

Promoting Gender Equality in the Aid Effectiveness Agenda in Asia Pacific

Engaging the Principles of the Paris Declaration

UNIFEM Discussion Paper
November 2007

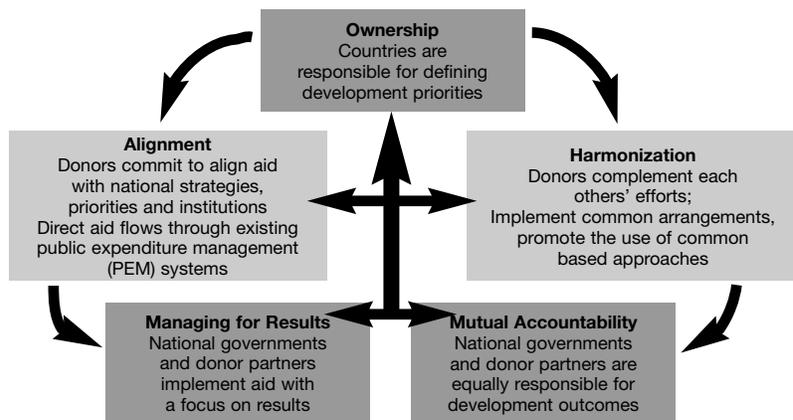
Introduction

As efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 intensify, developed and developing countries have agreed to new partnerships and aid modalities, designed to align aid to nationally determined development priorities, channel diverse aid sources into direct support to national budgets, and ensure greater stability and predictability in aid flows.

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness outlines five guiding principles for greater aid effectiveness:

- **Ownership**, which commits developing countries to take leadership in implementing nationally defined development strategies
- **Alignment**, which commits donors to support national development strategies
- **Harmonization**, which commits donors to harmonize aid priorities
- **Managing for results**, which commits donor and partner countries to focus on results
- **Mutual accountability**, which commits national governments and development partners to measure aid performance through systems, procedures and capacities.

These principles engage development partners in a dynamic relationship (see diagram). As such they offer opportunities for gender equality advocates to demand national development and donor assistance strategies that more effectively promote gender equality.



As the Paris Declaration is rolled out, however, countries face challenges in promoting gender equality under these principles, owing to weak participatory mechanisms, limited collaboration among stake-

holders and insufficient capacity and resources. Without effective engagement in the political process there is a danger that the implementation of the underlying goal—development effectiveness—will be limited to administrative and financial procedures. To ensure this goal is not lost, gender equality advocates are engaging in a series of consultations in order to find ways to engage in technical and political processes at all levels. Such engagement will involve using existing gender action plans and strategies and broadening and deepening political participation and accountability.

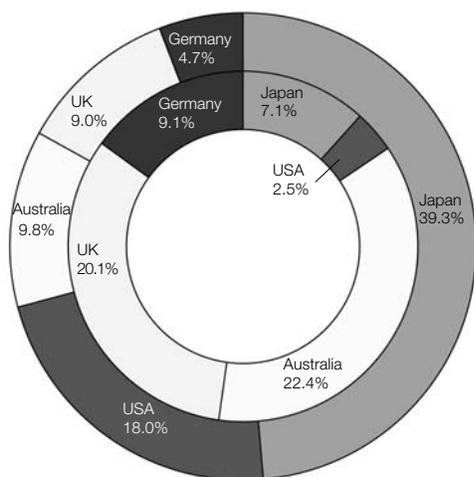
Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness in the Asia Pacific Region: Country Experiences

On 22-24 August 2007, as part of a series of regional consultations on gender equality and aid effectiveness, UNIFEM and the Government of Indonesia convened government and civil society representatives from 11 countries in the Asia Pacific region in Jakarta, Indonesia. Representatives from each of the Paris Declaration roll-out countries, namely, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and Viet Nam, together with donor agency representatives from Norway, the European Commission, Japan and the Asian Development Bank, shared experiences with implementation to date and their implications for development and gender equality. (The graph on page 3 shows the share of ODA that goes to gender equality in selected countries in the region.)

Country presentations examined each of the principles designed to guide the implementation of commitments under the Paris Declaration and the extent to which they have provided opportunities to advance a gender equality and development agenda. After discussion, which included an analysis of the trends in development assistance since the 1960s and an update on planning for the Third High-Level Ministerial Forum in Accra, Ghana in September 2008, participants adopted the Jakarta Declaration on Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness. Together with declarations from UNIFEM-sponsored regional consultations in Kazakhstan, Burundi and Senegal, the Jakarta Declaration will feed into national, regional and global discussions on further implementing the Paris Declaration that will be articulated in the Accra Agenda for Action.

Top Five Bilateral Donors and Gender Equality, 2000-2004
Selected Asia Pacific Countries*

Outer Circle—Average annual share of total ODA commitments
 Inner Circle—Average annual share of gender equality commitments



*Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Vanuatu, Yemen
 Source: Carolina Guina, "The Paris Declaration: Linking Aid Effectiveness in Asia Pacific," background paper for UNIFEM, January 2007. Calculations based on OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System.

This report examines the main challenges that have emerged from efforts by gender equality advocates in the Asia Pacific region to advance gender equality goals under each of the Paris Declaration principles. It is informed both by the country experiences presented at the meeting and by a background paper on the aid effectiveness principles and their implementation in the region, especially regarding the promotion of gender equality.¹

Ownership

The principle of national ownership of development plans empowers governments to set their national priorities and encourages donors to support these. Ownership belongs to all branches of government and civil society, making multi-stakeholder participation critical to the preparation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), Joint Assistance Strategies (JAS) and other national planning instruments. Consultations organized in support of this principle have provided diverse stakeholders, including gender equality advocates, with a sustained opportunity to provide input into poverty assessments and voice alternative policy options, thus expanding the space for a more informed debate on policy issues, including those on gender equality.

Several countries have successfully used global agreements, such as the Millennium Development

Goals (MDGs), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action, to inform the political process involved in identifying national priorities and monitoring progress on gender equality. Success depended in large part on the strength of alliances of gender equality advocates with parliaments, academic institutions, civil society and other sectors in building political support for women's participation.

A number of participants also reported a trend in recent years towards greater participation in the formulation of national planning documents. Although it varies across countries, the process is usually driven by a high-level multi-stakeholder steering committee, with sub-groups on sectoral issues, and consultation meetings are held to promote broad-based participation. Often, however, participation is confined to a narrow circle of stakeholders, whose selection lacks transparency. Even where women's groups are represented, their ability to express their views may be limited by legal or institutional barriers. Thus even when they seem to be part of the planning process, gender advocates may be unable to argue their case effectively.

To be effective, not the opportunities for but also the substance of women's participation must be strengthened, especially the extent to which their views are reflected in PRSPs and incorporated into policies and programmes with corresponding budget allocations. This in turn requires that gender equality, from the start, be seen as a key element of the development agenda.

The development effectiveness of aid requires explicit gender equality goals and targets in national development strategies and budgetary processes.

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In addition, participation must go beyond the planning process and extend to programming, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. In Nepal, for example, women's rights advocates have managed to integrate gender equality more fully into each successive five-year plan, identifying it as a principal strategy of the PRSP in the 10th Plan in 2002 and incorporating gender into the macro-development framework in the Interim Plan of 2007. To be sustained, and avoid the risk of policy evaporation, the

participation of gender advocates needs to be institutionalized. In Cambodia, where gender equality was made central to achieving the MDGs, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has been named a priority ministry in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework and the National Strategic Development Plan includes specific gender targets and indicators. As part of the consultative process, joint monitoring indicators and targets on gender equality have been set up.

New aid modalities

Aid modalities to support implementation of the Paris Declaration include direct budget support in the form of Direct Budget Support and Sector-Wide Approaches, sometimes financed by multiple donors through basket fund mechanisms. New aid modalities are supported at country level through generating national consensus on Poverty Reduction Strategies, aligning development assistance to support countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and dividing responsibility for technical leadership at country level through Joint Assistance Strategies.

The ability of Cambodia to institutionalize participation by gender equality advocates is partly due to the fact that the Technical Working Group on Gender, one of the 18 technical working groups designed to implement the national plan, was set up specifically to build stronger national ownership for gender equality objectives and is quite broad based, comprising civil society and private sector groups as well as government and donors. The technical working group also supported the creation of a series of Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups in line ministries, providing a mechanism for institutionalizing the implementation and monitoring of each ministry's gender mainstreaming strategies and advocating for the integration of gender-responsive measures into sector strategy development processes and donor programmes.

[Participants] call for governments and partners to ensure intensive consultation with parliamentarians to integrate gender perspectives into the authorization, appropriation and oversight processes of the national budget.

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Experiences in both Nepal and Cambodia show that efforts to mainstream gender should focus on strategic governance processes—specifically, those that support increased participation in political decision-making and legislative reforms. Because the PRSP and its outcomes are shaped as much by the political process as by technical inputs, the process of engendering development should be linked to political processes and actors.

Alignment

The principle of alignment commits donors to link aid with nationally defined priorities as reflected in national planning documents, including the PRSPs. Country Harmonization Plans for Bangladesh, Cambodia and Nepal, for example, explicitly state that aid coordination and allocation will be done on the basis of their PRSPs. Although this offers an opportunity to link aid to gender equality, in most cases, PRSPs take a narrow approach to gender issues, limiting them to social sectors or microenterprise, with little attention to macroeconomic policies.

Similar problems were noted in Indonesia, where efforts to promote alignment have focused mainly on External Assistance Policy Reforms. These reforms seek to improve coordination among government agencies in managing donor assistance and bring about greater transparency in the way countries prioritize programmes and procedures. Under the new aid allocation procedures, a project can be eligible for resources if it meets certain readiness criteria, including a detailed activity plan, performance indicators and counterpart funding. These can also advance gender equality outcomes, but only to the extent that gender equality measures are included among criteria and indicators.

Part of the challenge has to do with the lack of capacity in line ministries to mainstream gender, as well as the inability of national machineries for women to influence sectoral policies. In this regard it is encouraging that Viet Nam has initiated a capacity-building process through their Joint Programme on Gender Equality, in which the government and 12 UN agency partners provide coordinated multisectoral technical assistance to line ministries to advance the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality and integrate it into mainstream planning processes.

Even where gender policies are more fully integrated into these planning process, they may not be translated into specific programmes and projects with the corresponding budgets. Weaknesses in the donors' alignment process can also contribute to an inability

to realize opportunities under this principle. This process of “policy evaporation” was pointed out in the case of Cambodia, where despite a highly engendered situation analysis and joint assessment in the PRSP, gender dimensions tended to be lost in donors’ country programming and the related budgeting process.

The principle of alignment also calls for donors to use countries’ public financial management systems to ensure that aid becomes a contribution to the national budget. Underpinning this principle is the desire to ensure that resources are allocated to well-defined and country owned priorities. However, while public sector reforms are underway in many countries, participants noted that donor support has mainly gone to fast-tracking these reforms rather than making sure they incorporate gender considerations.

All of these financial reforms are relevant to strengthening the process of gender-responsive budgeting in the new aid environment. To date, mainstreaming gender in budgets has had limited success, owing to the limited use of gender mainstreaming as a planning tool. Public financial management and budgeting processes remain centralized in the ministries of finance and budget where there are few opportunities for women and gender advocates to get involved. Tracking on gender-related expenditures has also been difficult, as neither donor nor recipient countries have been able to provide appropriate systems. UNIFEM experience has shown that a critical foundation for successful gender-responsive budgeting is the existence of a system that links resources to results. In this regard it is encouraging that both Papua New Guinea and Fiji, for example, have introduced performance-based budgeting.

[Participants] call for governments and partners to sustain technical support to develop national capacities for gender-responsive development planning, budgeting and implementation through strengthened institutional mechanisms and effective coordination between women's machineries and ministries of finance, planning and other line ministries.

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Harmonization

In line with the principle of harmonization, donors are making efforts to carry out joint situation analysis and country assistance strategies, along with programme-based approaches such as Sector-Wide Approaches, budget support and basket funding.

Several developing countries have already benefited from joint country analytic work on gender. For example, the Joint Gender Assessment for Cambodia, supported by UNIFEM and other development partners, set the groundwork for integrating gender equality into the assistance strategies of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. However, donors assign different levels of priority to gender equality in policy frameworks, programming and implementation, which generally results in different levels of funding commitment and support.

One concern with programme-based approaches is that because they are linked to priorities set out in country PRSPs and other planning documents, they require that gender equality be included as a priority in all of these documents or risk further marginalization. They therefore require that national women’s machineries develop the capacity to shift their programmes from downstream to middle and upstream interventions. The representative from Fiji reported for example that the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Housing is currently making this shift.

Despite these risks, the shift from projects to programme-based approaches can generate opportunities as long as gender equality advocates are knowledgeable and positioned to take advantage of them. This has been seen, for example, in Cambodia, where the shift to programme-based, results-oriented budgeting has offered an opening to include gender-responsive results in programme plans and integrate gender-responsive budgeting principles into budget processes.

Clearly, much also depends on the extent to which donors themselves prioritize gender equality. Donors have all made commitments to gender equality under the Beijing Platform, CEDAW and the MDGs. To avoid becoming marginalized within a harmonized approach, as they pool resources and develop common procedures, donors need to strongly articulate the need to incorporate a gender perspective in all sectors and build gender equality outcomes into the implementation process. The representative from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), for example, indicated that it is endeavouring to do this by emphasizing the importance of combining gender

mainstreaming with programmes targeted to gender equality and ensuring there are sufficient mechanisms and operating systems between donors and line ministries. Elsewhere the UK Department for International Development (DfID) asserted that efficiency should not be achieved at the cost of development impact and that donors need to change their organizational behaviour where this constrains gender equality efforts.²

Managing for results

Under the Paris Declaration, the managing for results principle means managing to achieve internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. As such it provides an opportunity to make the connection between gender equality and development effectiveness. Making this happen, however, means securing stakeholder buy-in on results; negotiating objectives and targets among all stakeholders; and regarding results as a shared commitment and responsibility, including identifying the constraints to achieving the results and the means to overcome them. Several participants noted that managing for results is a dynamic process, making continued dialogue essential. Papua New Guinea made the point that a three-way partnership is needed: top-down, requiring political and bureaucratic commitment; bottom-up, requiring personal and community ownership; and outside-in, requiring effective donor and NGO partnerships. They proposed developing integrated partnership delivery systems to strengthen both governmental and non-governmental structures.

A review of progress on this principle noted that countries have made some efforts to improve monitoring and evaluation, but still face two important challenges. The first involves establishing mechanisms for identifying the indicators, setting the targets and ensuring that the results actually feed into the decision-making process. In Bangladesh, for example, the PRSP contains detailed policy matrices that identify a broad set of gender-related goals and the accompanying monitoring indicators, data sources and institutional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation. Other country representatives expressed concern, however, that monitoring and evaluation systems tend to be completely separate from the programming and budgeting process, with the result that important feedback never reaches policymakers.

The second challenge concerns the continued weakness of statistical capacity in developing countries. *World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, for example, shows that vital statistics such as numbers of births and deaths, are not sex-disaggregated in

national censuses and surveys in 90 per cent of the developing world.

A review for the Third International Roundtable on Managing for Results found that many countries have just started to establish mechanisms for coordinating data collection.³ The costs involved may be substantial, especially in small or low-income countries, requiring both external and internal resource allocations to meet them. Increasingly, countries are encouraged to prepare National Strategies for the Development of Statistics, following guidelines similar to those for PRSPs.

As support for statistical capacity-building shifts to comprehensive national strategies, it is critical for gender equality advocates to be part of the process from the beginning, ensuring their representation in new institutional mechanisms for coordinating data collection and reporting. A report on the World Bank's Country Statistical Information Database and a review of ongoing initiatives indicate that most countries are just beginning this process, although the data collection system in Bangladesh has some "good practice" features, including strong inter-ministerial and non-governmental linkages.⁴

Although national statistical strategies generally recognize weaknesses in existing capacity, few of them contain specific measures to address these, or specify guidelines for producing sex-disaggregated data. Cambodia's National Statistical Master Plan is one of the few that specifies gaps and provides some measures to address them, including the identification of institutional responsibilities for producing gender-related statistics. This plan also notes efforts underway to develop guidelines for setting national standards in such fields as trade and employment, though it is not clear if these will include the need for gender-specific indicators.

[Participants] call for governments and partners to implement gender-responsive planning and performance-based monitoring with harmonized, gender indicators, through improved collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and other relevant information, and the elaboration of gender-responsive social and financial standards for planning and forecasting and public expenditure management.

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Within the context of the MDGs, which set time-bound targets and indicators, several global initiatives are now underway to improve gender statistics. The UN Statistics Division, together with UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank, is initiating a gender and statistics programme, aimed at improving gender statistics through better coordination among existing initiatives and management of the knowledge and experience gained from programming in gender statistics. In addition to improving capacity to report on gender differences in such areas as education and formal employment, it will address capacity needs in areas such as gender-based violence, political participation, time-use and informal employment.

Mutual accountability

The Paris Declaration's emphasis on mutual accountability holds national governments and development partners equally accountable for development results. Accountability therefore includes the responsibility of both partners to implement or support implementation of national development strategies; the obligation of those in power to justify their decisions and actions in a transparent way; and the existence of enforcement mechanisms to combat poor performance or abuse of power.

Governments have begun to improve transparency by increasing public access to information on their policies and spending priorities. Several countries have posted their PRSPs on government websites; translated PRSPs into local languages; and conducted information campaigns through media and public education. Donors have posted information on their policies and operations on their websites, although information on decision-making processes is not generally provided.

Enforcement mechanisms are more challenging. National parliaments and civil society have both played important roles in pressuring both donor and recipient governments to be accountable for development outcomes. In cases where formal accountability mechanisms remain weak, civil society has acted as guardian of the public interest. Governments and institutions should endeavour to work towards a coherent and comprehensive system of disclosure and access to information not only of development results, but also of those accountable for delivering them. The same is true of global and regional institutions, including the international financial institutions, the European Commission and bilateral donors. Such an approach would facilitate efforts to identify strengths and weaknesses and could provide a

framework for instituting improvements, especially for gender-related information and processes.

[Participants] call for governments and partners to undertake capacity-building to raise awareness on gender issues and impacts among technocrats/bureaucrats in planning and finance ministries as well as Parliamentarians to ensure sustained commitment at various levels; strengthen the ability of national women's machineries to assess the gender implications of macro and microeconomic policies; build the technical capacities of national women's machineries, line ministries, and civil society organizations to negotiate with the finance and planning ministries for the inclusion of gender perspectives in national plans and budgets; and ensure that line ministries have adequate budgets for training to promote gender equality.

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Concluding Remarks

The Jakarta Declaration called for sustained efforts to address the large imbalances in the implementation of the Paris Declaration that weaken the advancement of gender equality. These can be seen in the uneven embrace of the Paris Declaration as well as in the implementation of all of its principles by both national governments and development partners. Institutional obstacles to promoting gender equality remain at all levels, whether in the framework of the Paris Declaration or outside of it.

The lead-up to the Ghana High-Level Forum, which will report on the progress of the Paris Declaration, will be an important period for consolidating gains and catching up in areas where there has been little progress. There are many opportunities at the national, regional and international levels that can be used to ensure that the gender equality dimensions of new aid modalities are addressed, especially in light of observations that in a number of cases, the trend towards programmatic approaches has tended to overlook gender equality.

In preparation for the Ghana meeting, participants pointed to a number of strategies that UNIFEM and its

partners could undertake in order to strengthen capacity at both global and country levels. For example:

- At the national level, it is important to identify and work with government agencies in charge of preparing national action plans and monitoring progress on the implementation of the Paris Declaration. Since countries are expected to prepare action plans and report on progress for the Ghana meeting, there is an urgent need to get key players involved in these processes on board.
- At the global level, it is important to use existing networks and donor forums to reinforce efforts and develop a collaborative work programme on integrating gender equality into the aid agenda. Gender equality advocates can try to influence the work of donor groups that support the implementation of the Paris Declaration, such as the OECD-DAC Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and the Multilateral Development Bank technical working groups, to determine how gender equality can be incorporated in ongoing and planned activities.
- There are a number of international forums scheduled in the lead-up to the Ghana meeting which can be used to create awareness and possibly derive a stronger commitment to incorporate gender equality into the aid agenda. In each of these it is important to mobilize civil society and gender equality

advocates who play a role in monitoring the impact of the Paris Declaration on gender equality.

The Jakarta consultations emphasized that halfway to 2015, it is important to keep in mind that the test of the new aid effectiveness agenda is the extent to which it enables all partners to work together to achieve the MDGs. Given the centrality of gender equality to achieving all of the MDGs, ensuring that the implementation of the Paris Declaration principles advance gender equality is critical to both aid effectiveness and development effectiveness.

Notes

¹ Carolina Guina, "The Paris Declaration: Linking Aid Effectiveness and Gender in Asia Pacific," background paper for UNIFEM, 24 January 2007. The countries reviewed include: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Fiji, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Vanuatu and Yemen. For a report on the proceedings, see "Asia Pacific Gender and Aid Effectiveness Workshop Report," UNIFEM 2007.

² 2006 Asian Regional Forum on Aid Effectiveness, Manila, 18-20 October 2006.

³ Third International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, Hanoi, 5-8 February 2007.

⁴ World Bank, Country Statistical Information Database: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20541648~menuPK:1164885~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html>



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