



WORKSHOP ON

**DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN PRACTICE:
APPLYING THE PARIS DECLARATION TO ADVANCING
GENDER EQUALITY, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

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Joint Assistance Strategies – a way to advance cross cutting issues?

Joint Assistance Strategies and donor harmonisation processes: A Zambian civil society perspective.

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Civil Society's participation in Zambia's national development process?

The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) is a policy advocacy network of national and provincial level civil society organisations working around contributing and monitoring the various national development policy processes in Zambia. CSPR's origin traces back during the country's PRSP formulation phase in 2001 in response to calls for civil society to be part of the formulation process of Zambia's 1st PRSP, a group of 20 NGOs mostly networks came together to coordinate civil society's contribution to the PRSP through working groups.

It is worth while to note that civil society participation and influence in the PRSP process was acknowledged but was limited. This participation was limited to Lusaka based groups, while grassroots civil society voice remained invisible. Further civil society was concerned by and pointed out the unfortunate scenario of members of parliament being sidelined.

The Government of the republic of Zambia (GRZ) has completed and adopted the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) as the successor to the PRSP and yet again CSPR spearheaded a coordinated civil society process that resulted in a civil society perspective of the FNDP as the official civil society input to the process. The CSPR thematic group's process was aimed at coordinating and harmonising civil society participation in national development processes. Currently there are attempts and efforts by civil society to create a united approach to engaging with government and donors through a planned civil society coordination mechanism.

Through the civil society thematic groups (TGs) and the government led sector advisory groups (SAGs) civil society is expected to participate and contribute to the planning budgeting and monitoring of the programmes and policies in the FNDP including discussions around the financing mechanisms and modalities of the FNDP.

The Joint Assistance Strategy Process in Zambia and Civil Society

Following the formulation and adoption of the FNDP, the Government of Zambia and its cooperating partners (CPs) are/will be finalising the Joint Assistance Strategy for Zambia (JASZ). Even though there has been a marked improvement in the level and extent of civil society participation in the national planning and budgeting processes (including the MTEF process), civil society influence remains non existent in major government – donor aid discussions.

Civil society has also been lobbying for more transparency and improved information flow around the government –donor aid discussions such as the JASZ process, IMF/WB negotiation processes under the PRGF, and the performance assessment framework (PAF) for the poverty reduction budget support (PRBS) process.

How is the JASZ engaging wider stakeholders?

In Zambia the lack of an institutionalised framework for civil society participation has contributed to the ineffective influence of civil society in the JASZ, currently civil society is and has not been part of the government/donor dialogue on the JASZ process inspite of being invited to participate and monitor the FNDP through the SAGs. In spite of donors efforts to harmonise their aid, policies and actions in support of the FNDP, however there still remains a lack of corresponding harmonised support to civil society to effectively

enable and provide a formidable social-political entity to check and hold government accountable.

Presently GRZ is largely accountable externally to donors as opposed to being accountable to local governance institutions and citizens. Like in the PRSP process, the role of parliament within the JASZ has been ineffective. Under the current arrangement, parliament does not have sufficient oversight powers to influence the outcome of most policy processes and its role in the JASZ is still vague and limited.

Presently there is limited transparency and information to enable engagement of more stakeholders in the JASZ process. There is need to move away from reliance on *Donor Goodwill to Government responsibility* in ensuring wider stakeholder involvement.

How can JASZ being more effective in engaging wider stakeholders

- Need to reverse accountability inward through strengthening the participation of local players like CSOs, parliament etc.
- Need to encourage and support civil society initiative like the thematic group process that seeks to harmonise and coordinate civil society approaches.
- Donors should promote a ‘civil society budget support’ approach to enable and build corresponding capacity in civil society to engage in JASZ and other processes, including monitoring donor commitments to Paris Declaration targets.
- Civil society must harmonise and coordinate their own implementation and monitoring approaches and use these as evidence of best practice in their engagement with government and donor processes.