



## **Owning Development: Promoting Gender Equality in New Aid Modalities & Partnerships**

### ***New Political Commitments: the 2005 World Summit and the Paris Declaration***

At the 2005 World Summit in September, world leaders reaffirmed the Millennium Declaration and its development goals and provided political support to renewed efforts to achieve them. Women's advocates and civil society organizations successfully mobilized to ensure the outcome recognized human development and human security as interlinked goals and the importance of gender equality as an essential contribution to meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

As efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) intensify, so too do the challenges to make development assistance more effective. Following a series of meetings, 90 developing and developed countries and 27 aid agencies agreed on a set of aid reforms that forges a partnership between donor and recipient countries, aligns development assistance with national development priorities and ensures a focus on poverty reduction. The reforms are outlined in The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonization, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability, issued in March this year.

### ***National Ownership and New Aid Modalities***

The Paris Declaration makes clear that development aid must be driven by the concept of partnership between donors and recipient countries, and ownership of the development process by recipients. This conceptual shift is mirrored in the mechanisms through which aid is allocated, namely, Budget Support and Sector Wide Approaches, as opposed to support for individual projects. Instruments such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Country Strategy Papers are also used more frequently. In order to fulfill their stated aim of increasing ownership, the new aid modalities crucially require accountability, in particular that of the recipient governments to their constituents, including through national parliaments and civil society organization consultations. Women, as citizens and stakeholders in their country's development, are key constituents.

The evolving nature of the aid architecture and the new aid modalities present opportunities to advance the gender equality/poverty eradication agenda. To date, however, gender equality has not been addressed explicitly. A coordinated effort is therefore needed to ensure that gender equality imperatives are made central to the emerging aid architecture.

Analysis of Sector Wide Approaches and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers indicate that gender equality analysis is mostly absent or inadequately included. Currently, the integration of a gender perspective at the national level is not sufficiently reflected in institutional arrangements, national development strategies, development programmes, budgets, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Gender equality is a cross-cutting issue rather than a separate sector, and gender mainstreaming (when used as a strategy across sectors) is usually poorly implemented, contributing to policy evaporation.

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While donors have committed themselves to substantial increases in Overseas Development Aid (ODA) over the next decade, the changing nature of development aid poses huge challenges for gender equality advocates. What effect will they have on implementation and accountability? What strategies are needed to ensure that gender equality imperatives are central to the new aid architecture? What partnerships need to be in place to spur implementation of commitments to achieve the MDGs and the Beijing Platform for Action?

Last year, UNIFEM commissioned a study of gender equality and development assistance called “Accountability Upside Down,” which tracked gender equality commitments through all stages of development assistance programming. The study, published by Eurostep and Social Watch and carried out by Europe External Policy Advisors (EEPA), moved from legal and policy frameworks, to budget allocations, to implementation, evaluation and impact, and found a widening gap between commitment and implementation at each stage. It concluded that both national ownership and accountability requires strengthening women’s inclusion among government, civil society and parliamentary players. Implementation and accountability cannot be limited to recipients of development aid; to deliver for women, it must also apply to development partners.

This conference will widely consult and inform the European Union and its partners on how to accelerate progress on gender equality and development cooperation in the context of the new aid modalities. It brings together gender equality advocates and development professionals from the global South and the global North and provides a crucial space for discussions and strategizing.