developing country government relations can make up for the lack of inclusion of CSOs and civil society.

Some criticism of the PD stems from the earlier discussion of PRSPs. INTRAC reports that some CSOs fear that just as PRSPs frequently used the facade of country ownership to disguise continued influence of international powers, the PD will employ a similarly superficial form of country ownership, with international donors, including financial institutions like the World Bank and Northern country governments, powerfully influencing the country strategies generated by developing countries (Sen, 2007: 3). The result could be that the PD would have little impact on some of donors' most harmful and antidemocratic practices, including aid tying, conditionality and parallel programming. In fact, the PD permits conditions so long as the donor has a "sound justification." Moreover, none of the twelve indicators measures reduction in aid tying and conditionality. Northern CSOs and Southern CSOs and governments have tirelessly opposed aid tying and conditionalities, yet they remain common practice. Many Southern CSOs

are particularly disillusioned with PRSPs and consequently fear that ‘scaling up aid’ will only result in greater donor power and less democratic ownership in practice (Wanyeki, 2006).

Other CSOs have emphasised that not only does the PD run the risk of emulating the PRSPs’ problems, it encourages developing countries to rely on PRSPs in coming up with a country strategy without addressing their shortcomings in participation (OECD, 2007b). The CCIC has argued that it is crucial that the Paris Declaration not align itself with PRSPs given the evidence that external forces had a strong hand in creating them and that in practice they are not good examples of country ownership (Tomlinson, 2006: 24). For these reasons many CSOs feel that the Paris Declaration takes a weak stance on ownership by failing to address some of the most problematic aspects of aid donation with sufficient rigor. Such weaknesses could potentially result in the same failure to ensure the participation of the poor and reduce inequalities that plagued most PRSPs.

Many CSOs raise concerns over the indicators being used to measure progress towards reaching the development goals (Eurodad, 2008: 14; Sen, 2007: 2). World Vision purports that the indicators are favourable to donors and susceptible to falsification (Phillips, 2008: 22-3). The UK Aid Network (UKAN) and others assert that the existing indicators may not ensure broad participation and that additional indicators are necessary to ensure that the monitoring of commitments and results takes into account participation by additional aid actors like civil society (Sen, 2007: 4). Southern CSOs are concerned that the indicators used do not ensure that the aid will be effectively handled by developing governments once it is received. The indicators seem to focus on accountability up to the point of receipt, with no measure whether aid is actually being used as planned. (Wanyeki, 2006).

Numerous recurrent themes are raised in the present literature on the Paris Declaration and CSOs. Publications reflecting Southern CSOs’ perspectives raise some important additional concerns that receive little reiteration elsewhere. In addition to the concerns surrounding ownership described thus far, Southern CSOs in particular want to ensure that donor motives can be “unpacked and discussed,” to ensure that donors’ political agendas are not structuring the aid they deliver (Wanyeki, 2006). If donors pursue an aid agenda based on their own values (e.g. neo-liberal economics) or based on their own national desires (e.g. improved homeland security) when they conflict with the best interests of aid recipients, it is counterproductive to sustainable democratic ownership. Some Southern CSOs have also made the difficult acknowledgment that while they have consistently protested political and economic conditionalities, they have also used them at times to keep Southern governments on track and to gain donor support for their agendas. The PD does not attempt to distinguish between useful and harmful conditionalities, but leave it up to donors to decide whether they have a sound justification for putting conditions on their aid. Southern CSOs emphasise that reducing conditionality and increasing accountability must be accompanied by better national policies and institutions. There is a concern that with donors increasingly contributing to a large financial pool like a national annual budget, it will be hard to track whether governments are spending on the committed expenditures. For instance, if a government commits to spend on gender while creating the national budget, there is no guarantee that later in the year the government’s priorities won’t shift and the earlier commitment will be neglected. Another concern related to alignment and accountability is that developing country governments may become more accountable to donors



than to their own citizens, even in countries where national tax revenues account for eighty or ninety percent of the budget and donors contribute only ten or twenty percent (Wanyeki, 2006). This result is paradoxical; in trying to foster democracy the developing country government becomes more beholden to a foreign power than its own people.

All of these concerns only emphasise need for civil society to participate and influence the future of the PD and aid effectiveness, but has the Declaration left CSOs any room to do so?

### **The Role of Civil Society in the Paris Declaration**

With civil society largely neglected by the Paris Declaration, what does the instrument mean for civil society organisations? This section discusses how many CSOs initially saw their role under the Paris framework. Subsequent sections will examine the steps CSOs have taken since the PD was implemented, and what the next step for CSOs should be.

While some CSOs felt that the PD offers a new framework to operate within, others contended that the PD excludes civil society from the aid arena entirely. These views represent opposite ends on a spectrum of positions that have been espoused on the issue and are summarised below.

#### **1) CSOs are largely excluded by the Paris Declaration:**

a) **and consequently CSOs should be concerned and critical of the PD** for devaluing the unique and valuable role of CSOs, particularly in the aid forum. The PD does not and should not be applied to CSOs in the meantime, as they have no real role under the PD as it stands.

b) **but the PD is a positive sign of future declarations to come** in the area of aid effectiveness that will more directly address the role of CSOs. CSOs should encourage the drafting of an additional declaration, or amendments to the PD. Still, the PD should not be applied to CSOs in the meantime, as they have no real role under the PD as it stands.

2) **CSOs have a role as watch-dogs.** They should ensure that the PD does not operate like PRSPs, lives up to promises regarding country ownership and does not exclude disadvantaged or marginalised populations or have other unintended negative results.

#### **3) Principles of PD should apply to CSOs:**

a) Even if not directly addressed to CSOs, **many international CSOs act as donors**, so in that sense some PD principles like alignment may apply in their distribution of aid.

b) **If the principles were more broadly defined**, the Paris framework would include the role of CSOs in relation to donors, developing governments and the PD goals.

4) Under the PD, partner countries commit to encourage the participation of CSOs in their dialogue on aid dispersal. **The role explicitly accorded by the text of the PD is an acceptable entry point for civil society into the aid effectiveness discussion.**

Textual evidence suggests that CSOs that felt excluded are justified in that feeling. The PD directly refers to CSOs in only one paragraph, which weakly commits partner countries to “encouraging” participation of CSOs. Other paragraphs in the Declaration (excerpted earlier in Section II of this paper) leave room for CSO involvement, but do not specifically require or emphasise civil society or CSO involvement. In a “Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations” on the Paris Declaration, the AG-CS stated that while CSOs are not completely excluded by the Paris Declaration, the role proscribed to them is a limited one. They wrote that the Paris Declaration “flags CSOs as potential participants but does not recognise them as development actors in their own right” (AG-CS, 2008: i). Moreover, it fails give value to the unique role of CSOs in promoting diverse participation, equality, innovation, empowerment and organisation. Some might suggest that the absence of civil society in the PD is acceptable because the PD is an agreement between donors and developing country governments, and CSOs should create their own framework. The problem with this line of reasoning is that the donor-developing country government relationship should not exist separately from the relationship between civil society and developing country governments or civil society and aid donors. A framework that addresses these two actors in isolation is inherently incomplete. The position taken by the Advisory Group on Civil Society and Aid Effectiveness (AG-CS) as a result of their consultation with other CSOs will be the most influential CSO voice at the Accra HLF3.

There is an equally strong counterargument to proponents of simply adopting the Paris framework to apply to CSOs. First, in practice this proposition focuses on CSOs that act as donors. It would mean the incorporation of a limited number of international CSOs (INGOs), while still leaving many indigenous CSOs essential to democratic ownership excluded. In addition, while some aspects of the PD may be appropriately applied to donor CSOs in limited situations, these narrow circumstances are an unconvincing reason to consider applying the principles of the PD to donor CSOs broadly. Even when CSOs are acting as donors, harmonisation and alignment run contrary to core CSO principles including independence and diversity. As Brian Pratt, Executive Director of INTRAC, explains, “Given the key element of pluralism in civil society...[and] independence of civil society groups we should neither expect nor promote alignment of policies either between civil society and NGO groups or automatically with state authorities” (Pratt, 2007). Alternatively, AG-CS suggests the principles should be more broadly defined so that civil society has a role in the principles’ implementation. From this perspective, CSOs would not agree to abide by the principles themselves, but would play a role in how donors and developing country governments execute the principles. For example, AG-CS states that the principle of alignment should entail not only alignment with developing country government national strategies, but also with local government priorities and other country-based institutions including CSOs. By broadening the meaning of alignment, civil society’s role is acknowledged instead of excluded. This approach is not only inclusive of CSOs, it would help remedy concerns over ownership under the PD.

In summary, committing CSOs to align with developing country government policies and harmonise with other donors would affect only a limited sector of CSOs and risk CSOs' independence and diversity. However, there is an alternative way by which the principles might "apply" to CSOs. A broader construction of the Paris principles would include some allocation of what civil society's role in relation to each principle is. This would resolve many of the current concerns over the Declaration. However, the goal should be to ensure that the PD includes civil society where necessary and appropriate, not to make the PD a comprehensive strategy for CSOs in aid effectiveness. Just as CSOs and civil society need to be included in the Paris Declaration because of their unique role in aid effectiveness and ownership, the distinctiveness of civil society's role also means that CSOs should not be limited to the PD, but should consider additional principles for CSOs that would improve aid effectiveness. For example, one area that is clearly left out of the PD is the relationship between CSOs. Some might take the previous argument one step further and propose that not only should the PD principles be broadened, CSOs should be added as a third party to the Declaration. If CSOs are not only acknowledged in the donor and government commitments as key aid actors, but are given their own set of commitments under the Declaration, the scope of the Declaration would be vastly extended. However, it is important to remember that the PD was never intended to be a comprehensive development plan, but rather an agreement for better coordination between donors and developing governments. A safer solution, less susceptible to compromises or omissions that may result from working within an established framework, would be a CSO-oriented strategy to improve aid effectiveness, an idea that will receive some development later on.

For the reasons discussed, it will not suffice to incorporate CSOs into the PD merely by adding them as additional donors or parties that adopt the same commitments as donors. Not only are the roles played by CSOs unlike the roles of the donors and developing governments currently addressed by the Declaration, they are unlike one another. In other words, the role of CSOs in achieving the PD is not uniform. Instead, enhancing aid effectiveness through greater country ownership may require donors and developing country governments to make multiple commitments to match the diverse roles of CSOs as donors and democratic actors.

If the PD does not include any substantial role for CSOs in its current form, and the principles are not directly transferable to CSOs, then what is the next move? For many CSOs the next move is organising and calling for the revision of the PD. Those actions and the results that followed are discussed below.

### **CSOs Move Forward From Paris**

Since 2005, CSOs have ardently voiced their concerns over the PD and the future of aid effectiveness in publications, conferences and forums. The most consistent criticisms of the PD voiced in recent years have been included in the earlier section, "Reception of the Paris Declaration by CSOs and Other Development Actors." The result of abundant CSO activity relating to aid effectiveness has been an increasingly organised CSO response to the PD and an eagerness to influence future aid effectiveness policy.

In early 2007, the AG-CS was formed in response to CSOs' interest in engaging with donors and partner country governments on the issues of aid effectiveness. The AG-CS was set-up to consult with the OECD's WP-EFF and guarantee CSOs a place at the discussion table at the upcoming HLF3 in Accra, Ghana. The AG-CS includes three members from each of four stakeholder categories: donors, developing country governments, CSOs from developed and developing countries (see Appendix C). The Advisory Group is not intended to represent the voice of CSOs but to consult with a wide range of CSOs to explore more deeply the issues of aid effectiveness and ensure civil society a place at the discussion table. In February 2008 the AG-CS held "The International Forum on Civil Society on Aid Effectiveness: A Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue", in Quebec, Canada. This forum contributed to the AG-CS's "Synthesis of Findings and Recommendations", currently in its third draft. The Synthesis will be presented at the HLF3. The current recommendations focus on recognising CSOs as development actors in their own right and acknowledging the importance of CSOs as aid donors, recipients, and partners. AG-CS emphasises the broad range of functions that CSOs perform. In addition, AG-CS advocates for an expansion of the Paris principles so that they include a broader range of aid actors, particularly more local actors. In the final section, AG-CS asks donors and developing governments to help CSOs be more effective by creating a supportive climate for CSOs to work in (AG-CS, 2008).

In addition to working with the AG-CS as a liaison to WP-EFF and HLF3 participants, CSOs have organised a parallel forum to the HLF3 specifically for CSOs to discuss aid effectiveness. It was organised to take place just before the HLF3 to help prepare for the upcoming events. The parallel forum was organised by the CSO International Steering Group (ISG) chaired by the IBON Foundation (see Appendix C). In September 2007, the ISG published "From Paris 2005 to Accra 2008: Will Aid Become More Accountable and Effective? A Critical Approach to the Aid Effectiveness Agenda." Like the AG-CS paper, ISG emphasises deepening the aid effectiveness agenda so that it includes more development actors. It additionally calls for stronger language in the PD on issues of gender equality and human rights.

What remains to be seen is how CSO organisation and preparation for the HLF3 will affect the outcome in Accra. The next section looks at the influence of CSOs on the HLF3 process thus far.

### **III. The Accra Agenda for Action**

#### **What is the Accra Agenda for Action?**

In preparation for the HLF3 in Accra, Ghana, the Steering Committee has released several drafts of the "Accra Agenda for Action" (AAA). The AAA is a statement that will be adopted by ministers of developed and developing countries as well as heads of bilateral and multilateral development institutions at the HLF3 in Accra. The AAA statement both summarises progress made towards implementing Paris and points to where progress remains to be made or change is needed. It will serve as an addendum to the Paris Declaration, containing additional commitments and clarification of the PD text. During the drafting of the AAA, AG-CS was consulted twice for input. Many of the concerns addressed earlier, including broadening ownership, changing the top-down approach to a bottom-up approach, taking a stronger stand

against conditionality and enhancing donor accountability, were raised by the AG-CS during consultation, although the extent that AAA reflects these consultations is modest (see discussion below). The AAA has recently been finalised for presentation at the HLF3, and unfortunately frustrations seem to abound.

### **Early Reception of the Accra Agenda for Action**

Immediate responses from ISG and AG-CS were highly critical of the first draft of the AAA. They maintained that the first drafts of the AAA did not adequately address the concerns they had previously voiced over the PD. However, there is some evidence that CSOs' criticism of the Paris Declaration and input from the AG-CS were taken into account, even if inadequately. The final draft of the AAA includes three new broad commitments: 1) Strengthening country-owned development processes, 2) building stronger, more inclusive, partnerships for development, and 3) delivering and accounting for development results. Under the first heading, a series of new commitments appear to embody many of the concerns raised by CSOs regarding ownership. The second heading, discussing partnership, presents an improved statement on the need for civil society involvement and CSO partnership. Finally, the third heading discusses improvements needed in terms of accountability and transparency (OECD, 2008b; see Appendix D). The AAA also includes several lines under the heading "We will deepen our engagement with civil society organisations" (OECD, 2008b).

However, closer reading of the text below the headings reveals that that the content of the AAA makes few concrete changes to the PD. Since the release of the first draft, two subsequent drafts have been released and scrutinised by an awaiting audience of donors, developing governments, and CSOs. CSOs, developing governments, and donors have all expressed dissatisfaction. The final version of the AAA remains an inadequate attempt at accommodating CSO concerns and it is clear that CSOs' impact was limited. The AG-CS has finalised the third draft of its synthesis paper and the ISG has published a position paper on the final AAA. It remains to be seen whether the final feedback contained in these papers will have any further influence on the AAA when the events in Accra finally commence. Both the ISG and AG-CS papers recommend a number of specific changes to the AAA and include examples of alternative wording they would find acceptable. The most recent ISG paper commenting on the final version of the AAA notes that the previous draft was actually more of an improvement on the PD and put forth a stronger position on conditionality and aid tying than the final draft. It reiterates the lack of accountability of donors to ensure reductions in aid tying and conditionality and emphasises the need for time frames to make monitoring worthwhile (ISG, 2008c).

In addition to the most recent published reactions put forth by AG-CS and ISG, several other CSOs have published responses to the final AAA. Echoing ISG, Eurodad writes that, "The latest draft of the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) has been stripped of any specific time-bound commitments to which donors can be held to account and the document has been seriously watered down" (Eurodad, 2008b). Moreover, they make an eerily similar observation to the one made by ISG:

Eurodad believes that the draft has been weakened in several places. Donors are backtracking on a number of areas including: on commitments to reduce aid conditionality, on commitments to make aid more predictable, to use country systems, to reform technical

assistance and on mutual accountability. Yet again, donors seem to be unwilling to practice what they preach and be held account for their commitments in the same way they are calling on developing countries to do so. In the current draft developing countries are encouraged to design country-based action plans that set out time-bound and monitorable proposal to implement the Paris Declaration and the AAA, but donors are not mentioned. And despite the many concerns about the current monitoring process of the Paris Declaration, even the minor commitment to independent monitoring has been removed in the latest draft (Eurodad, 2008b).

Better Aid reports that a number of actors, including the European Union (EU) and developing country governments, are similarly frustrated. They also proposed an explanation for the AAA's inadequacy: "The European Union has registered its formal objections to the latest draft of the Accra agenda for action.....with up to a dozen specific objections. Meanwhile it is thought that developing country governments, although very disappointed with the latest draft are getting increasingly disillusioned with the process. The US appears to be effectively using its influence over the World Bank to ensure strong position from across the Atlantic to water down the outcomes for the High Level Forum in just three weeks time" (Better Aid, 2008). This sentiment is reminiscent of the PRSP process and does not bode well for meaningful and productive dialogue in Accra or future CSO influence.

#### **IV. Recommendations for Civil Society: An ICSW Perspective**

##### **The Future of the Paris and Accra**

As emphasised earlier, from the perspective of ICSW, the greatest criticism of the Paris Declaration is that it defines ownership from a government-centric perspective, guaranteeing that country governments have greater control over aid planning, but not that the planning will reflect the input and involvement of civil society. As such, the greatest concern is that the PD be revised to include mechanisms that ensure that government strategies reflect and involve civil society and indigenous CSOs. This concern is closely tied to concerns over the accountability of donors, aid conditionality and the tying of aid.

The improvements made by the AAA demonstrate that CSOs are still a powerful and effective voice when they organise. The influence of feedback from ISG and AG-CS on the AAA, even prior to HLF3, is evidence that dialogue with other aid actors is a productive path. However, there is clearly a large amount of work to be done if the AAA is to be more than another international aid policy with a promising façade that lacks real substance. While the language of the AAA as it currently stands is an improvement on the PD, it is still too weak on donor practices and monitoring progress. Moreover, it seems that the AAA's discussion of the role of CSOs and civil society implicitly refers only to donor CSOs. In paragraph nine under "Building more effective and inclusive partnerships", the AAA writes that, "In recent years, more development actors — middle-income countries, global funds, the private sector, civil society organisations— are increasing their contributions and are bringing valuable experience to the table" (OECD, 2008b). Here the emphasis is on increasing CSO financial contributions and the mention of "experience" seems to be in reference to experience with aid administration. In paragraph thirteen, the AAA promises that, "Developing country governments will work more closely with parliaments and local authorities in the preparation, implementation and monitoring

of national development policies and plans. In doing so, governments will engage with civil society organisations (CSOs)” (OECD, 2008b). This language is an improvement upon the PD but still too vague to be useful (e.g. what does it mean to “engage” with CSOs?). Finally, in paragraph twenty, the AAA commits donors and developing country governments to “deepen [their] engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs) as independent development actors in their own right whose efforts complement those of governments and the private sector” (OECD, 2008b). Again, this statement is an improvement but makes no distinction between the efforts of indigenous CSOs and INGOs. In doing so it fails to recognise indigenous CSOs as democratic actors and instead groups their efforts in with those of INGOs.

We are concerned that changes made thus far by the AAA reflect a need to consult CSOs as aid donors and aid administrators in the area of aid effectiveness. This could be the result of indigenous CSO voices that have been heard much less frequently in this discussion, although their perspective has not gone entirely unrepresented. While INGOs, too, emphasise democratic participation, the AAA is missing that message. Meanwhile more recent CSO commentary has focused on donor actions, risking pushing concern over indigenous CSO involvement into the background.

The current AAA statement reflects progress and the impact of CSOs’ efforts. However, there remains a disconcerting lack of discussion of civil society and CSOs as development actors, in spite of an increased discussion of CSOs as aid donors. Although aid donation and dispersal is an important role played by many INGOs, ICSW is concerned that the lack of a clear distinction in the literature between the functions of INGOs and indigenous CSOs has led to policy changes that appear to affect the involvement of indigenous CSOs and INGOs, when in fact they only affect the latter. This criticism is raised as an addition to the many other concerns raised by CSOs in this discussion (as summarised above) and supports the need for further changes to the AAA.

### **A New Direction: CSO Coordination and the Future of Aid Effectiveness**

While it is important that CSOs continue to advocate for improvements to the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and future international policies, this is not the only place where CSOs can influence aid effectiveness. Aid effectiveness can also be improved by changing CSOs’ actions. CSOs have their own difficulties with coordination and accountability, affecting both aid efficiency and efficacy. Aid effectiveness is highly relevant to CSOs and even apart from the PD there is still a lot of work for CSOs to do.

In a paper on Southern civil society perspectives on international aid, a recent paper from the Overseas Development Institute wrote that, “While not strictly part of the official aid system...INGOs nonetheless have become increasingly important actors in aid relations given the large sum of international development assistance they command and their large presence in Africa, Asia, and Latin America alike....However, the impact of INGOs can also be overwhelming for CSOs at the at the local level. INGOs have increasingly come to be perceived as competing unfairly with local CSOs for financial and other programming resources, as well as undermining the growth and effectiveness of an independent and autonomous indigenous civil society sector” (Menocal and Rogerson, 2006: 20). To remedy this situation, the authors suggest

improving discussion between decision-makers in the North and Southern CSOs. In their conclusion they dare to ask “Should there be a code of conduct for Northern CSOs?” (Menocal and Rogerson, 2006: 22). This question, asked quietly at the end of a lengthy paper is one that CSOs have needed to ask for sometime in reference to all CSOs. Although PD principles like harmonisation and alignment are not appropriate for CSOs in the same way that they are for donors, there is some similarity between the issues faced by governments and donors in relation to coordination and efficacy and current concerns among CSOs. Recently CSOs have moved towards acknowledging the need for articulated principles governing relationships between CSOs. A recent INTRAC newsletter raised the subject after an officer from a Southern NGO spoke up to INTRAC’s director regarding “issues of decreasing trust between agencies who have worked together for many years, and of increasing and sometimes excessive procedures which, from his perspective, have not only done little to improve his work but have in fact reduced the efficiency and effectiveness of his agency” (Pratt, 2008: 1). A set of principles with the goal of enhancing CSO effectiveness in an effort to enhance aid effectiveness seems to be on the horizon. Recently CSOs have begun collaborating in planning an ‘Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness’ for 2009 and 2010 (CONCORD, 2008). It seems particularly promising that one of the goals of the Open Forum is to develop principles that focus on the diverse roles of CSOs as development actors, not only aid actors.

CSOs have been united by the PD and again by the Accra Forum. While it is important that CSOs continue to advocate for improvements to the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and future international policies, this is not the only place where CSOs can influence aid effectiveness. Aid effectiveness can also be improved by changing CSOs’ actions. CSOs have their own difficulties with coordination and accountability, affecting both aid efficiency and efficacy. Aid effectiveness is highly relevant to CSOs and even apart from the PD there is still much for CSOs to do.



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## APPENDIX A: List of Participating Countries and Organisations

### Participating Countries

Afghanistan	Honduras	Poland
Albania	Hungary	Portugal
Argentina	Iceland	Romania
Australia	India	Russian Federation
Austria	Indonesia	Rwanda
Bangladesh	Iraq	Samoa
Belgium	Ireland	Sao Tomé & Principe
Benin	Israel	Saudi Arabia
Bolivia	Italy	Senegal
Botswana	Ivory Coast	Serbia and Montenegro
Brazil*	Jamaica	Sierra Leone
Burkina Faso	Japan	Slovak Republic
Burundi	Jordan	Slovenia
Cambodia	Kenya	Solomon Islands
Cameroon	Korea	South Africa
Canada	Kuwait	Spain
Cape Verde	Kyrgyz Republic	Sri Lanka
Central African Republic	Lao PDR	Sudan
Chad	Lesotho	Swaziland
China	Luxembourg	Sweden
Colombia	Madagascar	Switzerland
Congo D. R.	Malawi	Syria
Cook Islands	Malaysia	Tajikistan
Czech Republic	Mali	Tanzania
Denmark	Mauritania	Thailand
Djibouti	Mexico	Timor-Leste
Dominican Republic	Moldova	Togo
Egypt	Mongolia	Tonga
Ethiopia	Morocco	Tunisia
European Commission	Mozambique	Turkey
Fiji	Namibia	Uganda
Finland	Nepal	Ukraine
France	The Netherlands	United Kingdom
Gabon	New Zealand	United States of America
Gambia	Nicaragua	Vanuatu
Germany	Niger	Vietnam
Ghana	Nigeria	Yemen
Greece	Norway	Zambia
Guatemala	Pakistan	
Guinea	Papua New Guinea	
Guyana	Peru	
Haiti	Philippines	

\* to be confirmed

## **International Organisations adhering to the Paris Declaration**

African Development Bank  
Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa  
Asian Development Bank  
Commonwealth Secretariat  
Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP)  
Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)  
Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)  
Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI)  
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)  
European Investment Bank (EIB)  
Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria  
G24  
Inter-American Development Bank  
International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)  
International Monetary Fund (IMF)  
International Organisation of the Francophonie  
Islamic Development Bank  
Millennium Campaign  
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)  
Nordic Development Fund  
Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)  
Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS)  
OPEC Fund for International Development Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat  
United Nations Development Group (UNDG)  
World Bank

## **Civil Society Organisations present at the High Level Forum, Paris 2006**

Africa Humanitarian Action AFRODAD  
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation  
Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)  
Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement (CCFD)  
Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité (CIDSE)  
Comisión Económica (Nicaragua)  
ENDA Tiers Monde  
EURODAD  
International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)  
Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC)  
Reality of Aid Network  
Tanzania Social and Economic Trust (TASOET)  
UK Aid Network

For most recent update visit: [www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclaration/members](http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/parisdeclaration/members)

## Appendix B: The Twelve Paris Declaration Indicators

Paris Indicator of Aid Effectiveness	Target for 2010
1. Ownership- Operational Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)	At least 75% of countries have operational development strategies
2a. Quality of Public Financial Management (PFM)	Half of partner countries significantly increase the quality of their systems
2b. Quality of Procurement Systems	One third of partner countries significantly increase the quality of their systems
3. Aid Reported on Country Budget	At least 85% of aid flows reported on budget
4. Coordinated Capacity Development	50% of technical cooperation through coordinated programmes
5a. Use of Country Public Financial Management (PMF) Systems	90-100% of donors use country systems in countries with sound systems
5b. Use of Country Procurement Systems	90-100% of donors use country systems in countries with sound systems
6. Parallel Programme Implementation Units (PIUs)	Reduce by 2/3 the stock of parallel PIUs
7. In-year Predictability of Aid	Halve the proportion of aid not disbursed within the fiscal year
8. Untied Aid	More aid is untied
9. Use of Programme-Based Approaches	66% of aid flows are provided in a coordinated manner
10. Joint Missions and Country Analytic Work	40% or donor missions are joint
11. Sound Performance Assessment Framework	Reduce by 1/3 the countries without sound performance assessment
12. Reviews of Mutual Accountability	All partner countries have reviews of mutual assessment in place

## **Appendix C: Composition of AG-CS and ISG**

### **OECD Advisory Group on Aid Effectiveness (AG-CS)**

Website: <http://web.acdi-cida.gc.ca/cs>

The AG-CS was set up by the OECD's Working Party on Aid Effectiveness (WP-EFF) to provide a voice for civil society through broad consultation. It includes:

- 1) Donor Agencies: Canada, France, and Norway
- 2) Southern country governments: Nicaragua, Columbia, Rwanda, Cameroon, and Zambia
- 3) Northern and International CSOs: Action Aid, CONCORD/CARE International, and the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC);
- 4) Southern CSOs: AFRODAD, IBON Foundation, Third World Network Africa,
- 5) OECD Representatives: Goran Eklof (CSO Advisor), Hubert de Milly (Senior Policy Advisor)
- 6) Workshop Organisers (non-members): Asociacion Latinamericana de Organizaciones de Promocion (ALOP), Reseau des Plates-Formes d'ONG d'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre (REPAOC), Arab NGO's Network for Development (ANND), Confederation Europeen des ONG d'urgence et de developpement (CONCORD)
- 7) Key Collaborators: Austrian Development Agency (ADA), CIVICUS, EURODAD, Department for International Development UK (DFID), European Commission (EC), NEPAL, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), UNDP

### **The CSO International Steering Group (ISG) on Aid Effectiveness**

Website: <http://www.betteraid.org>

Active partners in the ISG currently include:

ActionAid, International Network  
Alliance 2015, Network of six European NGOs  
ALOP, Asociación Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promoción  
ANND, Arab NGOs Network for Development  
AWID, Association for Women's Rights in Development  
CCIC, Canadian Council for International Cooperation  
Civics, International Network  
Concord, European NGO Confederation for Relief and Development  
Eurodad, European Network on Debt and Development  
Ghana Forum on Aid Effectiveness  
IBIS, Denmark  
IBON Foundation, Philippines (Current Chair of ISG)  
Interaction, U.S.A.  
International Trade Union Confederation  
Reality of Aid, International Network  
SEND Foundation, Ghana  
Social Watch, International Network  
Third World Network, International Network  
UKAN, UK Aid Network  
WIDE, International Network

## Appendix D: Excerpts from The Accra Agenda for Action (Emphasis Added)

Full Text Available at: <http://www.accrahlif.net>

Sections Omitted.....

### We will take action to accelerate progress

7. Meeting three major challenges will be critical to accelerate progress:

8. Country ownership is key. **Developing country governments will take stronger leadership of their own development policies, and engage with their parliaments and citizens in shaping them.** Donors will support them by respecting country priorities, investing in their human resources and institutions, making greater use of their systems to deliver aid, and increasing the predictability of aid flows.

9. Building more effective and inclusive partnerships. **In recent years, more development actors — middle-income countries, global funds, the private sector, civil society organisations— are increasing their contributions and are bringing valuable experience to the table.** They are also creating management and coordination challenges. Together, all development actors will work in more inclusive partnerships so that all our efforts have greater impact on reducing poverty.

10. Achieving development results — and openly accounting for them — must be at the heart of all we do. More than ever, citizens and taxpayers of all countries expect to see the tangible results of development efforts. We will demonstrate that our actions translate into positive impacts on people's lives. We will be accountable to each other and to our respective parliaments and governing bodies for these outcomes.

11. We resolve to accelerate progress on these three challenges by i) Strengthening Country Ownership over Development, ii) Building More Effective and Inclusive Partnerships and, iii) Delivering and Accounting for Development Results.

### Strengthening Country Ownership over Development

12. Developing countries determine and implement their development policies to achieve their own economic, social and environmental goals. We agreed in the Paris Declaration that this would be our first priority. Today, we are taking additional steps to turn this resolution into a reality.

### We will broaden country-level policy dialogue on development

13. We will engage in open and inclusive dialogue on development policies. **We acknowledge the critical role and responsibility of parliaments in ensuring country ownership of development processes.** In order to further this objective we will take the following actions:

a) **Developing country governments will work more closely with parliaments and local authorities in the preparation, implementation and monitoring of national development policies and plans. In doing so, governments will engage with civil society organisations (CSOs).**

b) **Donors will support efforts to increase the capacity of all development actors – parliaments, central and local governments, CSOs, research institutes and the private**

**sector — to take an active role in dialogue on development policy and the role of aid in contributing to countries' development objectives.**

c) Together, developing countries and donors will ensure that development policies and programmes are **designed and implemented in ways consistent with agreed international commitments on gender equality, human rights, disability and environmental sustainability.**

Developing countries will strengthen their capacity to lead and manage development

14. Without robust capacity – strong institutions, systems and local expertise — developing countries cannot fully own and manage their development processes. We agreed in Paris that capacity development is the responsibility of developing countries, with donors playing a supportive role. Together, developing countries and donors will take the following actions to strengthen capacity development:

a) Developing countries will systematically identify areas where there is a need to strengthen the capacity to perform and deliver services at all levels — national, sub-national, sectoral and thematic— and design strategies to address them. Donors will strengthen their own capacity and skills to be more responsive to developing countries' needs.

b) Donors' support for capacity development will be demand-driven and designed to support country ownership. To this end, developing countries and donors will i) jointly select and manage technical co-operation, and ii) open the provision of technical cooperation to local and regional resources including South-South co-operation.

c) Developing countries and donors will work together at all levels to promote operational changes that make capacity development support more effective.

We will strengthen and use partner country systems to the maximum extent possible

15. Successful development depends to a large extent on a government's capacity to implement its policies and manage public resources through its own institutions and systems. In the Paris Declaration, developing countries agreed to strengthen their systems<sup>1</sup> and donors agreed to use them to the maximum extent possible. Evidence shows, however, that developing countries and donors are not on track to meet their respective commitments. While progress has been made in improving the quality of country systems, this varies considerably between countries. At the same time, even when there are quality country systems, donors often do not use them. To strengthen and increase the use of country systems we will take the following actions:

a) Donors agree to consider use of country systems as the first option for aid programmes in support of activities managed by the public sector.

b) Developing countries and donors will jointly assess the quality of country systems in a country-led process using mutually agreed diagnostic tools.

c) Where there are quality systems, donors will use them. When donors continue to rely on aid delivery mechanisms outside country systems (including parallel project implementation units), donors will state transparently the rationale for this and will review their positions at regular intervals.

d) Where country systems require further strengthening, countries will lead in defining reform programmes and priorities. Donors will support these reforms and provide capacity development assistance.



e) Donors further agree to set out in a transparent manner their plans for undertaking their Paris commitments on using country systems; to provide staff guidance on how these systems can be used; and to ensure that internal incentives encourage their use.

Sections Omitted.....

#### We welcome and will work with all development actors

19. The contributions of all development actors are more effective when developing countries are in a position to manage and coordinate them. We welcome the role of new contributors and will improve the way all development actors work together by taking the following actions:

- a) We encourage all development actors to use the Paris Declaration principles as a point of reference in providing development cooperation.
- b) We acknowledge the particular role of middle-income countries as both donors and partners. We can learn from the experience of South-South co-operation, and we encourage further development of triangular co-operation.
- c) Global funds and programmes make an important contribution to development. These are most effective when they are matched by efforts to develop the capacity of the environment and institutions within which they operate (e.g. health and education systems). As new global challenges emerge, donors will first ensure that existing channels for aid delivery are used before creating separate new channels that risk further fragmentation and complicate coordination at country level.

#### We will deepen our engagement with civil society organisations

**20. We will deepen our engagement with civil society organisations (CSOs) as independent development actors in their own right whose efforts complement those of governments and the private sector.** We share an interest in ensuring that CSO contributions to development reach their full potential. To this end:

- a) We invite CSOs to reflect on how they can apply the Paris principles of aid effectiveness from a CSO perspective.
- b) We welcome the CSO proposal to engage with them in a CSO-led multistakeholder process to promote CSO development effectiveness. We will seek as part of that process to: i) improve coordination of CSO efforts with government programmes, ii) enhance CSO accountability for results, and iii) improve information on CSO activities.
- c) We will work with CSOs to provide an enabling environment that maximises their contributions to development.

Sections Omitted.....

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