

## LATIN AMERICAN CSOs AT THE FOURTH HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON AID EFFECTIVENESS<sup>1</sup>

### OUR CORE TARGETS AS A REGION

The civil society organizations (CSOs) of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have discussed how to improve International Development Cooperation (IDC) effectiveness in relation to the agenda of the 4th High Level Forum (HLF-4) that will be held in South Korea. We have consolidated a series of regional political targets that are complemented and cemented with those of every country. As such, our 5 core proposals state that:

- IDC is and must be regarded as a **global public good**, devoted to contribute to funding development, to realize every individual's human rights, and to overcome inequalities and any other forms of exclusion.
- CSOs are both social actors with regards to development, and political actors in the processes that deepen and strengthen democracy in our societies. When appropriate conditions in the environment are present, our actions contribute by enriching the public agenda, as well as empowering social groups claiming for their rights and also as watchdogs of public goods including IDCs as well as sustainability of ongoing processes.
- Not only must cooperation **with middle income countries** continue, but also change by recognizing that poverty, inequality and exclusion —wherever they exist— are problems that concern all mankind as a whole and hence, the IDCs system.
- **Strengthening CSOs** must be a core target for any development process and IDC itself. Primarily, any successful agreement on development-oriented projects or actions for a specific territory must include the reinforcement of the organizational structures of such territory.
- Attention to **gender equality and women's rights**, including the enhancement of their organizations and networks, has generated general consensus among regional CSOs, and it represents a major priority. This is a message not only to public actors, but also to IDC and CSOs themselves.

### OUR MESSAGES TO OTHER STAKEHOLDERS OF COOPERATION

Based on our discussions, LAC CSOs convene the following stakeholders to consider and address these recommendations (full version on [www.alop.org.mx](http://www.alop.org.mx))

#### TO OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

1. **Observe the commitments** made in the past and particularly, regard IDC as a reflection of solidarity among nations rather than mere geopolitical or commercial interests of the donor countries. Also, comply with the provisions of the Paris Declaration (PD) and the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA).
2. Design novel mechanisms for **cooperation with middle income countries**. Its particular inequality has made traditional cooperation little advisable. However, IDC must not disappear, but be reoriented.

<sup>1</sup> From July to September 2011, discussion workshops were held in 15 countries of LAC where both CSOs and other actors addressed problematical issues regarding International Development Cooperation. A thousand organizations participated as well. Such contributions were gathered in a workshop held in Mexico City in September 2011 with a view to having them available for HLF-4.

3. Maintain both in writing as well as in practice, action taken in Accra where CSOs are recognized as actors that are fully entitled in development processes, and therefore guarantee a place for CSOs participation and establish effective political communication.
4. Transform the perspective of **"security"** as the core value in the various cooperation agendas. Inequality and exclusion are also forms of violence.
5. Include as a priority and effectiveness criterion the **reinforcement of local institutionality and CSOs** located in territories where programs or projects are being executed with support of international cooperation.
6. Bear in mind that **cooperation is directed towards states and societies rather than governments**. Cooperating only with countries with common ideological and political affinities, and letting aside civil societies are inappropriate practices that move away from seeing cooperation as a public good.
7. Assume **more strict transparency criteria and standards** in order to facilitate social audit processes and project assessment since society looks forward to guaranteeing that resources are invested as properly and efficiently as possible.
8. To enhance both local and national levels by **using national systems** and/or strengthening the current ones where financial, technical, knowledge and human talent flows occur when carrying out development projects. Unilateral conditions must be eliminated. In contrast, advancing towards mutual recognition of international frameworks concerning human rights, decent work, "action without harm", women's rights, children's rights and protection of minorities, is key to developing cooperation projects.
9. In LAC it is vital to **integrate both local and regional governments<sup>2</sup>** as legitimate interlocutors of international cooperation, either for decentralized cooperation agreements and triangular South-South cooperation.
10. **Guarantee sustainability** in the technical, financial, environmental and social arenas for development projects. Every actor must demand and question itself and other actors on how they are addressing this matter. As well, such sustainability must constitute a principle of effectiveness.

11. **Be completely acquainted with the differences between private investment and cooperation**. Profitable investment is regulated in every country; however, it must also be included and complied with in frameworks claiming for human rights, decent work, and environmental sustainability.

#### TO NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS OF LAC

12. In LAC, cooperation represents valuable resources that are complement and support for domestic resources. Our region, the most unequal in the world, must advance towards increasingly **progressive taxation programs**, providing genuine development processes with a more suitable redistribution of wealth and income as well as proper investment of public resources.
13. Create **permanent institutional spaces for tripartite discussions** (States, international cooperation and CSOs) about

<sup>2</sup> "Regional" issues refer to government offices located in municipalities (local) and national governments, such as; departments, states, provinces, etc.

IDC issues, in order to enrich the agenda and agree development priorities.

14. Recognize the **Istanbul Principles** as a reference framework for cooperation and relationships with CSOs and adhere to the commitments subscribed in the AAA including the creation of enabling environment for CSO development. The entire region needs that explicitly and publicly the highest levels of government recognize that organizations of the society are legitimate spaces that look after the public interest.
15. Use **public funding mechanisms** for deepening work relations with CSOs, maximizing the faculties of these organizations for the production of public goods through the services and processes they promote.
16. Develop **long term public policies** for IDC at the state level and also promote them all over local and subnational territories, allowing commitment and participation of all stakeholders involved in development. IDC using a short-term approach is highly disruptive.
17. Create **public information systems** on programs and projects currently designed and executed in different countries in order to promote transparency with regards to allocation and use of public resources aimed at carrying out development projects.
18. Manage **South-South cooperation** in terms of transparency, mutual accountability and citizen engagement so as to avoid repeated failures that traditional cooperation has been recognizing and correcting.
19. Create a **new institutionality in Latin America and worldwide**, acknowledging new realities and generating governance and control mechanisms for international financial flows.

#### TO LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

20. **Local and regional governments must assume themselves as interlocutors** of international cooperation for development projects.
21. **Incorporate CSOs** (local, community, territorial) in the design, operation and evaluation of geographically specific projects taking account citizenship needs.
22. Act under criteria of maximum **transparency** and accountability that guarantee citizen engagement using democratic mechanisms of public information and follow-up.
23. **Give continuity to development projects** that have delivered good results. Territorial CSOs usually have cumulative knowledge and memory in terms of what has worked well.
24. Build **cooperation projects in border areas** with the purpose of gathering mutual energies and synergies to solve problems regarding poverty and exclusion, and to advance towards a closer regional integration according to peoples' needs.

#### TO PRIVATE COOPERATION

25. Consider **strengthening Southern CSOs** as a strategic development objective. Latin American CSOs encourage Northern CSO to raise issues such as their withdrawal from middle income countries, their transformation as competitors with CSOs of the South for local public resources, the need to reduce transaction costs and, in general, to adopt institutional policies to cement CSOs all over the world.
26. From LAC we call for "responsive cooperation" to **provide our agenda with a new "political approach"** without reducing our role as mere project operators, contractors or subcontractors. It is urgent to resume central discussions such as the international system necessary to advance towards a more fair and sustainable society.
27. The new modes of cooperation such as South-South cooperation, triangular cooperation and decentralized cooperation require

systematizing practices and **build knowledge based on experience**. Programs with a global reach for such purposes are urgent at present

#### TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

28. **International frameworks**, especially those that recognize vital issues such as human rights, gender equality, decent work or sustainability also serve as ethical guidelines for the private activities involved in cooperation.
29. Donations coming from this sector are also public goods **and must assume responsibilities regarding transparency and accountability**, as in the case of other actors of cooperation.
30. **A strengthened civil society** is a public good that is beneficial to all.

#### TO SCHOLARS

31. Understand that you are **part of the civil society** and is expected to have an independent say and therefore contribute to discussing cooperation and development, in alliance with the rest of the CSOs in a wide variety of matters.

#### TO LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER BRANCHES OF NATIONAL STATES

32. Deliberation on development cooperation policies (either as donors and recipients) are attributes that belong more to the state level rather than the government level, and must be publicly addressed. **Legislative discussions** would enrich public policies and civil society participation would make them even more valuable, as is the case of democratic systems.

#### TO OTHER STAKEHOLDERS: UN

33. Different UN agencies must understand that it is not desirable to compete with local CSOs to obtain public resources and that **strengthening each country's civil societies is also their responsibility**.

#### TO CSOs

34. Develop and implement fully the **Istanbul Principles**.
35. Recognize that **there are different levels of institutional strengthening** and also difficulties to observe each principle, and generate appropriate strategies accordingly. Access to international cooperation requires mutual support.
36. Understand that **CSOs are not free of patriarchal practices** within them. As well, the women's rights agenda must be a core issue to strengthen such organizations, and must be accompanied by respect and recognition of women's and feminist organizations and their agendas.
37. Not all the sources of funding are legitimate, especially if they do not respect agreements on human rights. It is better to say NO to those funding entities rather than facing unethical consequences due to the said entities' nature or origin.

The group of CSOs that has been involved in these discussions has had an intense and long way to go. It has been an absolutely valuable experience to collectively and progressively generate not only knowledge but also agreements. Our next step is to use all this work as training and mobilization guidelines in order to advance towards our core objective: to fulfill the conditions for a "good life" for everyone in our world.

Busan, South Korea, November 2011