



OPEN FORUM ON CSO DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Africa Region Consultations on Gender and Development Effectiveness

Facilitated by:

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Introduction

A total of 23 participants attended the consultation which was held in Lusaka from 7th to 8th April 2011. Participants were drawn from a cross section of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) representing five countries namely Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The attendance list is attached as *Appendix i*.

The report is according to the discussions *as shown in Appendix ii* attached. Issues coming from CSOs that participated in the internet survey and phone interviews have also been incorporated.

1.0. Background to the Open Forum: Gender Perceptions to the Open Forum

Participants were taken through the background to the Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness with a focus on the development of the eight Istanbul Principles and High Level Meetings (shift from aid to development effectiveness). There was concern raised on how inclusive the Open Forum is in terms of engaging small organisations that exist at community level especially those situated in rural areas. Assurance was given that the consultations were meant to take on board all 'voices' in order to ensure issues raised were as representative of all CSO regardless of their position. The CSOs stressed the need for wide involvement at country levels though lack of capacity and resources would prove a hindrance.

CSOs strongly emphasised the need to focus on **how aid is impacting the vulnerable** i.e. women, girls and children in all main areas of shelter, food, health, training and education. This is the key in defining the guidelines on effectiveness.

However, the mandate of the consultation was also discussed in the context of the MDG campaign which CSOs felt was not as vibrant as before. There was **fear the Open Forum initiative will also go down the same way**. The participants were encouraged to operationalise the principles in their programming if they were to become fully effective. In addition, it was shown that this would be a step towards CSOs taking charge of the effectiveness agenda to avoid it being decided for them. The main challenges highlighted were the divided CSO world and the high donor dependency levels among some CSOs.

While acknowledging these challenges, the CSOs looked at them as opportunities to come up with strategies which can be used to ensure the smooth operationalisation of the principles. The strong point demonstrated is the credibility that the CSOs have in

issues of reporting and accountability. There was need to develop strategies that were powerful and **took in the voice of women and girls regardless of their background**, thus there is need for the messages to come from the grassroots. Therefore, there was a consensus that the principles are taken as non-negotiable minimum enabling standards of measuring effectiveness.

CSOs raised the need to ensure the engagement of regional bodies on Istanbul Principles such as the SADC Council of NGOs and took this as a point of action.

CSOs experiences relating to Gender Equality and Equity

The CSOs discussed the issue of **shrinking space for CSOs which has had negative impact in gender programming**. This meant sharing the little resources to address all gender related needs in communities thereby affecting effectiveness. There was need to ensure the gender issue does not get buried among the other principles but to be given prominence in order to allocate resources to the sector.

While most countries had signed to a number of instruments relating to gender and have gender policies and frameworks in place, implementation was still a challenge attributed mostly to the patriarchal structure of the society.

To address this there is need to have **guidelines that focus on the taking of affirmative action in as far as women participation is concerned**. CSOs have different agendas even when they are working on gender thus focus is to be holistic in order not to disadvantage the mandate of specific organisations. In this sense, all the 8 Istanbul principles should be looked at using a gender lens,

2.0. Developing guidelines, mechanism and indicators to measure how well CSOs live up to the 2nd Principle

The discussion around this issue was discussed guided by the questions in *Appendix iii, Group 1*.

The CSOs' appealed to the Open Forum to ensure concerns of 'small' organisations are taken on board. The main focus of work done by CSOs in Africa are around social and economic empowerment programmes which include women's and children's rights, women's participation, women health rights and HIV&AIDS and livelihood support. Therefore, there is need to ensure all **the needs of the different CSOs are included**.

However, the CSOs agreed that there are some **crosscutting issues that affect organisations whether women focused or mainstream organisations** i.e. the vulnerable situation of women and girls exacerbated by the patriarchal nature of our societies. This would need to be addressed including cultural practices that have further placed women and girls at a disadvantage e.g. female genital mutilation and wife inheritance.

The other issues of concern raised included:

1. Funding at times tends to be gender blind since funding bodies' composition mostly constitutes males
2. The 'fear' of calls for gender equality and equity as a result of misunderstanding the concept of gender by males who currently dominate the higher structures of decision making
3. The need for women to have access and control over resources including right to land

In addition, CSOs agreed on the fact that gender is viewed as a woman's issue because so far it is an issue that is being led by women and for women, thus it is mostly linked to women and feminist movements. Consequently, there is need to package guidelines to be all inclusive in order to take on board economic, political, social and cultural aspects. This will ensure the concept of gender is not misunderstood and looked at as a threat **but something that addresses power relations between women and men in a positive light**.

In discussing successful strategies for gender effectiveness that are working in the African region vis-à-vis gender mainstreaming, empowerment and capacity building,

gender budgeting, indicators and other processes the CSOs identified the following points which are to be key components in the guidelines:

1. Gender disaggregated data (for indicator purposes)
2. Community involvement
3. Men involvement
4. Traditional leadership involvement
5. Positive discrimination towards women
6. Economic empowerment for women and girls
7. Policy and legislation in favour for women and girls
8. Institutional capacity (multi-level)
9. Research and documentation (institutional memory)
10. Lobbying and advocacy – creation of a wider base/reach at grassroots level
11. Increasing awareness of gender issues through media (including community run media)
12. Movement building/mobilisation

3.0. Minimum standards for an enabling environment for CSOs to undertake development

CSOs were in agreement on the question of having an enabling environment for work around gender. The consensus was that we do not have an enabling environment because CSO works on gender are undermined by the lack of adequate policy frameworks. Consequently, CSOs are vulnerable especially since they have little control over the environments in which they operate. Among the factors identified inhibiting the conducive environment were:

- Poor Implementation of Policies: Most policies and programmes at national and local levels have failed to analyse the impact of macroeconomic and sector policies on the marginalised.
- Freedom of speech is impaired thus affecting lobbying and advocacy.
- Absence of leaders who are champions in influencing policy making (no political will)
- CSOs have become political scapegoats and political pawns
- Economic bias as most of the resources are put in the corporate or private sector
- Donors do not take into account the changing dynamics of developing countries.
- Patriarchal structure of our societies
- High levels of corruption has created an unfriendly environment for Women's Participation in Decision-Making Processes
- Absence of Capacity Building opportunities for women which has made it difficult for women to engage in other development issues like climate and trade but rather focus on 'softer' issues such as women's rights.
- Cultural norms and religious beliefs which paint women as followers tend to sustain chauvinistic characteristics in Africa. It seems women lack the motivation to take a lead in leadership decisions because their world view of leadership and decision making is that they look down on their abilities and thus remain subservient to males both in the church, politics and community activities
- Lack of affirmative action, lack of acceptance of alternative work methodologies such as distance working, working from home, working part time. Inadequate maternity and paternity coverage. Lack of day-care facilities.
- Public laws, customary teaching and practices are gender blind

In the backdrop of the above mentioned factors disadvantaging CSOs working on gender, **there is need to define effectiveness at the level of political will to gender programming at all levels**

namely community, national, religious, economic and political. While there are a number of instruments in places addressing the subject of gender equality and women's participation, the levels of commitment to the policies are not adequate as such HIV&AIDS continued to be high among women and girls; Gender Based Violence cases were high among women and access to micro finance was a challenge for women even in agriculture which had more women at small scale levels. In the formal sector, except for women and feminist organisations women are still few in leadership and decision making position e.g. in media hence the reason why gender was not a prominent area of media coverage.

Another aspect of definition would be the **use of gender lens in policy implementation**. As it is now, there is gender blindness and bias at policy level as can be demonstrated by gender blind budgeting in most countries, lack of commitment to recommended percentage of female participation in leadership e.g. most countries in Africa do not reach the 30% female participation in political leadership and the absence of women rights in most nations' constitution in Africa. This has resulted in the feminisation of poverty in the continent.

In addition would be need **for the domestication of international instruments** which include:

- ✓ Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- ✓ Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
- ✓ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- ✓ African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR)
- ✓ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- ✓ Legislative advocacy on domesticating UN Resolution 1325, Affirmative Action
- ✓ Protocol to the African charter on human and People's rights on the rights of women in Africa
- ✓ Maputo Plan of Action on Maternal Health in Africa
- ✓ MDG Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action Declaration
- ✓ United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
- ✓ African Democracy Charter
- ✓ The law on female genital mutilation

At the level of funding organisations, CSOs expressed the concern that funding partners, especially international partners do not **take into account the changing dynamics of**

developing countries in which recipient organisation operate. In this case, there is need to look at **how effective the aid being received is in terms of capacity being built** in receiving organisations. The missing links in the development effectiveness agenda that prevents women's rights organisations to work would need to be addressed by:

- Bottom up development of gender agenda rather than donors dictating it
- Promoting ownership of the gender agenda among communities by allowing them to drive the process in order to encourage community ownership (i.e. people centred and rights based).
- Government to prioritise Gender in planning and implementation
- Mutual learning opportunities and information sharing between governments, CSOs and donors
- Carrying out Gender Impact Assessments at all levels

4.0. Identify strategies for sustained CSO integration of the development of effectiveness agenda into HLF4 and beyond

Below is the summary of areas of consideration for CSO integration of the development effectiveness:

4.1. Gender Impact Standard

- Assessment of implication in planning, design, development and implementation as a pre condition for any activity, decision or project undertaken
- Accountability e.g. being accountable to gender equality and equity in all its operations and delivery
- International and regional instruments that entrench gender equality be the basis for CSO advocacy for domestic accountability by states to people
- Ethical partnerships guided by CSO's principles (CSO encouraged to develop their own code of conduct)

4.2. Economic

- Remuneration and benefits
- Affirmative access to and control over resources, opportunities and benefits
- Funding (biased) – programme and external

4.3. Sustainability

- Generation of own funds
- Responsible planning for sustainability
- Diversify sources of funding e.g. engage local corporate organisations through government creation of local framework for support to CSOs (Social corporate responsibility; c local philanthropy)
- Fundraising and resource mobilisation skills
- Credibility of organisation (positive image profiling)

4.4. Participation / Inclusion

- Composition
- Decision making
- Agenda setting
- Gender friendly work environment

4.5. Capacity:

- Understanding and application of gender concept (theory and practice)
- Access to skills and education (part of resources should be towards capacity building in Gender for funded programmes)
- Secure adequate and appropriate personnel to integrate and mainstream gender within the organisations
- CSOs' understanding and strategic use of the media
- Duty to collaboration and information sharing as well as other resources among CSOs on issues of partnership, mutual learning, solidarity
- CSOs be consistent with their mandate and be flexible enough to seize funding opportunities which respond to changing needs of communities

4.6. Empowerment:

- Make economic, political, cultural, technological and social empowerment an integral part of gender work

4.7. Economic Stability

- Too much dependency on donor support from governments

NB: Equity remains a crosscutting issue in all these areas.

Annex i: List of Participants

NO.	NAME	SEX	POSITION	ORGANISATION	COUNTRY	CONTACT DETAILS
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**Open Forum Gender Thematic Consultations from Africa Held in Lusaka, Zambia
from 7th to 8th April 2011**

DAY ONE

08.30 – 09.00	Registration & Introductions
09.00 – 10.00	Official Opening: Welcome Remarks – WfC Representative
10.00 – 10.30	Expectations and Objectives
10.30 – 11.00	Tea Break
11.00 – 12.00	Background to the Open Forum (Presentation)
12.00 – 13.00	CSO Experiences relating to Gender Equality and Equity (Open discussion)
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch
14.00 – 15.00	Developing guidelines, mechanisms and indicators to measure how well CSOs live up to the 2 nd Principle (Group Work)
15.00 – 15.15	Tea Break
15.15 – 16.00	Report back and plenary

DAY TWO

08.00 – 09.00	Recap of Day One
09.00 – 10.30	Identify minimum standards for an enabling environment for CSOs to undertake development activities (Group Work)
10.30 – 10.45	Tea Break
10.45 – 12.30	Enabling Environment Cont'd... (Report back)
12.15 – 13.15	Identify strategies for sustained CSO integration of the development effectiveness agenda into HLF4 and beyond (Plenary)
12.30 – 13.00	Closing remarks and end of programme
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch

Group Work 1: Developing guidelines, mechanisms and indicators to measure how well CSOs live up to this principle.

1. a) What are the gender equality issues within CSOs?
b) What type of gender programmes are CSOs in Africa focused on?
c) Why is gender perceived as a 'women's issue'?
d) How is gender understood across the board?
2. Identify successful strategies for gender effectiveness in the African region vis-à-vis gender mainstreaming, 'empowerment' and capacity building, gender budgeting, indicators and other processes which are working.

Group Work 2: Identify minimum standards for an enabling environment for CSOs to undertake development activities

1. Assess the enabling environment for CSOs working on gender issues.
 - a) What is the impact on effectiveness of women's organisations?
 - b) What aid and financial resources are available for gender programming?
2. Assess the level of political commitment in the African region to gender equality and equity.
 - a) What policies and instruments are available?
 - b) What is the role of the donor community and other stakeholders in promoting gender equality and equity?
3. a) Identify where there is gender blindness and bias, or invisibility in policy, political will, budgeting etc.
 - b) What evidence do you have to demonstrate this?
 - c) Suggest ways to overcome them
 - d) What indicators are there of a widening gender gap?
 - e) What is missing in the development effectiveness agenda that prevents women's rights organisations to work well?

Plenary Discussion: Identify strategies for sustained CSO integration of the development effectiveness agenda into HLF-4 and beyond

1. How can CSOs ensure women's rights, gender equity and equality in their work?
2. Propose what should be the key messaging on gender equality and development effectiveness in relation to the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan