



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

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**Session D - Discussant**  
**Harmonisation**

**Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness – experience from SE Asia**

**by**

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### **Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness – experience from SE Asia**

From January-April 2007, DFID, UNIFEM and the World Bank supported a case study and workshop process to deepen mutual understanding amongst development practitioners of the challenges and opportunities for implementation of gender equality objectives through the Paris Declaration in SE Asia. In preparation for the workshop and in consultation with the governments, 4 aid-funded initiatives in Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Timor Leste were assessed using the lens of the Paris Declaration's aid effectiveness framework. The assessments and workshop that followed validated the use of the Paris Declaration as a framework for identifying challenges and opportunities for promoting gender equality within aid policy and programming. The workshop with 60 - mostly national but some regional and international donors and NGOs - developed recommendations on how to strengthen approaches to gender equality both within the specific initiatives and within the Aid Effectiveness agenda as a whole. A hard copy report of the workshop is available and there will be a more general discussion of this SE Asia process during a lunchtime session at this workshop.

### **Some points to consider in discussing cross cutting issues and managing for development results**

The challenge for those with a central concern with gender equality is clear – there is a need to demonstrate that specific interventions aimed at promoting gender equality, as well as generic development interventions that incorporate a concern with gender equality, deliver identifiable results. There is also an opportunity presented by an increasing focus on results: Social analysts and policy makers / practitioners – including those concerned with gender equality - who have skills in qualitative impact assessment have much to offer to government bureaucrats and senior managers, who are under pressure from their constituencies to tell a 'good story' on aid impact.

Discussion of all 4 case studies for the SE Asia workshop highlighted challenges with establishing results frameworks. The discussion of the Vietnam case study of the Poverty Reduction Support Credit leads an observer to the obvious but fundamental conclusion that establishing a framework for managing for results that incorporates gender equality requires a priori agreement that gender equality targets are appropriate and that their monitoring is worth the investment. In the multi donor safer motherhood programme in Indonesia, it was particularly recognised that the maternal mortality challenge is (in large part) about ensuring change in (and thus establishing measurable targets on) attitudes and behaviours. The Timor Leste discussants identified the challenge of measuring long term change – in this case impact beyond increases in women in local government and towards results or real changes in poor men and women's lives at local level.

The discussion in Bangkok highlighted how social analysts and policy makers / practitioners will need not just to demonstrate how qualitative data collection is central to results management but how it can practically be used to tell a robust story on change. The real challenge that the MfDR framework presents is to ensure that an 'efficiency' argument for aid does not overshadow an 'effectiveness' argument. The story of impact must balance on the one hand the reality that change is complex and political ( and not easily reduced to simple targets) – with on the other hand the need for attribution – for example that resourcing gender analysis and related activities leads to quantifiably *more* positive improvements for poor people. The nature of the balance of this story will affect the choice of aid instruments. For advocates of social change the risk is that simple stories on results pre-empt selection of instruments that promote social change where stories / results are not linear.

The discussion at the workshop in Bangkok also highlighted how the overall process of monitoring the OECD DAC Paris Declaration and the OECD DAC survey mechanism in particular could be significantly strengthened through qualitative assessment work – this is relevant to a discussion of mutual accountability.

**Some points to consider in discussing cross cutting issues and mutual accountability (ma)**

Experience shows that implementation of this Paris principle is the least advanced. It is fundamentally about power relations between donors and governments and government and citizens and ensuring that these relations are characterised by joint accountability (in this case) for working to promote gender equality. One element of establishing MA is building the right conditions for equal dialogue. In Vietnam the lack of gender targets in the PRSC has meant there is no discussion of accountability for impact on gender equality around this instrument. In turn opportunities for establishing a gender related target are reduced. In Indonesia, regular management meetings for the safer motherhood programme are held between government and donors, but there is no discussion of responsibility for gender. One issue here is whether women (in general) and gender equality advocates (in particular) are invited / resourced / have the capacity to participate in these types of forum.

The Cambodia experience provides the most holistic and systematic attempt to ensure that aid dialogue mechanisms between government, donors and civil society are resourced to include a discussion and to introduce an level of accountability for the promotion of gender equality. The initiative led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and supported by donors has mainstreamed a discussion of gender equality within existing aid dialogue mechanisms. It has been a time consuming process and it is too early to assess the results but the lessons from this initiative will be extremely insightful for those concerned with how to promote gender equality as part of mutual accountability.

The discussion of the Timor Leste project in Bangkok shows the value of assessing gender-focused interventions through the lens of the Paris Declaration. For example, it was recognised that there was no mechanism for discussing progress on gender equality in TL. Discussants considered such a dialogue to be fundamental in determining strategies for promoting gender equality and in turn how for example this particular project was contributing to the agenda. Using the Paris Declaration framework highlighted how there was a need for complementary initiatives beyond the project to maximise its impact. A dialogue mechanism to promote more mutual accountability was identified as one of these initiatives to be take forward.

The CEDAW framework and international reporting was seen by workshop practitioners to be a useful mechanism for promoting greater mutual accountability for gender equality – but more needs to be done to establish donor and government commitment to it. In general, donors were seen not be holding themselves to account for progress on gender commitments and not aligning with their own policies. However it was noted that promoting donor accountability for their impact on gender equality in recipient countries would require a shift of relations for recipient governments / civil society to call donors to account. Perhaps a more realistic process would begin with more donor 'peer review' of performance on gender commitments. And this might start with a focus on rewarding good practice and establishing incentives to perform well rather than overly criticising poor performance. Likewise peer review mechanism across government departments might be a useful mechanism to promote greater accountability.