



## Poor overlooked in making aid work

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Levels of poverty in the developing world will remain unacceptably high if aid reform sidesteps the central question of its impact on the poor, according to African Churches and international faith-based organisations before a critical aid meeting.

The Accra High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, 2-4 September, brings together over 800 representatives of multilateral and bilateral donors, developing country governments, and civil society organisations. The meeting will review the Paris Declaration, a roadmap to improving aid effectiveness signed by one hundred ministers, heads of agencies and other senior officials in March 2005.

In a joint statements Caritas Internationalis, the Symposium of Episcopal Conference in Africa and Madagascar (SECAM), the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), the International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity (CIDSE), and ACT Development fear that the interests of the poor have not been reflected in draft documents produced for Accra.

The General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala will be at Accra. He said, "About 29,000 children under the age of five die every day, 21 each minute, mainly from preventable causes. Six million of the almost 11 million children who die each year could be saved by low-tech cost-effective measures. Accra has the potential to improve how we end this scandal of poverty but only if it helps poor people become the authors of their development."

In Ghana, Caritas and CIDSE will be officially represented by René Grotenhuis, president of CIDSE and General Director of Cordaid (Caritas Netherlands). Mr Grotenhuis said, "Aid is judged by quantity and not by what it delivers on development. The Paris Declaration ignores sustainable development. Leaving the poor out of aid effectiveness is like leaving people out of architecture. Accra must make the impact on the poor key in the way we look at development spending."

Gweneth Berge representing ACT Development in Accra said, "Half of all aid comes in the form of expensive consultants responding to directives from donors. Local communities must have a greater role in making decisions that ultimately affect their lives the most. That means an end to the imposed conditions of international donors that continue to undermine democratic ownership of aid."

"Rich country governments are behaving shamefully in still tying aid to the promotion of their own economic interests. Requiring food aid be supplied by Northern producers in the current food crisis is immoral. Our way has been lost if aid benefits the rich when the poor go hungry in greater numbers."

Bishop Francisco Silota, who represents SECAM in Accra, said, "Churches and faith-based organisations are major providers of health, education and other social services in developing countries. They must be recognised as partners in delivering development aid."

"We also have to contribute to a change in the mindset of African citizens. The dependency syndrome has to be overcome. People have to understand that they have been given talents and charismas in order to define their own destiny. But they need to make use of them."



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During the Civil Society Organisations parallel forum, Catholic and Protestant African Churches along with international faith-based networks will organize an ecumenical worship service on 31 August, and a workshop on accountability in the use of resources for development with examples from Zambia, Congo-Brazzaville, and Uganda on 1 September.

### Notes to editors

Main media contact: Sean Hawkey  
Telephone: 00 44 777 561 6813.  
Email: [sha@wcc-coe.org](mailto:sha@wcc-coe.org)

Available for interview:

For Rev. Dr. Mvume Dandala call Sean Hawkey.  
Key areas of expertise: Overview of aid effectiveness and the role of Churches and Faith Based Organisations.

For Most. Rev. Don Francisco Silota, Bishop of Chimoio, Mozambique  
Please call Volker Monikes, Telephone: 00 233 24 6232123  
Email: [volker\\_monikes@yahoo.com](mailto:volker_monikes@yahoo.com)  
Key areas of expertise: Role of the Churches in Development, Advocacy work of the Church, Relationship Church . Politics - CSO

For René Grotenhuis, please call Blandine Bouniol.  
Telephone 00 32 478 585 408  
Email: [bbouniol@caritas-europa.org](mailto:bbouniol@caritas-europa.org)  
Key areas of expertise: Overview of aid effectiveness and the role of Churches and Faith Based Organisations.

Vincent Edoku, Programme Coordinator, Research and Advocacy Unit, Caritas Uganda.  
Telephone: 00 256 (0)772461113  
Emails: [caritas@caritasuganda.org.ug](mailto:caritas@caritasuganda.org.ug) and [vedoku@caritasuganda.org.ug](mailto:vedoku@caritasuganda.org.ug)

Brice Mackosso, Justice et Paix Brazzaville Congo  
Telephone 00 242 5579081  
Email: [bricemackosso@yahoo.fr](mailto:bricemackosso@yahoo.fr)

Humphrey Mulemba, JCTR Lusaka, Zambia  
Telephone: 00 260 1 290410  
Email: [humphrey.mulemba@gmail.com](mailto:humphrey.mulemba@gmail.com)

Key areas of expertise: Civil society activists/advocates especially in the areas of external debt management and citizen action.

Gweneth Berge of ACT Development/Norwegian Church Aid  
Telephone 00 47 93 24 24 69  
Email: [Gwen.Berge@nca.no](mailto:Gwen.Berge@nca.no)  
Key areas of expertise: CSO Effectiveness and Ownership most closely (have also applied to participate in the Sectors Round Table at the High Level Forum).