

Accra: a defining moment

Why making aid effective matters to every citizen



A World Vision brief in preparation for
the OECD-DAC Third High-level Forum on Aid Effectiveness
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Accra: a defining moment. Why making aid effective matters to every citizen

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Women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, returning home from an internal displacement camp where they fled to avoid local fighting, gather for the distribution of plastic sheeting and women's clothing. Many lost everything when they fled.

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“Poverty is about relationships that have gone wrong.
Poverty is about powerlessness.”

Jayakumar Christian, National Director of World Vision India

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities world-wide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. As followers of Jesus, World Vision is dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable people. World Vision serves all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

Children are often most vulnerable to the effects of poverty. World Vision works with each partner community to ensure that children are able to enjoy improved nutrition, health and education. Where children live in especially difficult circumstances, surviving on the streets, suffering in exploitative labour, or exposed to the abuse and trauma of conflict, World Vision works to restore hope and to bring justice.

World Vision recognises that poverty is not inevitable. Our Mission Statement calls us to challenge those unjust structures that constrain the poor in a world of false priorities, gross inequalities and distorted values. World Vision desires that all people be able to reach their God-given potential, and thus works for a world that no longer tolerates poverty.

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introduction

a chance to do better

Over the past decade, world governments have made major commitments to eradicate global poverty, to promote sustainable development and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Since 2000, the signing of the Millennium Declaration resulted in a significant increase in promises of overseas aid. Two years later, at the Monterrey Consensus on Finance for Development, donor governments re-dedicated themselves to reach the 1970 target of 0.7% of their Gross National Incomes (GNI) to Official Development Assistance (ODA). In Gleneagles, Scotland, G8 leaders responded to a massive civil society action by making a bold commitment to providing increases in aid for developing nations.

Nevertheless, in 2008, just seven years shy of the MDG deadline, progress towards reducing global poverty is still woefully inadequate.

Some governments and global institutions are making a genuine effort to reduce poverty and its impacts. Indeed, recent figures indicate the world is a little closer to meeting these poverty reduction indicators. However, a glance at the reality on the ground proves there is still much more that needs to be done if there is to be any chance of hitting the goals by 2015.

Examples include MDGs 4 (reducing by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five) and 5 (reducing by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio). Despite some individual country success stories, there has been virtually no world-wide progress on MDG 5 since it was announced in 2000. Annually, more than half a million women die during pregnancy and childbirth. In 2006, 9.7 million children under the age of five died, largely from preventable diseases. Today, 26,000 children will die – 13,000 just in Africa.

When they meet in Accra, the leaders of more than 100 countries and of key global institutions will have an historic opportunity to help end what is a criminal waste of human life and potential. The decisions leaders make about

aid will set the tone for the upcoming United Nations High-level Event on the MDGs, and the Finance for Development meetings in Doha later this year. They will also reshape the future by determining whether aid is truly effective, and whether it brings about real change at all levels for the millions of people whose lives depend on it.

The road to Accra

In recent years the aid community has focused increasingly on broad-based country planning (e.g. through Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers), with budgeting and aid financing as critical to a comprehensive approach to tackling poverty. Many developing countries have strengthened their ability to identify underlying causes of poverty in their national strategies. However, most are not yet able to fully generate the much-needed resources to implement these strategies. Consequently, they depend heavily on donor financing, with some governments seeking almost half of their budget requirements from various bilateral and multilateral donors.¹

In 2005, the international community responded to growing concerns about aid and, at the High Level Forum of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC), developed a set of guiding principles for reforming the delivery and the management of aid: the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. This was the culmination of 10 years of donor discussions, and it set out principles to ensure the effectiveness of aid through the creation of an enabling environment for developing country assistance. Commonly described by donors as “an unprecedented global consensus” the Paris Declaration addressed perceived failings on aid delivery and established indicators, targets and a monitoring system to be implemented by 2010.

Having started as a somewhat technical donors’ exercise, the Paris Declaration has become an important political process that both donors and recipient countries are following closely. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including World Vision and its partners, have been engaged both at donor and country level to monitor

and influence the process. Evaluations so far have shown important gaps in the implementation of the principles and targets of the Paris Declaration. Additionally, the commitments have been seen as insufficient by CSOs and partner governments. The resulting aid effectiveness agenda has tended to emphasise donor priorities and changes needed in partner developing countries. The focus has been on the need for institutional reform by donors and partner governments, with an emphasis on the prioritisation of management and efficiency concerns.

The Paris Declaration outlined five principles, which should shape aid delivery:

OWNERSHIP: Developing countries will exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies, and will co-ordinate development actions

ALIGNMENT: Donor countries will base their overall support on recipient countries' national development strategies, institutions, and procedures

HARMONISATION: Donor countries will work so that their actions are more harmonised, transparent, and collectively effective

MANAGING FOR RESULTS: All countries will manage resources and improve decision-making for results

MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Donor and developing countries pledge that they will be mutually accountable for development results

But this fails to recognise that aid is ineffective if the political, economic and social processes that encompass development are not addressed. Linking the Paris Declaration to these other processes would help to put the interests of poor and marginalised people back at the centre of the aid effectiveness agenda. As other representatives of CSOs have argued, the aid effectiveness agenda should help to ensure sustainable poverty reduction, address inequality and give vulnerable people a voice:

“The only true measures of aid’s effectiveness are its contribution to the sustained reduction of poverty and inequalities; and its support of human rights, democracy, environmental sustainability and gender equality”²

It is World Vision’s view that the Paris Declaration’s commitments, objectives and assessment indicators have been artificially separated from considerations about how aid actually affects the conditions that sustain poverty and inequality. For aid to be effective, it should facilitate a process whereby people living in poverty are also empowered to understand, claim and realise their human rights.

The High Level Forum

At its High Level Forum in Accra, the OECD-DAC will assess progress to date and address issues affecting the implementation of the principles of the Paris Declaration. This forum is therefore an important opportunity to deepen the current aid effectiveness agenda by explicitly addressing its relevance to broader development goals, such as poverty reduction, human rights and social justice for all vulnerable people, including children.

In preparation for the Accra meetings, there have been world-wide consultations to develop consensus and ensure that the objectives of the forum are met. The Accra Agenda for Action has been prepared, and it is hoped that at the meetings, lively debate and insightful contributions will produce a final document that shows strong political will and clear direction for aid effectiveness.

While progress in aid delivery has been made, it has not been sufficient to make aid work for the poorest and most vulnerable people. World Vision expects the outcomes of the High Level Forum to be ambitious, closing gaps with specific, measurable timelines and clear monitoring plans. It must go beyond the Paris Declaration and previous commitments. We urge the world leaders in Accra to reach a deeper consensus, so that the final Accra Agenda for Action will serve the needs and priorities not only of donors, but also of partner countries and CSOs, and, ultimately, of the world’s most vulnerable citizens.

As the Accra Agenda for Action has itself stated, this High Level Forum is indeed a moment of opportunity. The decisions in Accra matter, even to the poor, vulnerable and marginalised.

Notes

1. For relevant case studies, visit www.eurodad.org/uploadedFiles/Whats_New/Reports/Turning_the_Tables.pdf
2. International CSO Steering Group, *Better aid: A civil society position paper for the 2008 Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness*, 2008, p2, www.betteraid.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=88&Itemid=26

key issues

ownership, accountability and predictability

The principles of ownership and mutual accountability – two of the five key principles of the Paris Declaration – are welcomed by World Vision as the basis for relationships between donors and recipient governments.

We believe that ownership is an important cornerstone for development; unless countries are able to decide and direct their own development paths, development will fail to be inclusive, sustainable or effective. Long-term and sustainable outcomes can only be achieved if citizens are effectively connected within the aid “chain”, as active participants. Citizens would thus be “makers and shapers” rather than ‘users and choosers’ of interventions or services designed by others”.² Country ownership will not be achieved simply by recipient governments developing

their national poverty reduction policies. It also needs the meaningful participation of citizens, including children and the historically marginalised, in the development, implementation and monitoring of those policies.

World Vision believes that accountable relationships can help to support democracy and the empowerment of poor people to claim their rights. However, the current aid system encourages recipient governments to be accountable primarily towards donors, rather than to their own citizens. This undermines domestic accountability.

The emphasis of the principle of mutual accountability needs to shift towards increasing accountability of governments to their citizens. Donors and partner governments should recognise that unequal power



A mothers' group in Peru meets to decide what to do about government milk programme difficulties
photo: Jon Warren/World Vision

relationships exist between governments and citizens, and that meaningful democratic participation is key for the creation of domestic accountability.

Citizens need to expect and demand accountability from their governments. Civil Society Organisations can play a unique role not only in expressing the demands of citizens, but also in building accountability from the bottom up, helping to empower citizens to claim for themselves the full range of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. Delivering on democratic ownership through domestic accountability requires a twin strategy of support for government responsiveness and direct support to civil society and citizen empowerment.

However, efforts towards the Paris Declaration principles of ownership and mutual accountability may be undermined unless the flow of aid for sustained poverty programming is predictable. All governments need to be able to withstand the vicissitudes of the global economy, but countries in receipt of aid feel the peaks and troughs of the unpredictable global economic climate most acutely. Predictability of aid is an essential element of good governance and mutual accountability. Unless recipient governments can be sure that aid will be predictable, long-term, delivered according to donor agreements, and sustainable, their planning will remain insecure and the lives, livelihoods and well-being of the most vulnerable people will potentially be endangered.

A minimum requirement for ownership and accountability is to have full transparency. With access to information and clarity about the conditions, budgets and results that are attached to aid contracts, parliaments, CSOs and citizens have tools to hold their governments and donors accountable, and to exert their role in participation and ownership.

It has become increasingly apparent that “fragile” states are confronted with particularly severe development challenges. These include deteriorating or weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crises, persistent social tensions and/or violence. Typically there is a lack of capacity to engage citizens productively and collectively in order to ensure security, rights and basic needs. It is precisely this barrier that points to the centrality of citizens’ participation without which fragility cannot be overcome.

In such situations, it is critical to ensure that donors and partners “do no harm”, guarding against inadvertently



Some of the 150 young people from across Bolivia who convened for the Third National Congress of the Children's Parliament

photo: World Vision

aggravating the existing or potential challenges. Sustainable change requires, more than ever, addressing the underlying causes of poverty, fragility and conflict. In such instances, the role of civil society becomes even more important.

Civil society: a vital cog in the aid effectiveness machine

Extensive experience has shown us that CSOs can play a vital and unique role in ensuring international aid has a meaningful impact on the lives of people living in poverty.

As a child-focused organisation, World Vision believes one should measure the effectiveness of aid against its contribution to the realisation of rights of the most vulnerable, especially children.

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) like World Vision are exceptionally well placed to gather evidence and to influence pro-poor policy-making at the national level that support such rights. Through work with communities, we are able to support them to hold their own governments to account for how aid is used.

For aid and policy change to be effective, empowered citizens, including children and vulnerable groups, need to be able to monitor and influence government spending and the delivery of pro-poor policies and services. It is vital that:

- Aid should enable citizens to be empowered to understand, claim and realise their human rights (economic, social and political)
- Citizens should be able to hold their governments to account on their commitments to eliminate poverty and on their use of international assistance

- Citizens should be able to hold the international community to account for their promises of aid, and promises to eradicate poverty and to ensure human rights

Organisations like World Vision also support governments to fulfil their commitments to child well-being through enabling the effective engagement of citizens and CSOs with governments. NGOs have developed a range of social accountability approaches to strengthen the capacity of community members and partners to improve local level service provision by holding governments accountable to their stated policy commitments.

“A generation of African globalised youth have clear expectations of what the future should hold for them; and, increasingly, the confidence to tell not only their leaders, but also the whole world, what they want.”

John Githongo, Vice President of Policy & Advocacy, World Vision International

Good examples of social accountability approaches include getting children, vulnerable groups and citizens involved in such activities as participatory policy-making and budgeting, independent budget analysis, public expenditure tracking, social auditing and producing community scorecards. These approaches have been developed to strengthen local structures and institutions, and to support better governance, ownership and accountability in aid recipient countries.

One method that World Vision has used to build local capacity is Community Based Performance Monitoring (CBPM), a participatory tool that empowers local communities to demand social accountability in poverty reduction programmes. Our experience with CBPM has convinced us that only genuinely participatory mechanisms that involve citizens directly can guarantee ownership of pro-poor policies.

With more than 50 years of experience in relief, development and advocacy in more than 100 countries, we recognise that aid effectiveness is not just about the quantity of aid resources. It is also about the quality of that aid and how it is delivered and used.

It is technically feasible to ensure ownership through broad participation in planning, evaluation and decision-making. World Vision has extensive practice, and continually seeks to improve, a world-wide architecture from communities,

to countries, to regions, to global decision-making and action. The partner communities carry out their own analysis, planning and accountability processes. The process starts with building consensus with communities at the design stage, and reiterative feedback and reporting mechanisms during implementation. National and regional strategic analysis, planning and accountability feed into international decisions about funding allocations as well as programme priorities, responses to crises and global communications.

As one part of the international aid delivery network, World Vision is itself accountable to a number of stakeholders. We are accountable to the numerous donors, partners and communities who support our work. We are also accountable to the governments in the countries where we work, and to our colleagues in the humanitarian and development community. Most importantly, however, we are accountable to the poor and vulnerable who feel the impact of our work most of all.

World Vision, therefore, actively participates in efforts to increase the capacity for mutual accountability at a range of levels, adhering to international standards and monitoring mechanisms. World Vision actively participates in global civil society efforts to develop a common set of standards for aid, and concrete actions to increase ownership and accountability.

Notes

1. The term “citizen” is used throughout this paper in its broad sense to refer to all people, regardless of citizenship status, including stateless persons.
2. AM Goetz and J Gaventa, *Bringing citizen voice and client focus into service delivery*, IDS Working Papers, 2001

How aid can strengthen citizens' rights

A World Vision Ghana (WVG) project, supported by the Canadian Development Agency (CIDA), worked to extend government initiatives addressing malnutrition and preventable diseases among under-5s.¹ The programme began with a baseline survey that WVG staff then shared with the local community prompting a dialogue about how best to implement necessary interventions.

WVG provided training to community health workers on Community Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses. Community Based Surveillance Volunteers, with the support of local leaders, worked with local health authorities to ensure that required services and monitoring were available at the community level. When appropriate monitoring of services by government officials did not occur, community volunteers alerted WVG and health authorities at the district level. Further, WVG encouraged the community to table their needs to their local political representatives.

This programme equipped mothers, care-givers and communities as a whole to demand improved services from their government. In this case, the involvement of community members had a dual function. It was a mechanism to enable behaviour change necessary for the success of interventions (e.g. more mothers understanding how to protect their children from malaria); and, by understanding and addressing a problem facing them, community members became agents of change.

For government programmes to be genuinely country-owned, participatory approaches are a vital ingredient. This example also demonstrates that CSOs should be seen, not only as a conduit for government programmes, but also as mobilisers of communities, empowering citizens through knowledge and participatory methods to become participants in holding governments accountable.

1. ENHANCE (Expanding Nutrition & Health Achievements through Necessary Commodities & Education) is a pilot programme implemented by World Vision Canada and World Vision Ghana with funding received from the Canadian International Development Agency



Clean water is critical for Meimunatu, aged 40, and her children whose community, in northern Ghana, has a guinea-worm endemic
photo: Esperanza Ampah/World Vision

A community puts World Vision under the spotlight

Community Based Performance Monitoring (CBPM) has been piloted by World Vision in six countries, including Uganda and Brazil. CBPM provides space for increased dialogue between citizens and governments around state-provided social services, such as health and education. In several projects in Uganda, people have unified through the CBPM process and now together identify problems and address them with local service providers.

In one case, communities arranged meetings and visited the Sub-County Health Chairman and a local doctor to express their fears about medicine they had been prescribed. The result of their own intervention was that substandard drugs were withdrawn from the local health centre.

Another community put into practice the knowledge gained from World Vision about entitlements to basic services, as well as the skills for seeking improvements from local providers. Ironically, on this occasion, it was the agency's own staff held to account when several water tanks provided by World Vision were found to be cracked and unusable.

“This is unusual because the community knows World Vision is helping, so if they question us they normally worry that we may stop helping them. CBPM has made them braver.” Betty Wamala, World Vision Uganda

World Vision recommendations

to all national representatives and international agencies attending the OECD-DAC High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness

Progress has been made on aid delivery, but it has not been enough to make aid work for the poorest and the most vulnerable people. This is a moment of opportunity. **World Vision expects the outcomes of the High Level Forum to be ambitious. In the current context of challenges to the achievements of the MDGs – food insecurity and climate change – world leaders should do no less than to set measurable timelines and clear monitoring plans for assessing “aid effectiveness”.**

World Vision recommends:

1. Full ownership includes the poor and most vulnerable

It is critical that the Accra Agenda for Action goes beyond the Paris Declaration and previous commitments in putting in place concrete conditions of ownership, whereby citizens, civil society, and their elected officials play a central role in planning, designing and implementing development.

World Vision recommends that:

- Civil Society Organisations (CSO) leverage their position of influence and their position of trust with communities to a) play a vital role of speaking for the most vulnerable, b) act as watchdogs over the aid system, and c) increase democratic accountability between citizens, communities and their governments.
- Participation must ensure the inclusion of all sectors of society and all citizens, especially the most vulnerable who are most in need of aid such as children and youth, women, orphans, persons who are disabled, displaced and trafficked, and persons with HIV and AIDS.
- Aid should focus on the capacity of civil society actors and local institutions, not just national government institutions, to effectively assess

need, design programmes and work with local communities to implement programmes.

- The Accra Agenda for Action includes a mechanism to measure “ownership”.

2. Mutual accountability requires transparency and independent monitoring

Donor and partner governments must acknowledge the unequal power relationships between citizens and governments; the importance of accountability from all actors, including donors and governments; and the importance of meaningful democratic participation in creating true accountability. The emphasis of the principle of mutual accountability should be shifted towards increasing accountability of governments to citizens.

World Vision recommends that:

- Full transparency must be required by all donors and partners. There cannot be accountability and ownership without full transparency. Country-by-country aid agreements must be published and accessible to parliaments, CSOs

and citizens. There should be full transparency of all agreements, timetables, conditions and monitoring.

- Results must be measured in light of the impact on the most vulnerable and those most in need of aid, using disaggregated data (for gender, age, and HIV and AIDS). Donors, as well as governments and other institutional partners, will be evaluated and held accountable with the use of these results and considering the conditions of the most vulnerable.
- The Accra Agenda for Action should create a system of independent monitoring and evaluation of the Paris Declaration at international, national and local levels that guarantees the participation of parliaments and civil society representatives.

3. Aid effectiveness requires predictability of aid

A critical mass of world leaders have made promises and set targets for quantities of development aid. In order for this aid to enable effective planning and use, and to achieve impact, the delivery of this aid must be consistent with promises and also must be predictable.

World Vision recommends that:

- All donors publish detailed timetables with annual targets showing their stepwise increase in aid to meet their promised 2015 levels, with a minimum of 0.7 % of GNI as a target. Donors should be held accountable with

rigorous scrutiny on overall aid commitments, actual disbursements, and delivery of aid in real monetary and commodity-value transfers.

- Aid should be predictable, in country-by-country multi-annual agreements, in order to enable partner country planning and the most effective and efficient use of funds.

4. Fragile states

It is essential for donors, particularly in situations of fragility, to be conflict-sensitive. This means working “to do no harm and to guard against unwittingly aggravating existing or potential conflicts” as well as effectively addressing the underlying causes of poverty and conflict.

World Vision recommends that:

- Citizens are key partners, especially in situations of fragility.
- Civil Society Organisations must be included in situations of fragility, in order to have useful multi-sectoral and holistic responses and to move beyond the politicisation of aid.
- A conflict-sensitive analysis must always occur and influence aid decisions. This analysis must take into account the conditions of the most vulnerable and also the causes of poverty, fragility, vulnerability, barriers to change, and risks of conflict.
- Situations of fragility require long-term perspectives with multi-year funding mechanisms.

Accra: a defining moment

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