Stronger CSO voices, country ownership stressed in PCFS mini-debate on governance in agriculture

Last November 30, the People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty in partnership with the Global Donor

Platform for Rural Development (GDPRD) and BetterAid Coalition held a mini-debate on governance in agriculture that stressed the need for country level ownership and greater CSO participation using a multi-stakeholder approach.

Part of the Knowledge and Innovation Space events during the High Level Forum IV on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea, the mini-debate was culled from an e-poster by the organizers entitled "Development Effectiveness in Agriculture: Inclusive Participation in Governance."

The panelists included Steve Wiggins of the Overseas Development Institute; Dr. Azra Talat Sayeed, PCFS Co-Chair and Roots for Equity-Pakistan; and Audax Rukonge of the Agriculture Non-State Actors Forum-Tanzania, a member organization of the BetterAid Coalition.

Wiggins, an agricultural economist, shared the findings of an evidence paper commissioned by GDPRD which includes 16 country case studies that showed that aid commitments in Paris and Accra are observed more in letter than in spirit. He stressed the need for country leadership and the need to create a multistakeholder coalition with the right people, principally small farmer holders.

PCFS Co-Chair Dr. Sayeed for her part said that agriculture and rural development (ARD) policies at present are not focused on people's needs. She said that the formulation, implementation and monitoring of said policies must involve grassroots participation . Dr. Sayeed also pointed to the need to do away with tied aid and other conditionalities that have gone against the interest of small-scale food producers.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rukonge shared that in Tanzania, almost 80% of the budget for agriculture comes from donors and so the question of whose priorities in ARD is reflected becomes very important. He emphasized that aid should promote a positive impact on the people at the local level and that priorities must be clear.

The short inputs were followed by a lively audience that raised shared points on country ownership and on ARD polices that involve the rural peoples themselves. A member of the Finnish parliament, Hon. Katri Komi, stated that government support for rural people is important to have a food secure country. The discussion also stressed the need for agriculture to be part of the main agenda of the aid discourse.#