

WEST AFRICAN WOMEN'S STATEMENT ON AID EFFECTIVENESS AND GENDER EQUALITY

We women from 15 West African countries and Mauritania, representing 33 organisations and networks of the sub region, at the West African Women's Consultative Meeting on Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality, organised in Lome, Togo from 25th to 27th June 2008 by Women in Law and Development in Africa, (WiLDAF) with financial support from UNIFEM Regional Office for West Africa and OSIWA (Open Society Institute for West Africa);

Having analysed the principles of the Paris Declaration and the draft Accra Agenda for Action (AAA);

Noting the endemic poverty of African women who represent more than 50 percent of the population, the role and place of women in the socio-economic development of our countries, and their voicelessness in decision making;

Yet acknowledging their commitments to poverty eradication and development

Recalling States' commitments through international instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW), Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); regional instruments including the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women and the African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality; and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance;

Recognize that the review of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness offers opportunities to advance gender equality and women's empowerment;

Affirming that Aid cannot be effective when it does not lead to sustainable development which implies, the centrality of human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, social justice and environmental sustainability.

Also affirming that progress in the areas of gender equality, environmental sustainability respect for human's rights and good governance, that the draft Accra Agenda for Action recognises as "essential to obtain tangible results in development" can be accelerated through the Paris Declaration implementation, only if they are treated as sectors coming with progress indicators and specific resources allocated in national budgets.

Yet deplore that the Paris Declaration has not taken into account human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment leading to an absence of gender indicators to measure progress in line with international instruments.

Fully support the different positions from women rights activists and gender experts at the Consultation of Women's Organisations and Networks and Aid Effectiveness in Toronto, Canada in January 2008; from African women at the African Women's Regional Consultation on Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness in Nairobi in May 2008, and from UNIFEM;

Do hereby make the following recommendations to partner countries especially from West Africa, and donors, at the Third High Level Forum on Paris Declaration in Accra in September 2008;

On Ownership

The principle of ownership must be understood as meaning democratic ownership to include, states partners as well as citizens, parliamentarians and civil society organisations in particular women's rights groups.

States partners and donors must, to this end:

1. Recognise civil society and especially women's organisations as full partners in their own right and as partners in the development process. Governments and donors must interpret national ownership by elaborating on its implications in the context of international and regional women's rights and gender equality obligations in CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action and the African Union Protocol on Women
2. Strengthen the capacity of women's rights organisations in order that they can influence the development process through integration of gender perspectives into policies, plans, programmes and budgets; and to enable them to play a key role in their implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
3. Strengthen the capacity of national gender mechanisms through adequate resource allocation and capacity building with a view to bringing their contributions to planning and budgeting as well as coordination,

monitoring and evaluation of gender equality and women's empowerment mainstreaming in this aid effectiveness process.

On Alignment

There is a risk that gender equality and women's empowerment may be excluded from the development agenda if it does not constitute a priority clearly expressed in national policies. National programmes should reflect the felt needs of women and men and not imposed as national priorities

We consequently require that:

4. Gender budgeting must be promoted as a tool combined with general budget support and the sector wide approach.
5. The capacities of the ministries of planning and finance be strengthened in gender mainstreaming, and gender sensitive budgeting.
6. Development assistance must also be seen to be channelled to addressing gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights concerns in our government systems, procedures and institutions. This should be reflected in budgetary allocations from the Ministry of Finance and in sector budgets.
7. Civil Society groups must track the money that has been used to implement gender equality and women's empowerment programmes within public financial management and procurement systems. Civil society organisations must measure the percent of aid directed towards gender equality, women's rights and human rights programming.

On Harmonisation

It is generally agreed that dialogue ensures that decisions taken meet the need of the different groups. To this end:

8. Joint donor working strategies must incorporate gender expertise to strengthen support for addressing gender equality and giving voice to the poor;
9. Within harmonization action plans, both partner governments and developing partners should agree to commit to address gender equality and women's empowerment in all sectors they fund;
10. Developing partners should do a gender analysis of countries in the West Africa sub-region; analyze the challenges that will prevent the sub-region from attaining the MDGs; and come to common agreements on how they will work with each other to address these issues and establish priorities that they will fund within the national development strategies and within sector programmes;
11. Joint missions and country analytical work should include gender advocates, experts and representatives of women's machineries.

On managing for results

Implementation of the Paris Declaration is monitored through a set of targets and indicators which assess public management systems, rather than impact of aid on development. Consequently:

12. We call on state parties to adopt new indicators that will allow monitoring and evaluation of the principles of ownership, managing for results and accountability from civil society.
13. The production of sex-disaggregated data must be planned and done on regular basis to serve as support for policy adoption, planning and budgeting as well as evaluation of the impact of policies and budget which are implemented in the partner countries.
14. The Paris Declaration monitoring system be improved by adding social and gender indicators already adopted in international agreements to assess gender equality and women's empowerment programming and financing.

On mutual responsibility

Openness and transparency from donors and partner countries, and multistakeholder mechanisms for holding donors and governments to account is necessary. To this end -

15. We call for the creation of an effective and relevant independent monitoring and evaluation system for the Paris Declaration and its impact on development outcomes.
16. We call on partner countries and donors to jointly account for gender equality issues to women, as the Paris Declaration is supposed to make aid effective in delivering the MDGS

17. Gender issues must be raised during sector, national development strategy and joint government and donor reviews.
18. Donors and partners countries need to direct resources towards strengthening capacity (of government, donors, CSO, women's organizations, parliaments) for enhancing mutual accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment.
19. Measure outcomes of gender mainstreaming and gender specific actions such as – access to health and education; changes in female employment and income; incidence of gender based violence and right to reparation; right to inheritance, property, land use; women's representation and participation in decision making

Fragile states

20. Special attention should be given to fragile states (states coming out of conflict, at war or post-conflict situations) regarding channelling specific aid to women's organisations to improve the lives of affected women.

We finally recommend:

21. That there is substantial increase of resources for women's rights organisations. Alignment should not be an obstacle for access by these organisations, from the smallest to the biggest, to predictable and multi-annual resources allowing them to play their watch dog and lobbying roles; and strengthen their capacities.

Done in Lome, on 26th June 2008

ORGANISATIONS THAT ARE SIGNATORIES TO THE STATEMENT.

1. Women in Law and Development in Africa – West Africa
2. Réseau de Développement et de Communication des Femmes Africaines (FEMNET)
3. Women in Law and Development in Africa – Bénin
4. Women in Law and Development in Africa – Burkina Faso
5. Women in Law and Development in Africa – Côte d'Ivoire
6. Women in Law and Development in Africa - Ghana
7. Women in Law and Development in Africa – Guinée
8. Women in Law and Development in Africa – Mali
9. Women in Law and Development in Africa – Nigeria
10. Women in Law and Development in Africa – Sénégal
11. Women in Law and Development in Africa – Togo
12. Réseau pour l'Intégration des Femmes des ONG et associations Africaines (RIFONGA) – Bénin
13. Associação Caboverdiana de Mulheres Juristas – Cabo Verde
14. Rede de Mulheres Economistas – Cabo Verde
15. Mouvement international des Femmes Démocrates (MIFED) - Côte d'Ivoire
16. Female Lawyers Association (FLAG) - Gambia
17. Network for Women's Rights (NETRIGHT)– Ghana
18. Coalition Nationale de Guinée pour les droits et la citoyenneté des femmes (CONAG-DCF) - Guinée
19. Association of Female Lawyers (AFELL) - Liberia
20. CAFO - Mali
21. Forum national pour la promotion des droits de la Femme FNPFD- Mauritanie
22. Association Mauritanienne de Lutte contre les Pratiques Néfastes agissant sur la santé de la femme et de l'Enfant (AMPSFE) - Mauritanie
23. Coordination des ONG et Associations Féminines Nigériennes (CONGAFEN) – Niger
24. ONG Dimol – Niger
25. Women's consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) – Nigeria
26. Women Advocate Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) - Nigeria
27. Forum for African women educationalists – Sierra Leone
28. Women's Forum – Sierra Leone
29. Réseau Africain pour le Développement Intégré (RADI) – Sénégal
30. Consortium des Organisations Non Gouvernementales d'Appui au Développement - Sénégal
31. Réseau des Femmes Anciens Ministre et Parlementaires (REFAMP) – Togo

32. Groupe de réflexion et d'action Femmes Démocratie et Développement (GF2D) – Togo
33. La Colombe - Togo

MINISTERIES

34. Ministère de l'action sociale, de la promotion de la femme, de la protection de l'enfant et des personnes âgées - Togo
35. Federal Ministry of women Affairs, Abuja – Nigeria