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Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and Donor Practices

CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE DUBLIN WORKSHOP - 26/27 APRIL 2007

Development Effectiveness in Practice - Applying the Paris Declaration to Advancing Gender Equality, Environmental Sustainability and Human Rights

9th Meeting, 8-9 March 2007

This Concept Note outlines the background, rationale and focus of the Dublin Workshop (26-27 April). It was prepared by a Workshop Steering Group composed of Members from the DAC Networks on Gender Equality, Environment, Governance, the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and the Secretariat.

It is submitted for INFORMATION at the Working Party meeting on 8-9 March 2007.

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CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE DUBLIN WORKSHOP - 26-27 APRIL 2007

DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN PRACTICE -

APPLYING THE PARIS DECLARATION TO ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

I. Background

1. In March 2005 over one hundred donors and developing countries agreed to undertake some landmark reforms in the way they do business together. The *Paris Declaration* marks an unprecedented level of consensus and resolve to reform aid and to make it more effective in combating global poverty and inequality, increasing growth, building capacity and accelerating achievement of the MDGs. Its implementation is spurring ambitious reforms in the aid system.

2. The *Paris Declaration* is based on five key principles – ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for development results and mutual accountability. It goes beyond previous agreements and lays down a practical, action-oriented roadmap intended to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development. For the first time donors and developing countries have committed to measure progress, with a set of indicators and targets for the year 2010. The *Declaration* thus creates stronger mechanisms for accountability.

3. In their efforts towards implementation of the *Paris Declaration*, donors and partners have been primarily focusing on improving the efficiency of the financial and administrative arrangements necessary to reduce transaction costs and improve aid delivery particularly in the light of donor commitments to scaling up aid. This focus on aid delivery modalities, appropriate mix of aid instruments, harmonisation of donor procedures, adoption of joint approaches, alignment with partner country financial management systems is an essential contribution to making aid more effective.

4. However, the five overarching principles of the *Paris Declaration* have implications which extend beyond aid delivery *per se*. They are major reference points for guiding policy dialogue and shaping development co-operation programmes in all sectors and in cross-cutting areas. Donor efforts to improving the effectiveness of aid delivery would not therefore be sufficient in themselves to make a real impact on development effectiveness. There needs to be due attention to substantive policy areas (in sectors such as health and education) and to cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, environmental sustainability and human rights.

5. Discussions are underway within GENDERNET, GOVNET, ENVIRONET, WP-EFF, the DAC Secretariat and the wider development community about

- the potential for the Paris Declaration's key principles and partnership commitments to be used as valuable tools for advancing cross-cutting policy issues and
- the potential of cross-cutting policy issues to add value to the implementation of the Paris Declaration.

6. To advance these debates, the four DAC subsidiary bodies will hold a joint workshop on the *Paris Declaration* and cross-cutting policy issues.

II. Cross-cutting issues and the Paris Declaration

7. There are relatively few references to cross-cutting issues in the *Paris Declaration*. Paragraphs 40 and 41 specifically deal with *promoting a harmonised approach to environmental assessments*, and paragraph 42 notes that “similar harmonisation efforts are also needed on other cross-cutting issues, such as gender equality and other thematic issues...”.

8. Furthermore, for human rights-inspired approaches the Paris Declaration implicitly offers interesting entry points by promoting a model of partnership that is focusing on stronger mechanisms for accountability, including partner country ownership as the fundamental tenet underpinning the Declaration.

III. Why focus on human rights, environmental sustainability and gender equality?

9. There are several compelling reasons for focusing on these three cross-cutting issues. Each face similar challenges from the changes in how aid is delivered. Each is focused on the achievement of development outcomes. The workshop would be a unique opportunity for the three communities of experts to learn from each other’s experiences and to strengthen links with the WP-EFF and its joint ventures with a view to contributing to the consolidated progress report for the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Ghana in 2008

10. Gender equality, human rights and environmental sustainability are closely intertwined as universal concerns and indicators of the progress of societies. Each takes an holistic approach to development. Each is critical to sustainable development. Each has been the subject of important global agreements made in Rio (1992), Vienna (1993) and Beijing (1995). At the same time, each seems to raise inevitable sensitivities and difficult challenges within donor agencies and in partner countries.

11. For over two decades most DAC members have had policies which have included a strong commitment to using development cooperation for achieving environmental sustainability and gender equality. Both issues have, however, proven to be difficult to address, not responsive to “quick fixes”, and, as often as not, there has been a gap between “what we say we do” and “what we actually do”. Although the focus on human rights in development is more recent, its integration into development agendas has been subject to similar challenges to those experienced with gender equality and environmental sustainability.

12. The GENDERNET and GOVNET have recently commissioned innovative work on the connections between gender equality/human rights and development effectiveness. The resulting papers¹ clearly articulate the contributions that gender equality and human rights thinking and practice can make to the implementation of the Paris Declaration and identify ways of using the Declaration’s key principles and partnership commitments to advance gender equality and human rights. The ENVIRONET has also developed guidance on Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)², to support the integration of

¹ Cathy Gaynor, “Paris Declaration commitments and implications for gender equality and women’s empowerment”. Paper commissioned by Development Cooperation Ireland, presented at the Meetings of the GENDERNET and the WP-EFF on 5-7 July 2006, DCD/DC/GEN(2006)1; Marta Foresti, David Booth and Tammie O’Neill, “Framework paper: Aid effectiveness and human rights – strengthening the implementation of the Paris Declaration”. Paper commissioned by the GOVNET Human Rights Task Team (October 2006); Paolo de Renzio, Verena Fritz, Zainab Kizilbash Agha, Marta Foresti and Tammie O’Neil, “Illustration papers on human rights and the partnership commitments of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness”. Papers commissioned by the GOVNET Human Rights Task Team (October 2006).

² OECD DAC, “Strategic Environmental Assessment: Good Practice Guidance for Development Co-operation” (November 2006).

environmental considerations in a changing context of more aligned and harmonised aid and new aid modalities.

13. The joint workshop is also an important contribution to the “agenda of improved interactions” that the DAC Chair refers to in his December 2006 guidance letter to Chairs of DAC Subsidiary Bodies³. The workshop will improve the interactions among the groups and generate synergies around a high priority issue.

IV. The Paris Declaration’s key principles and cross-cutting issues

14. The key principles of the *Paris Declaration* and the related partnership commitments present specific and similar opportunities (and challenges) for continuing to make progress towards environmental sustainability, gender equality and human rights.

Ownership – This is perhaps most obvious with respect to *partner country ownership and leadership* which cannot be taken for granted in these areas. Often partner country governments see these as the imposition of external norms and values systems although global agreements have been signed and ratified. When coupled with the use of new aid modalities, such as general budget support, there is a risk of reducing quality policy or political dialogue on potentially sensitive cross-cutting issues. Such dialogue has long been a cornerstone of development partnerships.

Alignment – There are already some examples of donors harmonising their approaches to gender equality and *aligning* with a country’s priorities such as the *Zambian Joint Assistance Strategy*. These experiences could be shared with specialists working on other cross-cutting issues and would be of interest to colleagues in donor agencies and in partner countries who are responsible for implementing the aid effectiveness agenda.

Harmonisation – Since the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (Rio, 1992) aid agencies have successfully put in place environmental assessment procedures for development projects that are based on good practice principles and approaches. In Vietnam, for example, the procedures of the donors involved are not only remarkably similar, but they also mirror those of the Government. As many donors shift from project-based support to SWAps and budget support, existing environmental assessment approaches, which were developed for project-level interventions, are no longer sufficient. Other approaches, notably Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), will be needed. Implementation of such measures should be conducted in a harmonised manner.

Managing for development results – Existing performance assessment frameworks may not always pay attention to measuring results relating to cross-cutting issues. However, the Managing for Development Results (MfDR) framework is predicated on the need to relate outputs to outcomes to results, and to modify inputs and activities according to the extent to which results are being achieved. Thus the MfDR approach should be a useful tool for monitoring progress in these areas, including MDGs, UN Conventions (on human rights and environmental issues) and other international agreements which should be integrated into national development strategies and plans.

Mutual accountability – Advancing gender equality, women’s empowerment and human rights are essential to strengthening local capacity, leadership, voice and participation in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of national development strategies. There is often a lack of strong

³ DAC/CHAIR(2006)11/REV2.

national accountability mechanisms for environmental sustainability, human rights and gender equality through parliaments, audit offices, a free media, an active civil society and all the other means that are used in donor countries to hold governments accountable to taxpayers and the community.

V. Objectives and intended outcomes of the workshop

15. The workshop which will bring together participants working on gender equality, human rights, environmental sustainability and aid effectiveness provides a framework for

- “rethinking” and “reshaping” the ways to work on cross-cutting issues;
- sharing experiences;
- developing strategies to more effectively apply the Paris Declaration’s key principles to advancing key cross-cutting issues.

16. The intended outcomes are:

- Increased mutual understanding of (i) how development agencies can more effectively address cross cutting issues through the application of the key principles and partnership commitments and (ii) how human rights-inspired approaches, gender equality and environmental sustainability dimensions can “add value” to the implementation of the Paris Declaration.
- Increased collaboration within agencies and in partner countries.
- Continued joint work between DAC subsidiary bodies with the aim of contributing to the consolidated Progress Report for the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (Ghana, 2008).
- The definition of concrete next steps putting the Paris Declaration into practice at the country level.

VI. Possible elements of a programme

17. The key principles of the Paris Declaration – ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability – will provide the framework for sharing experience and good practice and identifying further opportunities. The following elements could be considered for inclusion in the agenda:

- Brief introductions to the Paris Declaration, its implementation and the work of the WP-EFF and its joint ventures.
- Case studies, presentations (ideally given jointly by donor and partner country participants), panels and discussions on emerging good practice on using the key principles and partnership commitments to advance cross-cutting issues.
- Consideration of how human rights-inspired approaches, gender equality and environmental sustainability dimensions can “add value” to the implementation of the Paris Declaration
- Other aspects of the implementation of the Paris Declaration that are likely to be of interest to participants include:
 - ⇒ Communication and dissemination
 - ⇒ Monitoring progress
 - ⇒ Evaluation
- Identification of the potential for, format and structure for further collaborative work.

VII. Logistical and administrative arrangements

18. Initial thoughts on logistics are as follows:

- A workshop steering group, including representatives from each of the interested DAC subsidiary bodies and the host country is designing the agenda and the modus operandi for the workshop.
- External consultants will be contracted to prepare in collaboration with the OECD-DAC Secretariat a short background paper exploring the relationship between gender equality, human rights, environmental sustainability and aid effectiveness and setting out the challenges that the workshop is designed to address.
- A short outcome document is envisaged and workshop papers will be disseminated.

VIII. Participants

19. 100-120 participants associated with work on gender equality, environmental sustainability, human rights and aid effectiveness, mainly (60-70 per cent) from the field (state and non-state partner country representatives, donor field offices and embassies). Donor HQ participants will be encouraged to liaise with colleagues in their agencies prior to participating in the workshop.

IX. Host country

20. The workshop will be hosted by Ireland.

XI. When

21. 26-27 April 2007 (Dublin)

XII. Financial arrangements

22. Subject to final approval, shared funding responsibility is envisaged between the DAC subsidiary bodies, Ireland and Denmark.

XIII. Further preparation

23. Workshop steering group (one member of GENDERNET, ENVIRONET, GOVNET and WP-EFF, Network administrators from DAC Secretariat, plus one representative from the host country and from a partner country), in collaboration with external consultants.