

**BEYOND AID DEPENDENCE**  
**Session on Aid Effectiveness**

UN Development Cooperation Forum, New York, 30 June – 1 July, 2008  
Remarks by Ramesh Singh, Chief Executive ActionAid International

Chairperson, Excellencies, Delegates and Colleagues

I am delighted to share some thoughts and recommendations or asks concerning aid and development cooperation.

My brief presentation here is informed not only by ActionAid's own experience and research but also by the debates, discussions and research of various partner national and international civil society organisations we work with.

At the outset, before I talhae( )-5 cev ebate2( nspo)7.4( )d to-5.7.4( )-e2( n q7.4( )u7.4( )-e2(

We need to talk about aid justice as well as aid effectiveness. And, w9 TJ19.3183 0 TD-0.0002 Tc0 Tw(h)-5.1(o)-5

Coming back to the Paris Declaration process - ActionAid has long called for the aid reform process to be moved to a more representative institution in which both donors and southern countries have an equal stake and one that provides oversight and also complements the processes housed in OECD which is effectively the organisations of donors. In order for any discussions to be inclusive and representative, a strong role for civil society, local governments, parliamentarians and other stakeholders must be ensured. The formation and the inauguration of the Development Cooperation Forum provides space for donors both DAC and non-DAC, southern governments, CSO representatives and other stakeholders to discuss, monitor and review the current aid architecture and processes.

Accountability is ultimately about power relations: it describes efforts to restrain those with power and hold them to account for their actions. Rectifying this imbalance and making donors and the aid system more accountable to the people aid is supposed to help is critical for improving the effectiveness of aid. It will help ensure that aid priorities are truly owned by recipient countries and not imposed by donors. Improving the accountability of donors offers one of the surest routes to tackling persistent aid problems such as aid volatility and unpredictability, as well as ending damaging practices such as economic policy conditionalities and the tying of aid to donor goods and services.

One key step the DCF should promote - and which Accra could agree as a key indicator of accountability - is the development of country-level, open and transparent multi-stakeholder mechanisms to be developed which allow citizens groups - with special attention to women, people living with disability, HIV and indigenous people and their organisations - to hold their governments and donors to account for the use of aid.

### **More Transparency**

The need for far greater transparency in aid processes has been one of the main priorities of international civil society and recipient countries for the Accra process. Transparency is seen as a prerequisite for democratic ownership and real participation and accountability in aid processes. Access to information has been very limited as documents are often buried in donor websites, available in only one language and the information is not proactively disseminated. In addition, key information on the conditions attached to aid, on aid allocation, disbursement tables and on decision making processes are not made public, undermining the predictability and monitoring of aid flows. At Accra, donors should commit to signing up to a charter setting out high standards of openness and transparency which they will adhere to.

### **Women's Rights**

In Accra, governments need to reaffirm that equality between men and women is a central end as well as a powerful means of development. They must recognize that financing for development cannot be neutral in terms of gender. At the same time gender equality and other social commitments must not be used as conditionalities.

Donors as well as host governments through the policy and practice of mutual obligation and responsibility must monitor and comply with the commitments made through UN processes and human rights conventions, including those specifically addressing women's rights (such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women-CEDAW, among others). These must be seen as governments' mutual obligations not aid conditionalities.

Indicators tracking gender inequality outcomes, as well as gender equity in budgeting, have been agreed on at multilateral levels and implemented by governments and thus should be a key part of mutual accountability and transparency within donor recipient countries and between donors and host governments.

### **Key Improvements to the Delivery of Aid**

Some key areas for improvement of donor practises are highlighted by the Paris Declaration, particularly the continuing scandal of ineffective technical assistance and the unpredictability of aid that seriously undermines southern countries' efforts to plan their development. According to the OECD, 25% of aid is provided as 'Technical Assistance' and this rises to 50% if you include that which is embedded in other projects. Technical assistance perpetuates the donor monopoly on the technical knowledge needed to develop and often results in programming that follows donors' commercial and political interests instead of national priorities. The Paris Indicator on Technical Assistance should be strengthened and must ensure that it is truly demand-driven and country-led. Southern countries have raised the reform of Technical Assistance as a key concern to be discussed at Accra.

In other vitally important areas such as conditionality, tied aid and aid allocation, further reform needs to be agreed at Accra. The space allowed to governments to determine their own national growth paths has been denied by the use of economic policy conditions including targets for liberalisation and privatisation as well as macroeconomic 'discipline'. However, there are still no international agreements on this pressing issue and it has been left out of the Paris Declaration. Therefore, the Accra Agenda for Action should include a commitment to end all donor-imposed policy conditions and the use of aid to support foreign and economic policy priorities and interests.

A strong agreement is also needed to end the scandal of tied aid. The 'tying' of aid to the procurement of donor goods and services inflates costs, slows down delivery and reduces the flexibility of southern countries to direct aid where it is most needed. The primary beneficiaries of this practice are firms and consultants in donor countries. Whilst donors have

- Inflows to developing countries in the form of aid reached US \$119bn in 2006, but outflows in the form of illicit capital flight, mostly tax avoidance and evasion by multinational companies facilitated by offshore tax havens and banking secrecy, have been estimated at US \$500-800bn a year.

In conclusion, governments participating in the Accra and Doha processes must agree a step change in efforts to improve aid quantity and quality. They must move further and faster to bring development policies into alignment with the needs and aspirations of developing countries. Equally, they must also agree fundamental changes to “anti-development” policies, such as those on trade, climate change, and tax evasion and avoidance.

We are already receiving disappointing news:

First, the 27<sup>th</sup> June second draft of the Accra Agenda for Action seems even vaguer and weaker than the first draft of 12<sup>th</sup> June. Expectations are high that the Accra Agenda for Action will recognise the need to improve and go beyond the Paris Declaration. The preparatory process has been problematic but there have been discussions among southern governments, donor governments, civil society and other stakeholders. We must ensure that key messages from all these groups are reflected in the Accra Agenda for Action.

Second piece of bad news: the draft communiqué of the G8 obtained by the Financial Times, due to be issued at the Group’s July summit in Hokkaido, Japan, shows leaders will commit to fulfilling “our commitments on (development aid) made at Gleneagles” but fails to cite the target of \$25bn annually by 2010. This is totally unjustifiable and unacceptable.

Not so long ago, nearly 50 million people mobilised North and South to “Make Poverty History” under the larger coalition of Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) yet it