

# AidWatch report optimistic

The annual AidWatch report details EU member states performance on aid quality and quantity in the past year. **Gideon Rabinowitz**, UK Aid Network, outlines the findings from latest report and the opportunities for change in 2010.



• Key summits and meetings in 2010 must deliver for aid, development and the MDGs © iStock Photo

Looking back at the EU's performance on aid there is much to be concerned about, yet EU AidWatchers remain upbeat that the September 2010 MDG Review Summit provides an important opportunity to change this picture.

## AidWatch report 2010 highlights challenges on EU aid

It is commonly acknowledged that 2009 was not a great year for the EU's aid effort. In fact, EU aid actually fell last year at a time when developing countries most needed support as they faced the devastating impacts of the financial crisis. There has been very limited progress on reforms to make EU aid more effective, and important reform commitments that should be met by 2010 are way off-track. There was also an attempt by EU member states to start counting non-development focussed resource flows from their countries as aid, which would have reduced support from the EU for development even further.

## Significant opportunities for change in 2010

Despite these concerns, which are explored in some detail in the 2010 AidWatch report, *Penalty Against Poverty – More and Better EU aid can score Millennium Development*

*Goals*, it remains upbeat and focussed on the opportunities to change this picture during 2010.

In September 2010, the international community will meet in New York to review progress on the MDGs and agree coordinated actions to achieve these targets by 2015. EU member states are currently discussing how they will feed into this process and, as the AidWatch report makes clear, they can still play a vital role in the final push to achieve the MDGs by committing at the EU Foreign Affairs Council and the EU Leaders Summit in June to deliver on their aid quantity and effectiveness commitments. The report argues that anything short of this will put into question the willingness of the EU to act as a genuine development partner to the world's poorest countries.

## AidWatch network increasingly active on EU aid

A cause for optimism is the growing capacity and engagement of the AidWatch network – a group within CONCORD, the Confederation of EU development NGOs. The AidWatch network comprises of the national platforms of development NGOs working together in each of the 27 EU member states – the UK platform is coordinated jointly by Bond and the UK Aid Network. The AidWatch report is published every year in spring with national platforms contributing analysis on the aid performance of their countries and on trends in EU aid, making it a truly unique piece of analysis and commentary on EU aid.

In its earlier years, AidWatch activities focused mainly on its annual report and the analysis on the aid performance of EU member states. However, this year the network has been much more active in joint EU advocacy. This was most clearly illustrated by its successful efforts in late 2009 to lobby against proposals to start counting non-development focussed resource flows from EU countries as aid and ongoing efforts to lobby the European Commission and EU member states on their position for the MDG Review Summit.

## AidWatch demands greater political will on EU aid

As the 2010 AidWatch report makes clear, the most critical factor that will determine the outcome of the EU's policy discussions on aid and the MDG Review Summit is "political will". We know from the enormous bank bailouts in 2008 that political will can mobilise huge resource flows when required.

In order to generate political will across the EU to deliver more and better aid, many AidWatch national platforms are organising country launches of the report, which will be used to engage their policy-makers on the challenges around EU aid and how they will be responding.

## AidWatch in the UK

UK Aid Network and Bond are organising a UK launch of the AidWatch report on 10 June, providing an opportunity for UK NGOs and their supporters to quiz the new Secretary of State for International Development on the UK's role in ensuring the key moments in 2010 – the EU Foreign Affairs Council, the EU Leaders Summit, the G8 and G20 and the MDG Review Summit – deliver for aid, development and the MDGs.

Bond and UK Aid Network members are invited to attend this event – more information is on the UK Aid Network website: [www.ukan.org.uk](http://www.ukan.org.uk)



Written by Gideon Rabinowitz, Coordinator of the UK Aid Network and chair of the AidWatch group

UK Aid Network's work on aid: [www.ukan.org.uk](http://www.ukan.org.uk)

More about AidWatch: [bond.org.uk/pages/aid.html](http://bond.org.uk/pages/aid.html)

More about the MDGs process and joint position paper: [bond.org.uk/pages/mdgs.html](http://bond.org.uk/pages/mdgs.html)