

**PARIS DECLARATION ON AID EFFECTIVENESS:
STUDY OF EXISTING MECHANISMS TO PROMOTE
MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY (MA) BETWEEN DONORS
AND PARTNER COUNTRIES AT THE INTERNATIONAL
LEVEL**

BACKGROUND PAPER

**AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES ON MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY AT
THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL**



Oxford
Policy
Management

Range of Accountability Mechanisms

Within Africa at the country and continental level, accountability has been gaining prominence, especially as the continent has moved from a focus on liberation from colonialism to a focus on development. To a large extent, this change in focus is mirrored in the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) whose main goal was among other things 'to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of African states and to eradicate all forms of colonialism from Africa'¹ into the African Union (AU), whose vision is of 'an Africa integrated, prosperous and peaceful, an Africa driven by its own citizens, a dynamic force in the global arena'.²

With the change in orientation, there is greater concern with performance or service delivery, and with the rights of ordinary citizens. There is also increasing tendency towards concern about enforceability of commitments among many stakeholders. The voices of stakeholders outside government are increasing at country, regional and continental levels. At the country level the PRSP process has become much more broadly consultative, and at the continental concern about accountability has led to the emergence of a range of accountability mechanisms.

Continental Mechanisms

The AU has created a number of institutions outside the Heads of State and Government and AU Commission whose purpose is to broaden participation of a range of stakeholders, and to assist them to articulate people's voices. Many of the institutions are located outside Addis Ababa, the seat of the AU Commission. The African Human Rights Commission, based in Banjul, the Gambia, seeks to provide a forum to which African people can appeal against human rights abuses, even by their governments. Its existence should facilitate holding governments to account for their human rights records. The Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution sets the stage for AU intervention in cases where a member state is undergoing civil stress, this is a departure from the OAU's stance on non-interference in internal affairs of member states. The greater focus on good governance has led to the adoption of NEPAD as an AU programme, and the setting up of the APRM. The PAP has been set up to strengthen representation and oversight at the continental level. In addition the African Court of Justice, when operational, would exercise judicial oversight on constitutional issues.

International Mechanisms

A number of mechanisms have also been established to engender accountability in relational relations between Africa and its development partners. Among these is the Strategic Partnership for Africa, which is an informal association between donors and African countries. Since its formation, the SPA has been evolving; from focusing on expediting loan disbursements, to its current focus on aligning aid with recipient country

¹ Article 2 of the OAU Charter

² Vision and Mission of the African Union, May 2004

strategies and priority, and to its emerging focus on monitoring and evaluation, with mutual accountability as a key component. The African Partnership Forum is a mutual accountability mechanism set up by the Africa on the one hand and the G8, OECD-DAC and other development partners on the other. Its mission is to strengthen partnership efforts in favour of Africa's development and it has become a key forum at a senior political level for discussing and monitoring policy issues, strategies and priorities in support of Africa's development³. In 2005 in Abuja, NEPAD produced a discussion paper considering involving its development partners in its peer review process – the External Partner Peer Review Mechanism (EPPRM).

Participation of Civil Society

The Economic Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) has been created as a platform for including civil society in the social and professional bodies in the cultural affairs of the AU. In addition African NGOs have formed an NGO Forum to interact with the AU, PAP⁴ and other institutions created by the AU in order to lobby for greater participation of civil society, and for inclusion of the voice of the grassroots. Independent research and academic institutions also contribute to the accountability debate, and provide different players with the evidence required to support their position.

Evolution of the Mechanisms

The development of government level accountability parallels the change of focus of the OAU – from liberation to ‘a united and integrated Africa; an Africa imbued with justice and peace; an interdependent and robust Africa determined to map for itself an ambitious strategy; an Africa underpinned by political, economic, social and cultural integration which would restore to Pan-Africanism its full meaning’⁶ and composed only of ‘democratic states respectful of human rights and keen to build equitable societies’⁷. This change of focus has meant that the AU, as successor to the OAU has put more emphasis on accountability, and has created mechanisms, statutes and processes for enforcement or at least, dialogue. The Sirte Declaration calling for the establishment of the AU was made on 9.9.1999, the Constitutive Act of the AU was adopted in Lome, Togo in 2001, and the UA was launched in Durban in 2002. The Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution was created in 1993, and NEPAD was adopted as a programme of the AU in 2001.

As Africa’s perspective changed, it was also possible to negotiate and set up mutual accountability mechanism with its development partners. While the SPA, established in

³ APF website www.africapartnershipforum.org

⁴ PAP Communiqué on CSO engagement, 7-8 May 2007

⁵ CSO submission to PAP, May 2007

⁶ Strategic Framework of the African Union Commission, 2004–2007, (FINAL DRAFT), 4 March 2004, p.4.

⁷ Vision of the African Union and Missions of the African Union Commission, Final Draft, March 2004, p.18.

1987, initially focused on helping low-income, debt-distressed countries to gain quick disbursing assistance (QDA) to implement critically needed reform programs, since 2003, it has changed focus to supporting PRSPs and to aligning assistance with national and sector strategies and priorities, and in future on monitoring mechanisms. The APF was established November 2003 following the Evian Summit as a way of broadening the existing high-level G8/NEPAD dialogue to include Africa's major bilateral and multilateral development partners.

For years civil society in Africa has participated actively in the drive for better governance, observance of human rights and community development, but not in issues of international trade or aid effectiveness. Two issues seem to have generated interest and involvement in the international aid debate – the campaign for debt relief and the adoption of a consultative PRSP process. High indebtedness and the realisation that poor countries in Africa were registering negative capital inflows as a result of debt repayment led to debate and agitation for debt write-off. Civil society became actively involved, and this led to formations of civil society networks at country, regional and international level. AFRODAD, which became the focus network for debt relief for Africa at the continental level, is also now the focal network for agitation for greater aid effectiveness and mutual accountability on the continent. The advent of broadly participative PRSP processes on the African continent led to participation of CSOs in planning and in monitoring and evaluation of poverty reduction strategies. This experience has led to greater CSO understanding of international development relations, and increased advocacy activity.

Mutual Accountability Perspectives of the Various Players

The Government Perspective

The major concern for the AU is for the creation of greater space for African voices in the development debate, and for the adoption of African priorities in development assistance. The AU is trying to develop a mature relationship with donors and IFIs, where power relations are more balanced, and Africa is an equal partner. The AU and African governments would like to see greater observance of the principles of the PD. They would like to see greater ownership in planning and implementing development and that there would be greater alignment and harmonisation.

Another issue of concern is predictability of aid. In practice there tends to be a gap – sometimes a very wide gap – between the amounts of aid committed, and the amounts actually disbursed. And in some cases, even though the gap may not be wide, the disbursements are not always made when they are needed or when they were agreed. This makes it difficult for recipient countries to plan development or to deliver services.

As indicated earlier, there is increasing concern about accountability within the African continent in relation to development and aid. The AU has created the APRM with a focus on good governance, and has created the PAP to provide legislative oversight over the AU, and a number of autonomous bodies have been created that create space for the participation of different stakeholders or allow the voices of a wider range of stakeholders to be heard.

Concern has been expressed by civil society and independent observers on a number of issues, key among them being the fact that not enough space is made for civil society to play an independent role in debate about, and in monitoring and evaluation of aid, and that not enough attention is given to the priorities of the poor.

Civil Society Perspective

The civil society position is well articulated in a number of publications and from interviews conducted as part of this study. Africa's civil society movement has been part of the global civil society movement, and its perspective is similar to the position articulated in the civil society draft policy position to be submitted for Accra HLF3⁸. In general civil society decries the absence of a level playing field in the aid agenda. Among the issues raised are the following:

- The commitment to increase the flow of aid to Africa is not being met. The amount of aid committed and disbursed so far is much less than the 0.7% of GNI promised⁹. In addition this does not always go to the most deserving cases. Aggravating this position is the issue of phantom aid¹⁰, which means that actual aid given is even less than official figures suggest. African governments also do not meet their development commitments.¹¹ There is concern that accountability is a one way street – recipient governments to donors, but not donors to recipient governments, also not donors and recipient governments to their people.
- Civil society is also concerned that aid given does not always reach those who need it – the priorities of the poorest in urban areas and rural communities are not always given prominence. This tends to reduce the impact of the aid provided, and does not support sustainable development.
- There is concern that the debate about country ownership of development initiatives is interpreted narrowly to refer to government ownership, rather than broadly to include a diverse range of stakeholders the country. In this regard civil society would like recognition by both governments and donors that civil society and other stakeholders should be significant players at the policy formulation level in the development agenda.
- Civil society would also like a greater role in monitoring and evaluation, and within that, in accountability mechanisms. The civil society view is that there should be greater transparency in aid processes if aid is to be effective. More information should be made available openly – for instance on how much aid was given, for what and how it was spent.

⁸ International Civil Society Steering Group (2007) From Paris 2005 To Accra 2008: Will Aid Become More Accountable And Effective? A Critical Approach to the Aid Effectiveness Agenda, Draft for Discussion at Regional Consultations – September 2007

⁹ Centre for Global Development, Commitment to Development Index (CDI), 2007

¹⁰ AFRODAD (2007) Reality of Aid: Africa Edition 2005/6

¹¹ African Monitor (2007) Development Support Monitor 2007

Views about the Future in Mutual Accountability

From the collective positions of African governments and regional institutions, civil society and independent academic institutions, a common position on aid effectiveness and mutual accountability emerges.

1. There is general agreement that both the quality and quantity of aid should be improved. This could be achieved through applying by the commitments in the Paris Declaration. As a start, it is felt that reaching the donor commitment of the level of aid (0.7% of GNI) would have a marked impact. In addition, it should be development assistance (not military or security assistance for instance) and it should be aligned to national priorities, most of it should be spent in-country, and it should have minimum conditionalities.
2. It is desirable that the aid architecture should aim for a more even balance in power relations and voice at the international level, so that it reflects more closely African priorities, and needs. Accountability between donors and partner countries should be more even, so that both donors and African governments are held accountable for their commitments. Civil society and independent observers believe that further, both donors and African governments should be accountable to the citizens of recipient countries. Aid should focus more on the needs of the poor, and they should have a role in the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of aid. To achieve that aid negotiations will need to be more transparent, and greater information should be made available – on commitment, spends, disbursements, and reasons for suspension of aid.
3. There is common agreement between academics and civil society that civil society should play a much more significant and recognised formal role in aid policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation, so as to represent more fully the voice of the marginalised – the poor in urban areas, the rural poor, women, the youths, the disabled etc – whose voice is absent in the aid process so far.
4. Civil society would like to see a strengthening of mutual accountability processes. At the country level civil society would like to play a greater monitoring role. At the regional level, they would like to see greater civil society participation in the APRM. The current mechanisms in the Paris Declaration are seen as a good start but not adequate. African civil society networks embrace the call for an independent accountability mechanism, perhaps under the UN system.