

## THE AID ARCHITECTURE DEBATE: BEYOND BUSAN

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### THE PARIS DECLARATION AND THE ACCRA AGENDA FOR ACTION THROUGH A GENDER LENS

*The Research Platform on Aid Effectiveness is based at the Institute of Development Policy and Management (IOB, University of Antwerp, Belgium). This Platform studies the 'new aid architecture' (NAA) from four angles: (1) political economy of aid, reform and governance; (2) monitoring and evaluation; (3) gender; (4) macroeconomic and fiscal dimensions of aid. Policy briefs summarise the most important findings of research carried out by the team, and present its key recommendations. This brief highlights how the gender dimension has been addressed in the context of changing aid modalities, and it suggests venues for improvement.*

#### PART I: EVIDENCE

##### Introduction

The 2005 Paris Declaration (PD) and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) translate a broad consensus among donors to increase aid effectiveness. The PD and AAA set out a sweeping reform agenda for donors and recipients around five key principles: ownership, alignment, harmonisation, management for results and mutual accountability. In particular, donors are expected to replace their traditional stand-alone projects with more programme-oriented aid, including budget support.

While the rationale for a gender-sensitive PD may easily be built on grounds of equality, effectiveness and impact, the 2005 PD was largely gender-blind, with only a passing reference to gender in the paragraph on harmonisation. Until the ongoing 2011 PD Monitoring Survey, gender had not been included in the set of monitoring indicators, and it was largely absent from the PD Evaluation. By failing to consider the gender differentiation of poverty impacts, ambitious but gender-blind cross-national PD monitoring and evaluative exercises risk leaving important aspects of changing aid modalities unexposed.

On a positive note, the 2008 AAA pays slightly more attention to gender equality and women's empowerment, and it opens opportunities for integrating a gender perspective into changing aid modalities. The OECD/DAC has endorsed the 2008 'DAC Guiding Principles for Aid Effectiveness, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment'. It has also endorsed an optional Gender Equality Survey including three gender-performance indicators that have been added to the 2011 PD/AAA Monitoring Survey.

In principle, a shift towards 'higher' aid modalities need not have negative repercussions for gender equality and women's empowerment. In fact, each

of the five key PD principles opens opportunities, just as each entails some risks. Gender blindness is not neutral, however, here or elsewhere. It aggravates risks and under-exploits the opportunities that more effective aid modalities offer for equality between men and women.

#### PD Key Principles: Opportunities and Challenges for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

##### 1. Country Ownership

Support for country-owned and country-led policies and processes increases the probability of effective implementation and results. This also holds true with regard to policies and processes related to gender equality and empowerment, which exist in most of the partner countries. In most cases, however, these national or sector gender policies are neglected in the various national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and sector policies which are the basis for sector and general budget support. For example, our 2008 desk study of 12 Sub-Saharan African (SSA) PRSPs (Holvoet, 2010) highlighted the following:

- There is a declining tendency to integrate a gender dimension into consecutive stages of the PRSP process. Most references to gender issues are found in the diagnostic phase. Even when gender priorities have been duly identified, they are often not translated into specific actions plans, and neither monitoring indicators nor budgetary markers or targets are attached to them. This leads to the well-known phenomenon of 'policy evaporation'.
- Gender is particularly absent from sections addressing macro-economic frameworks, budgeting and medium-term expenditure frameworks.
- Targets and indicators are largely gender-blind, and a gender dimension is usually not integrated into such conventional M&E methods and instruments as tracking surveys, Management

Information Systems (MIS), beneficiary assessments or household and poverty surveys.

- Where sex-disaggregated data are included, they are generally conceived as an end in themselves. They do not lead to analyses of the underlying causes of the observed inequalities between men and women.
- Gender remains an issue of ‘capacities’, with a major focus on education and health rather than on ‘opportunities’. Existing national and international databases on labour-market participation, income ratios and political participation – all of which may reveal a lack of opportunities for women – are largely underexploited.
- More fundamentally, PRSPs generally return to a ‘Women in Development’ (WID), anti-poverty approach, in which poverty is considered the major cause of inequalities between men and women, and poverty reduction is presented as the logical solution. Such an approach, however, neglects ample empirical evidence that poverty reduction and economic growth do not necessarily lead to a decline in inequalities between men and women, as these inequalities are related to underlying gender relations. From this vantage point, it becomes essential to consider ‘gender’ during all different stages of interventions in order to realise objectives of poverty reduction and development. This is the goal of combining top-down ‘gender-mainstreaming’ strategies with bottom-up ‘empowerment’ strategies.

Gender-blind PRSP *content* is accompanied by gender-blind underlying *processes* and institutional apparatuses. In fact, national gender expertise, whether at the ministerial or sector level, is rarely included in central processes of policy-making, budgeting, implementation and M&E. Even in those cases for which gender experts have been consulted, these experts attend to have relatively low levels of expertise in the areas of socio-economic policy-making and management (including public financial management). Conversely, the traditional actors involved in negotiating national development policies and systems often do not excel in gender expertise or in their commitment to objectives of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

A number of positive points can be identified as well. Our SSA cross-national desk study and field studies in Tanzania and Mozambique highlighted that second-round PRSPs generally outperform first-round PRSPs. There appears to be a learning effect over time, which is particularly stimulated by an increasingly active national gender-related demand side, as well as by the use of various instruments and methods (e.g. gender-responsive budgeting or GRB) that are

particularly useful in an era that favours higher aid modalities.

Interestingly, donor agencies apparently do not use the manoeuvring space they do have in order to give more leverage to the nationally owned gender policies, the existing country’s gender apparatus and the non-governmental gender-demand side. To the contrary, gender experts within aid agencies have highlighted that the ‘ownership principle’ is currently being misused by aid staff as a means of evading their own responsibilities in terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

## 2. Harmonisation

The harmonisation principle opens opportunities for donor agencies to improve the coordination of their gender work through common arrangements for analysis, funding, reporting, monitoring and evaluation. Possible results include the following:

- Exchange of gender tools and good practices of gender-sensitive work
- Increasing quantity and quality of analytical work
- Improved gender tracking in programme-based approaches

Individual donor agencies that do not have their own gender expertise on the ground may practice the principle of harmonisation by drawing on the gender expertise of other donors. Coordination through gender working groups also provides the opportunity to use a kind of ‘division of labour’ to ensure participation in sector, macro-economic and budget working groups.

In practice, however, opportunities do not necessarily materialise on the ground. Gender concerns are often sidelined in order to reach consensus on other issues. Moreover, harmonisation often follows the principle of the least common denominator, which leads to the adoption of the gender policies of the least gender-sensitive donor.

## 3. Alignment

Donors are expected to align with the policies and systems of the partner countries, as it is mainly through existing policies and systems that weaknesses and strengths may be diagnosed and improved over time. This also holds with regard to national gender equality and women’s empowerment policies and systems that are put in place to stimulate gender equality and empowerment.

As long as gender-equality and gender-empowerment objectives are not integrated in national development policies and systems, however, alignment poses a risk of reinforcing the existing male bias.

Regardless of the pressing challenges in this area, donors and gender actors in the country do have manoeuvring space for counterbalancing the risks at hand. More aligned aid modalities such as Sector Budget Support (SBS) and General Budget Support (GBS) offer ample opportunities for integrating a gender dimension into the various 'entry points' through which donors exert influence. Table 1 in the recommendations section provides an overview.

In order to improve the gender-sensitivity of entry points, donor agencies (headquarter & field offices) might also need to make a number of organisational changes. Mandates and capacities of gender focal points are often still project-based; they are not systematically involved in other aid modalities, and staff members who are involved in the higher aid modalities generally lack gender expertise. The tools and approaches of GRB are particularly useful for bridging the knowledge gap that exists between gender experts and macro-economic, budget or other experts.

#### **4. Results orientation**

'Results-orientation' involves broadening the focus from 'implementation' (inputs, activities and outputs) to results (outcomes and impact). In practice, results-orientation necessitates the selection of outcomes, elaboration of causal chains, translation into indicators, target-setting, data collection, monitoring, evaluation and feedback.

The integration of a results-orientation in management and budgeting processes is aimed at adjusting inputs according to results obtained in a previous phase. Such performance-oriented budgeting processes open opportunities for gender budgeting, which similarly confronts 'inputs' and 'results' while integrating a gender dimension.

Results-orientation might be particularly useful for countering the problem of 'policy evaporation', at least when gender equality and women's empowerment are among the outcomes and targets selected. The inclusion of gender equality targets is not straightforward, however, as 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' are not easily captured in simple indicators. This tendency is aggravated by the fact that results-orientation is often misconceived as 'management by results' instead of 'management for results'. This leads to a selection of 'quick wins', thereby excluding such objectives as gender equality and empowerment, which often entail long-term changes.

In the context of budget support, there is also a general trend towards the inclusion of aggregate targets and indicators in PRSPs and Performance Assessment Frameworks. This focus on the 'aggregate' may conceal exclusionary policies and

practices, and it deserves special attention from a gender perspective.

#### **5. Mutual accountability**

'Mutual accountability' is aimed at increasing transparency in the use of resources and holding donors and governments accountable for development results. This obviously also entails accountability for gender-equality results.

Non-governmental actors are often identified as important stakeholders and facilitators of 'downward' accountability. It would nevertheless be naïve to assume that the gender dimension or gender actors will be automatically taken on board in the accountability exercises of non-governmental actors. This necessitates the presence of a well-developed 'gender-demand' side among non-state actors. Donors can play an important role in fostering the voice and agency of women and gender actors through financial and technical support, as well as through the advocacy of a more enabling political environment.

Particularly interesting in this regard are non-state gender budget initiatives that do the following:

- Track whether planned initiatives in the area of gender equality and empowerment have also been adequately budgeted for
- Assess real and potential gender-bias in results on the ground
- (more fundamentally) Increase leverage of non-state actors over policy-making and budgeting processes

At the international level, the most obvious accountability mechanism that assesses the gender-sensitivity of donors is the DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker (G-marker), which is currently being revised and refined to improve its ability to accommodate changes in aid modalities. The DAC peer reviews are also useful, as will be the final 2011 PD Monitoring Survey, which includes for the first time an optional Gender Equality Survey focusing on three gender-performance indicators related to country ownership, results-orientation and mutual accountability.

## **PART TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS**

No generally accepted guidelines on how to integrate a gender dimension into the changing aid architecture exist. A number of useful and feasible recommendations are emerging, however, for integrating the gender dimension more effectively into the various entry points that donors commonly use in the context of SBS and GBS. These recommendations are summarised in the table below.

## How to make donor entry points more gender-sensitive

ENTRY POINTS	SUGGESTIONS FOR INCLUDING A GENDER DIMENSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint ex-ante appraisal of the quality of national and sector policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Gender scan (content)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verify whether and how a gender dimension is integrated into national/sector policy diagnosis, selection of priorities, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.</li> <li>Verify whether existing national gender policies are integrated into national and sector development policies and plans.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>→ Useful format: OECD/DAC gender performance 'ownership' indicator</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint ex-ante appraisal of institutional apparatus for policy-making, implementation, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation (M&amp;E)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Gender scan (institutional apparatus)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verify whether existing processes and institutional apparatus for policy-making, implementation, budgeting, M&amp;E are gender-sensitive.</li> <li>Verify whether and how the existing national/sector gender apparatus is involved in different stages.</li> <li>Verify the presence/quality of the gender apparatus at the central level, within sector and finance ministries (including the existence of and/or capacity for gender budgeting).</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>→ Useful formats: OECD/DAC gender-performance 'managing for results' and 'mutual accountability' indicator</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mapping of national non-governmental actors (including CSOs, research institutes, parliament)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Gender scan (non-governmental actors)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map and assess the capacity of the national gender demand side.</li> <li>Assess the extent to which the national gender demand side is involved in PRSP and sector-programme processes.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>→ Useful format: OECD/DAC gender-performance 'mutual accountability' indicator</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint capacity building of national actors (governmental and non-governmental)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include gender component in existing capacity-building efforts in such areas as Public Finance Management (PFM), M&amp;E.</li> <li>Build capacity of national/sector governmental gender apparatus</li> <li>Build capacity of national gender-demand side (CSOs, universities, parliamentarians).</li> </ul> <p>→ Tools and instruments of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) might be particularly useful for bridging the gap between gender and non-gender (PFM, budget, M&amp;E, sector) experts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint monitoring, review and policy dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organise gender coordination/working groups and participate in sector, macro-economic and budget working groups through division of labour.</li> <li>Include gender process and result indicators (preferably taken from the PRSP or sector programmes) in Performance Assessment Frameworks .</li> <li>Include gender process and result indicators in donor PAFs.</li> <li>Include gender issues in joint (sector) reviews.</li> <li>Include gender issues in policy dialogue.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include gender dimension in various (joint) evaluative exercises, (e.g. public expenditure surveys, poverty and social impact assessment, poverty impact assessment, evaluation of Paris Declaration). See also Policy brief 4 on M&amp;E.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well-aligned projects (including joint projects)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include projects that are oriented towards specific target groups or towards specific objectives, including women's empowerment.</li> </ul>

### References and project information

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Holvoet, N. (2006) *EC Briefing Note on Gender Budgeting*, Brussels, European Commission.

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