



PIANGO

Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
Association des ONGs des Iles de Pacifique

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For Immediate Release

“GIVE DEVELOPMENT A HUMAN FACE”, PACIFIC CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS SAY

SUVA, FIJI ISLANDS (11 July, 2011) —. A Pacific regional meeting on aid and development effectiveness has reinforced an international call for people to be brought to the centre of development and that development co-operation and aid effectiveness processes are people centered, respect human rights and achieve social justice as cornerstones of aid and development effectiveness.

In recent years, the Pacific region has experienced structural adjustments, political instability and policy changes in its development assistance landscape. Threats to human rights, peace and security being experienced in some Pacific countries have impacted on the enabling environment for civil society and affected the way in which civil society works.

This was revealed at the Pacific Islands Consultation on Aid and Development Effectiveness which ended in Nadi at the weekend. The meeting was attended by civil society leaders from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Organised by the Pacific Islands Association of Non Government Organisations (PIANGO) in partnership with the Reality of Aid Asia Pacific, based in the Philippines, the meeting acknowledged the critical importance of donor support for CSOs. It congratulated the Australian Government on accepting the recommendations of an independent aid review to increase development assistance to the Pacific and its emphasis on support to Non Government organisations. Participants also congratulated the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) on its positive decision to reinstate the post of Non State Actor Officer saying they looked forward to working closely with PIFS in supporting Pacific governments to engage more effectively with civil society.

Civil society leaders called on Pacific Island governments to revisit their commitments to Pacific people and CSOs at regional and international levels within the context of the *Pacific Plan* and *Cairns Compact*.

“As umbrella CSO bodies, we have an important role to play and collaborate with other development actors to influence regional and global agendas and give voice to the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised that we work with. We need to bring together youth, women, men and community voices to advocate on very real and pressing issues affecting our region such as climate change, food security, human rights, gender, disabilities and trade,” said Ms Emele Duituturaga, PIANGO’s interim Executive Director.

“Commitments made on donor harmonisation in international agreements such as the *Paris Declaration* need to be extended to dialogue, resourcing and collaboration with CSOs. Civil Society needs to have partnership agreements with governments and development partners to ensure that development takes on a human face,” she said.

Ms Ava Danlog of Reality of Aid, said that in some instances aid effectiveness processes have been very disempowering for citizens.

“There is a need for CSOs to focus on concrete, tangible outputs as there is usually a tendency to focus on donor ‘hot topics’. Aid should be about partnerships. Development partners must foster basic principles of partnership and acknowledge the contribution of recipients. In addition, trade and other economic activities need to also focus on human development,” Ms Danlog said.

An emerging issue in the Pacific region and one that is also a part of the larger development agenda, concerns the rights of people living with disability in the region who continue to be marginalised and excluded from development processes.

Mr Katabwena Tawaka, of the Pacific Disability Forum told the meeting that present statistics (June, 2011) illustrate that over 800,000 people are living with disabilities in the Pacific.

“There is a need for governments and development partners to recognise disability as a development issue. Disability may increase the risk of poverty. In the Pacific, people with disabilities rely on their families for support, assistance and medical care and this must be acknowledged by stakeholders. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also do not make specific reference to people with disabilities,” he said.

The Pacific meeting was organised by PIANGO and was part of Reality of Aid Asia Pacific regional consultations in the lead-up to the HLF4 in Busan, South Korea, in November, 2011. HLF4 will assess whether or not key government commitments on aid effectiveness have been achieved since the last high-level meeting in Accra in 2008. The Busan meeting is a key opportunity for governments to go beyond promises and commit to more effective, sustainable development assistance in terms of its real impact on the lives of all people. (ENDS)

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