



AKTSAM/ Sida Partnership Forum, November 2009

Civil Society Reflections on Development Effectiveness



Antonio Tujan, Chair of Reality of Aid, reflected on development effectiveness and the issues that CSOs wish to raise in the Seoul High Level Forum in 2011. Ruben Fernandez, ALOP, Tomas Brundin, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Bodo Ellmers, EU-RODAD, participated in one of the panel discussions.

Reality of Aid is a southern-led network that aims to contribute to more effective international aid. This global meeting was the first of several Reality of Aid occasions to address themes that will assist civil society in carrying out its dialogue with donors on proposals for the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Seoul 2011.

Ambassador Jan Cedergren, Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, opened the seminar with a look back at the last High Level Forum held in Accra 2008:

“In Accra the CSOs had an important role to play. This was the first time they contributed to the results and it was a success, in my opinion. But let’s face it: Accra was only the beginning; we still have a lot of work ahead of us.”

According to Jan Cedergren aid effectiveness is moving more towards the concept of development effectiveness. Sweden adopted in 2003 a comprehensive policy directing their global development

initiatives. The policy promotes coherence whereby all policy areas must work towards a common goal, aiming at fair and sustainable global development.

He challenged all of us to talk more about development effectiveness:

“Human rights, gender, decent labour et cetera are not only add-ons but must be given a more prominent role since they have a fundamental effect on development.”

One problem is the lack of real ownership by developing countries and Jan Cedergren called for greater accountability to development partners from the donor side. He also stressed the importance of promoting increased South–South cooperation:

“We’re sending Anglo Saxons to solve problems they know nothing about. It would of course be better to use people from the South with cultural awareness and local knowledge.”

Ambassador Cedergren gave an

example from his current experience with the Adaptation Fund, established under the Kyoto Protocol. For the first time the Board for this Fund is dominated by members from the South, which he said is not popular among representatives from the World Bank and other institutions.

“But if we don’t give the actors from the South a chance to show responsibility there will be no development at all.”

Ambassador Cedergren also urged CSOs to look at their own effectiveness as development actors, which he sees as a challenge, and hoped that civil society would be as strong in their participation and contributions to Seoul as they were in Accra.

Antonio Tujan, Chair of Reality of Aid, continued to reflect on development effectiveness and the issues that CSOs wish to raise in the Seoul HLF in 2011. He introduced Reality of Aid as an organisation that brings together more



than 40 civil society networks in the field of international cooperation in 22 donor countries and in membership across the South. The Network has established a dialogue on aid issues with the OECD/DAC in Paris and with the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness.

Like Ambassador Cedergren, Mr. Tujan stressed that aid effectiveness has to move more towards the concept of development effectiveness. For CSOs, aid effectiveness is mainly oriented to technical commitments related to achieving results in aid management and he urged us not to simply look at results:

“The CSOs are looking to take a more holistic approach framed by development effectiveness, which embraces principles such as human rights, social justice, gender equality and sustainability. This is what leads to real empowerment and poverty eradication.”

Mr. Tujan pointed out that donor countries often claim that the development goals are non-political, but the CSOs suggest otherwise. “All development goals are

political, that’s why we need a new aid architecture.”

He highlighted three issues in particular for the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness 2011:

- Development effectiveness principles must be applied in development cooperation: empowerment, justice, sustainability, independence, solidarity, accountability and responsibility.
- There is a need for reshaping aid partnerships, to ensure that development cooperation respects an autonomous economic development, equal relationships and solidarity.
- There is a need for a new international aid architecture to promote equitable development cooperation.

“A plenary meeting of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness will be held in early December in Paris where the Better Aid Coordinating Group will present some key issues relating to this agenda. The draft will circulate for CSOs to debate in various workshops prior to the High Level Forum”, Antonio Tujan

concluded.

Tomas Brundin, Deputy Director at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, stressed that development cooperation is about empowering people, which is a real challenge to put into practice:

“We are struggling to make development cooperation more effective, but we are humble enough to admit that we have a lot to improve and we need your help.”

On the other hand, Tomas Brundin thought it possible to work with aid effectiveness without forgetting about issues like human rights and democracy.

“We don’t want aid effectiveness to be just a technical issue either, but it doesn’t stop us talking about concrete issues like policy coherence, one does not replace the other.”

He wondered if it would not be better for CSOs to deepen the discussion they began earlier and quoted the proverb: ‘grasp all, lose all’.

“Now you are inside as members of the Working Party itself, which is a huge responsibility. Show us what your agenda is, and show us some action.”



To the right: Keynote speaker, Ambassador Jan Cedergrén, opened the seminar with a look back at the last High Level Forum held in Accra 2008.

The international architecture governing aid reform really needs significant reform itself, stressed Bodo Ellmers, Policy and Advocacy Officer at European Network on Debt and Development. Development cooperation is increasingly fragmented and the transaction and overhead costs of aid are tremendous. The consequence is that only a small share of official development assistance (ODA) trickles down to the poor.

If development effectiveness means that aid should help poor and marginalized people to claim their rights, then the United Nations is probably the right organisation to take the lead. The UN is a driving force for the human rights based approach in development cooperation and thus seems to be best

placed to ensure coherence between aid interventions and the achievement of human rights.

Bodo Ellmers concluded:

“We need a stronger role for a more effective UN in shaping the debate on development effectiveness, and we also need a coherent development architecture with transparent global financial architecture, tax justice and new debt work-out mechanisms.”

Another challenging issue was raised at the seminar: How will the CSOs, as development actors in their own right, improve their own effectiveness? Antonio Tujan pointed out that there will be approximately 50 two-day country level consultations over the next year, organized by the Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness

that will allow the greatest possible number of CSOs to define their development effectiveness.

The results of the Open Forum consultations and process will lead to an agreed set of principles for CSO development effectiveness, a global framework for improving CSO accountability mechanisms and agreed minimum standards by donors, governments and CSOs for enabling CSOs to be true to these principles.