

**AFRICAN CAPACITY BUILDING FOUNDATION – 7TH ANNUAL MEETING OF TECHNICAL
ADVISORY PANELS & NETWORKS (TAP-NETS)
Yaoundé, 21-22 November, 2011**

Session theme: OBSERVING THE PAST AND INTERPRETING THE PRESENT

**Round Table Plenary: Bi-lateral Aid, Governance and Africa's Development Agenda –
Implications for Busan 2011**

Topic: Role of CSOs in Aid Delivery – Talking Points by Warren Nyamugasira

Busan is a critical moment and space because, *inter alia*:

- It has been very highly billed as the meeting that could make or break the aid effectiveness agenda. But it comes at a time when prophecies and apocalypses have been fulfilled. The world has been through a global financial crisis, the Euro-zone is still in crisis; USA is in a jobless recession and China is not growing as fast as projected; a new category of 'donor orphans' has emerged. Busan provides the opportunity to contemplate a world beyond aid as we know it today. That world is here already.
- Global economic governance remains a challenge; social unrest abounds with widespread frustration and anger over the continuing lack of transparency and excessive greed (of bankers and other elite); and global imbalances continue to create greater long-term instability. The 'Occupy Wall Street' movement and so-called 'Arab Spring' have brought home the fact that 'ticking time-bomb' so long warned of when people-power is disregarded for so long does go off, eventually; when masses of unemployed youth roam the streets and learn new cultures only from the streets and the social media; when obscene bonuses sit side by side with serious economic difficulties for the many, all is not well. This social unrest brings back to the table the question of whether the dominant development model is still fit for purpose; what the exit strategy is and whether it can be implemented before many states become ungovernable.
- Africa is becoming more assertive regarding what it brings to the table: An indispensable resource that has served humankind with global public goods for many centuries - indisputable human and natural assets including rich complex of mineral and gas deposits and an 'ecological lung' in its rain forests. Africa is doing this from a united front: Under the umbrella of Africa Platform for development Effectiveness, the 17th Africa Union Summit (July 2011) agreed, for the first time, a common African position and consensus on development effectiveness with parliaments, regional economic communities and institutions/organisations, civil society including women and youth groups, business and academia.

CSOs have always been central to the aid debate, especially at critical moments:

- CSOs led the bloody rebellions against Structural Adjustment Policies of the 1980s and early 1990s. They successfully campaigned for debt relief (basing on the 'Jubilee concept') (and some, as was the case in Uganda, received formal acknowledgement from senior government officials indicating how CSOs were in a position to say to the donor community what governments could not) and were central to the Gleneagles commitment by G8 to double aid to Africa by 2010. They have been very keen monitors of aid delivery and impact at the grassroots (e.g. the DATA report details annual performance donor by donor and sector by sector and AM reports what arrives on the

continent and where it is spent. Many other groups e.g. Open Aid that maps geographical locations of where aid has gone, Reality of Aid Africa, do similar work) and were among the first actors to call for a shift from 'aid effectiveness' to 'development effectiveness' and more recently to 'democratic ownership'.

- Aid needs CSOs for legitimacy. They are 'proxies' for citizens when it comes to 'engagement', 'ownership' and 'inclusiveness'. In donors' words, "Civil Society Organisations play a vital role in shaping development policies and new partnerships and in overseeing their implementation. They also provide services in areas that are complementary to or go beyond those provided by states". In CSOs' own words, "CSOs are vibrant and an essential feature in the democratic life of countries..." They collaborate with a diversity of people, (cultures and faiths), with emphasis on the marginalised, women and youth. They engender human rights and social justice and promote environmental sustainability.
- HLF-3 outcome document stated that "we share an interest in ensuring that CSO contributions to development reach their full potential" and in HLF-4 donors are intent on "implementing fully respective commitments to enable CSOs exercise their roles as independent development actors..." (*Draft outcome document*)

What do CSOs plan to deliver at Busan?

Three are 6 areas that have come through the various deliberations by CSOs leading to Busan:

- The unfinished aid effectiveness agenda specifically commitments around use of country systems, elimination of conditionality, promotion of transparency, aid predictability and mutual accountability. CSOs call for full implementation by 2013 – this is improbable
- South-South cooperation, highlighting its potential for transforming Africa and calling for support for it, particularly if it addresses the deficits highlighted above and formalises CSO participation
- Sustainable development in conflict and fragility – call for full implementation of the Monrovia Peace-Building and State-Building objectives within a defined timeframe – highly unlikely
- Capacity development for Africa's development effectiveness and CSOs' enabling environment within a decade. Capacity development in general has been identified as a central tenet: "Capacity development is critical for achieving Africa's renewal based on clear vision, strategic planning, effective and accountable leadership and capable institutions at all levels". It hinges on available human and institutional assets in adding value to the abundant natural resources and building sustainable economies. Greater emphasis needed including effective deployment of available African capacity and learning from the South
- Climate change finance – CSOs call for payment of ecological debt owed to Africa and for moving the Green Growth Fund away from the World Bank blamed for its role in enforcing neoliberal policies that created the problem in the first place.
- Post-Busan aid architecture – a new aid architecture to reduce aid dependency

Based on these issues, CSOs will achieve very modest gains. There is limited appetite for some of the issues like aid predictability as the traditional donors are hit by serious financial crises and increasing or maintaining ODA levels is hard to justify to their publics. A more interesting agenda would be in saying what official government delegations can't say, including the following:

- Aid as a return on investment - investing in Africa, including through aid, is a big part of the solution to the global economic crisis. The continent of Africa has huge potential to make a greater contribution to the global economy and 'aid' can act as a matchstick to spark a large fire that catalyses real development. Africa still provides raw materials for the development of the West and emerging markets, especially China. Illicit outflows exceed aid inflows. Furthermore, Africa has a vibrant and growing middle class that is similar in size to the middle classes of India and China and according to *The Economist*, this middle class of Africa is, "sucking in consumer goods" from outside Africa (*The Economist*, 25 October 2011). Aid is really not charity and this needs to be properly explained to donor country publics till they get it.
- Collective position by governments, domestic private sector, parliament and CSOs to try harder to find ways to exploit African resources for Africa's development and exchange value for value (including refusal to export unprocessed primary goods). Africa's middle class should be encouraged to also consume African. Efforts by a number of African countries to brand their domestically produced consumer goods are a good and huge step in that direction.
- Furthermore, 'Development Effectiveness', when unpacked, must include an element of migration, in the African mind and attitudes, away from a resource intensive and high maintenance development ideal (which we all aspire to) copied from the West whole stock and barrel, to one that is more appropriately attuned to our context and is affordable by all, in line with social and economic justice and rights-based approach to development that we all claim to espouse. Truth be told: We have reached a stage where we all must accept that Mother Earth can not support 7 billion human beings (and still counting) living, as one University of Cape Town professor put it, like 'Americans'. There is enough for need but not for greed or over-indulgence. It is time to review the refine the hugely constructive role of technological leaps and bounds as well as reviewing the destructive force it has been, but which those who have enjoyed more than their fair share of benefits have been content to disregard: The infrastructure we build, the consumer goods we import, the food we waste. Our planners must go back to the drawing board or hand over the 'stick' to a new set.
- Capacity building and deployment to include knowledge and wisdom from local communities
- Continental agreement to do whatever it takes to stop violent conflicts because such conflicts are haemorrhaging the continent, keeping away some of the good money for investment, often clawing back development gains and impacting those not directly involved in the conflict. (e.g. violent conflict in Sudan and DRC impact on some 15 African countries)

Dilemmas facing CSOs

- CSOs as independent development actors – independent of whom? As much as aid needs CSOs, CSOs need and are quite dependent on it. What does an overall shrinking aid package spell for the bulk of formalised CSOs? This dilemma is evident in the Entebbe Pan African CSO statement on aid and development effectiveness (7-8 November 2011) where the importance of South-South Cooperation as a tool for Africa's transformative development is highlighted, along with the need to address "the inherent economic, political and social tension arising from such cooperation" singling out deficits in human rights, environmental sustainability and democratic ownership

among others and then calling on the same governments to financially support CSO engagement.

- Another dilemma facing CSOs is what we can call ‘the Ethiopian dilemma’ where CSO activities are severely curtailed if a threshold of their funding comes from external sources and yet the development indicators are consistently high, calling into question the actual value of CSOs.
- CSOs and capacity challenges: CSOs own capacities are often weak and there is no systematic way to build it. CSOs have lost key actors to government, parliament and donor and international agencies. Existing agencies that build capacity on the continent, including ACBF, don’t have mechanisms to suit the nature and modus operandi of CSOs.
- In a number of African countries, there is limited enabling environment and CSO space is shrinking. Can the shared commitments that AU member countries, other actors and CSOs have shown when preparing for Busan be translated into joint actions at country level beyond Busan? What do both CSOs and governments need to do differently in order to build on that collaboration/partnership? Is there enough of a shared agenda among the twain?