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Open Data in Development Aid

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Abstract

This topic report focuses on the question of how improved access to and analysis of data can help increase transparency, accountability and effectiveness in development aid and development co-operation. Development aid and co-operation is a complex issue and subject to multiple in-depth studies and research. This topic report can not provide a comprehensive overview on the state of play in aid in general. Nor can the topic report provide evidence on the political, economical, cultural and overall societal impact of aid. This topic report focuses on the role that data and computing technology can play to improve analysis methods and thus improve our understanding of how aid can be made more effective.

At the beginning of the 21st century it has become apparent that promoting widespread and sustainable development is not only dependent on the amount of aid given, but also **on how** aid is given. There is a broad consensus within the international community that merely raising the quantity of aid is not enough but that the quality has to improve. This is what is called Aid Effectiveness and relies, amongst other factors, on increasing transparency and accountability in aid.

The opening of aid data has the potential to increase transparency and accountability but also create novel ways of combining data. Access to more and more easily comparable data can lead to better impact analyses to understand the effects of aid, to more targeted and efficient interventions, more openness and accountability. New technologies and methods such as geocoding allow for the creative combination of data sets. Furthermore, creative use of open data can increase engaged public participation in development aid debates, be it in donor or recipient countries, thus increasing its legitimacy and, potentially, better targeting.

The World Bank and the OECD have played a pioneer role with their recent release of vast amounts of data¹ that now, for the first time in history, can be analysed and contextualised with other data sets such as statistical data and indicators of trade, economic growth, health, or environmental data. Donor and recipient governments and civil society actors have undertaken additional efforts across the world. Efforts are also under way to bring different approaches together to ensure compatibility. The potentials which lie in the analysis of this data have to date not yet been fully explored. In many ways, we have only seen the tip of the iceberg.

¹ <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog>

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1 Executive Summary

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2 Introduction

Development Aid is complex issue involving a multitude of players such as governments in donor and recipient countries, new players from emerging economies, multinational corporations, philanthropists, international NGOs and civil society.

Aid flows have significantly increased over the past two decades, but at the same time aid has become increasingly fragmented. There has been an explosion in the number of donors, but while the number of projects has multiplied, their average size has decreased. With more players, aid has become less predictable and less transparent. Information, both from donors as well as recipients, is often poor, incomplete and difficult to compare with other data, and beneficiaries' feedback and formal project evaluations are rarely publicly accessible.

There are many different groups who are working towards greater aid transparency and accountability. Among these groups are:

- Governments and state administration in recipient countries, including finance ministries wishing to plan their budgets better and other line ministries who want to plan their activities with the knowledge of what money is available and in coordination with other actors.
- Parliamentarians, civil society organisations and citizens in recipient countries, who want to hold their government and other institutions delivering services accountable.

² <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog>

- Donors themselves, who want better information about each other's activities and more harmonisation to reduce duplication and improve synergies, as well as reducing the growing burden of reporting on an ad hoc basis.
- NGOs and civil society in donor countries, who want to ensure that donors are keeping their promises and using aid well.
- Anti-corruption campaigners, who believe that transparency will increase the amount of aid received by aid beneficiaries, due to less funds being diverted.
- Advocates for freedom of information, who argue that taxpayers have the right to know exactly how their money is being spent.
- Taxpayers, who increasingly want to know how their money is spent and want to check official information.
- Academics wishing to study the effects of aid, and point towards how it can be improved.
- Firms and NGOs that deliver services, who want better information to plan new investments.
- Interested media representatives
- The Open Data Community in recipient and donor societies seeking creative solutions to re-using data

The governance of aid presents itself as complex, bureaucratized and fragmented, with evident diseconomies of numbers and coordination, which have led to an **increase in transaction costs**. This is true for recipient countries, who are forced to neglect their domestic obligations in order to cope with requests and meetings with donors, but also for the donors themselves, and ultimately, for the beneficiaries.

In spite of the fact that the international community has raised the issue of aid effectiveness in the Paris Declaration and the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action, the implementation of this agenda has been difficult. This paper aims to look at some of the ways in which Open Data can be and has been used to increase accountability and transparency in development aid.

New Internet technologies allow NGOs, companies and interested citizens to make compelling applications and services based on official data. By making their data open, public agencies allow the public to re-use official data in new ways - from generating interactive visual representations, to creating better services based on the information, to connecting more datasets together so we can ask and answer more complex questions.

Similarly in the context of international development, sharing aid information more effectively will ultimately enable stakeholders to build up a richer picture - by allowing more information to be aggregated and by allowing innovation in the way this information is represented and queried. This topic report aims to look at some of the ways in which Open Data can be and has been used to increase accountability and transparency in development aid.

3 Historical Context

The international aid system was born out of the ruins of the Second World War, when the United States began to use aid funds to help rebuild Europe. Aid flows soon spread to other continents, especially to the new category of so-called “Third World” or developing countries. During the Cold War, foreign aid was often politically motivated and used to support client states and political allies in the developing world. After the end of the Cold War, alleviation of poverty and the promotion of development increasingly became the declared focus of official aid. Increasingly, the most needy societies were prioritised. It is against this background that the international aid effectiveness debate began taking shape in the late 1990s. Donor governments and aid agencies began to realise that their many different approaches and requirements were imposing huge transition costs, making aid less effective. This is the beginning of the so called aid effectiveness movement.

The aid effectiveness movement picked up steam in 2002 at the International Conference on Financing for Development³ in Monterrey, Mexico, which established the Monterrey Consensus⁴. There, the international community agreed to increase its funding for development but also acknowledged that more money alone was not enough. Donors and recipient countries alike wanted to ensure that aid would be used as effectively as possible. Helping poor countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals⁵, the set of targets agreed by 192 countries in 2000, which aimed to halve world poverty by 2015, became a central focus. A new paradigm of aid as a partnership, rather than a one-way relationship between donor and recipient, was evolving.

4 Effectiveness and Transparency in Aid

There is a range of different groups involved in the aid transparency movement, building on the long process to improve the effectiveness of official development assistance (ODA). This began with the First High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness⁶ in Rome, convened by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Donor agencies and developing countries agreed to better coordinate and streamline their activities at the country level. The main focus was harmonisation of aid.

The next big step forward was the “Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness”⁷ endorsed at the Second High Level Forum on Joint Progress toward Enhanced Aid Effectiveness⁸, in 2005 in Paris. Over one hundred Ministers and senior officials from governments and donor organisations committed themselves to this international agreement. Beyond its principles on effective aid, the Paris Declaration (2005) lays out a practical, action-oriented roadmap to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development. It puts in place a series of

³ <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffdconf>

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monterrey_Consensus

⁵ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml>

⁶ http://www.oecd.org/document/41/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_46868905_1_1_1_1,00.html

⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/15/3/46874580.pdf>

⁸ http://www.oecd.org/document/43/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_34430443_1_1_1_1,00.html

specific implementation measures and establishes a monitoring system to assess progress and ensure that donors and recipients hold each other accountable for their commitments. The Paris Declaration outlines the following five fundamental principles for making aid more effective:

- **Ownership:** Recipient countries set their own strategies for poverty reduction, improving their institutions and tackling corruption.
- **Alignment:** Donor countries align behind these objectives and use local systems.
- **Harmonisation:** Donor countries coordinate their efforts, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication.
- **Results:** Recipient countries and donors shift focus to development results and ensure that these are measured.
- **Mutual accountability:** Donors and partners are accountable for development results.

In 2008 the international aid community convened again at the "Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness"⁹ in Accra, Ghana. The Accra Agenda for Action¹⁰ built on the Paris Declaration by emphasising the importance of country ownership and accountability. The Accra Agenda says that greater transparency and accountability for aid - domestic as well as external - is a firm step towards better aid. In Accra, the signatories made the following commitment:

"We will make aid more transparent. Developing countries will facilitate parliamentary oversight by implementing greater transparency in public financial management, including public disclosure of revenues, budgets, expenditures, procurement and audits. Donors will publicly disclose regular, detailed and timely information on volume, allocation and, when available, results of development expenditure to enable more accurate budget, accounting and audit by developing countries."

One group of donors and developing countries went further than the main declaration by committing themselves to the International Aid Transparency Initiative. This declaration added specific commitments by these donors, outlining how they would implement the transparency goals set out in the Accra Agenda for Action.

But have the promises of Paris and Accra been fulfilled? Donors and multilateral bodies still not always practice the principles agreed upon in the declarations. The OECD has commissioned an evaluation¹¹ of the implementation of the Paris Declaration. The findings indicate some progress has been made improving aid effectiveness in two of three areas: the management and use of aid, and better partnerships, while the third area efficiency of

⁹ http://www.oecd.org/document/20/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_41201108_1_1_1_1,00.html

¹⁰ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/16/41202012.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/48/51/48278402.pdf>

aid delivery remains underdeveloped:

“Overall, the picture on efficiency gains is mixed, but so far disappointing in relation to the original hopes of rapidly reduced burdens in managing aid. There has been generally little reduction to date in those burdens where Declaration-style cooperation has been applied – and even increased loads are noted in a few cases.”

The evaluation concludes in eleven recommendations for policymakers in both partner countries and donor countries and agencies and was a key input to the Busan High Level Forum. Recommendation Nr. 2 on transparency reads as follows:

“Focus on transparency, mutual accountability and shared risk management

The next phase of reforms to strengthen the effectiveness of aid should build on the gains of the Paris Declaration campaign and learn from it by going beyond the global banner of the ‘grand declaration’ to concentrate on the most needed changes:

- deepening adherence to the principles of country ownership, alignment and harmonisation of donor support, and transparency and mutual accountability in tracking and achieving results;
- adding “shared risk management” to this framework of principles; and
- focusing mainly on country-led, coordinated action on the ground.

Transparency has emerged repeatedly throughout the Evaluation as the indispensable foundation for effectiveness and mutual accountability. Adding shared risk management, as a guiding principle will openly acknowledge that there are many uncertainties and risks in development and in partnerships. It will also express a mutual commitment to confront and manage risks and disagreements jointly, in the spirit of a mature partnership. Managing for development results should be further targeted and treated as a set of supporting techniques rather than a separate principle in itself.”

The most recent meeting in this series was the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness¹² held in November 2011 in Busan, South Korea with the aim to take stock of the progress achieved to date and to agree on future steps to be taken. After extended negotiations, 18 so-called “sherpas” - elected to represent a wider group of stakeholders - reached an agreement on the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation¹³.

¹² http://www.oecd.org/document/12/0,3746,en_2649_3236398_46057868_1_1_1_1,00.html

¹³ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/15/49650173.pdf>

5 Open Data for Transparency and Effectiveness in Aid

Critiques of the impact of aid have become more vociferous as the global campaigns to increase aid have gained momentum, particularly since 2000. While some argue that aid is never effective, most aid practitioners agree that while aid has not always worked to its maximum potential, it has achieved significant impacts when it has been properly directed and managed, particularly in areas such as health and basic education.

There is broad agreement that aid is only one factor in the complex process needed for poor countries to develop, and that economic growth and good governance are prerequisites. The ultimate aim of aid effectiveness efforts today is to help developing countries build well-functioning local structures and systems so that they are able to manage their own development and reduce their dependency on outside aid. Transparency is seen as a key pre-condition and can be defined as a basic expression of mutual accountability¹⁴. Mutual accountability can only work if there is a global culture of transparency that demands provision of information through a set of rules and behavioural norms, which are difficult to enforce.

As in other fields of governance, Open Data initiatives open new possibilities for increased public participation, scrutiny, transparency and legitimacy for development aid processes. At the same time, it allows for the tapping into of vast creative potentials e.g. through crowdsourcing which can lead to novel combinations of data sets, all leading to a more effective and transparent use of development aid.

Currently, there is only limited hard evidence on the relevance of open data for aid effectiveness and aid transparency. A study from 2004 by Reinikka and Svensson¹⁵ on Public Expenditure Tracking in Uganda has been influential, as has a similar study from 2009 by Svensson and Björkmann¹⁶, which focused on the impact of community-based monitoring and publication of quality indicators on service delivery in health centers in Uganda.

Directly related to aid effectiveness and specifically to aid allocation is the research by Jörg Faust¹⁷ from 2010 on Donor Transparency and Aid Allocation. As the abstract states:

“In recent years, the transparency of foreign aid has received substantial attention among aid practitioners. This analysis shows the impact of political transparency in donor countries on those countries’ formal promotion of aid transparency and on their concrete aid allocation patterns. Political transparency as measured by standard corruption indices not only impacts on the engagement of bilateral donors in the International Aid Transparency Initiative. Differences in political

¹⁴ Mary Robinson’s definition, in the OECD Survey on Monitoring The Paris Declaration, 2008.

¹⁵ <http://people.su.se/~jsven/Information.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://bit.ly/Svensson-Bjoerkmann>

¹⁷ http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1644704

transparency in donor countries also explain a large part of their varying aid selectivity patterns. Donors with higher levels of political transparency allocate aid more according to recipients' neediness and institutional performance.”

Interesting, though preliminary, findings¹⁸ on the impact of donor transparency on corruption have been published by a team of researchers associated with the AidData project in the USA.

The paper *Unlocking the Potential of Aid Information*¹⁹, published in late 2009 by AidInfo and the Open Knowledge Foundation looks at what publishers of information relevant to international development (NGOs, government agencies, research bodies) can do to make their knowledge assets open. In particular it focuses on legal and technical measures that publishers can take in order to make it easy for others to re-use the material they publish. It also makes a series of recommendations towards the development of a standard for publishing aid information:

Recommendation 1 - Aid information should be legally open. The standard should require that information is published under terms which allow reuse for any purpose (including commercial). In particular material should be published under a license or legal tool that is compliant with the Open Knowledge Definition, such as a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license for content or the Public Domain Dedication and License (PDDL) or CCO for data.

Recommendation 2 - Aid information should be technically open. The standard should require that raw data is made available in bulk with any relevant schema information. Material should be published in a format which is machine readable and for which the specification is publicly available and freely usable. For example, text should be made available in HTML or XML and data should be made available in CSV or XML.

Recommendation 3 - Aid information should be easily findable. The standard should require that aid organisations add their knowledge assets to a registry with some basic metadata describing the information.

6 Current Initiatives

A number of initiatives aiming at increasing transparency and efficiency through the opening of development aid data have been launched. A few central ones will be presented here, starting with the multilateral IATI initiative, followed by initiatives of multilateral donor agencies such as the World Bank and OECD-DAC, individual donor and recipient countries, NGOs as well as some upcoming ideas. Given the multitude of initiatives, this list can not be comprehensive, but does highlight some of the central and some of the most interesting initiatives.

¹⁸ http://data.irtheoryandpractice.org:8080/~oxford/papers/Tierney_2010.pdf

¹⁹ <http://www.unlockingaid.info/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/UnlockingAidInformation.pdf>

International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)

Individual initiatives in aid transparency are however not sufficient. If partner countries and civil society in aid recipient countries are to benefit from more transparency, the information of a range of different donors has to be comparable. This is why a group of donors at the High Level Forum in Accra in 2008 launched the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)²⁰. IATI is a network of donors, partner countries and civil society organisations and aims to take concrete steps to make comprehensive and up-to-date aid information easily accessible, comparable and re-usable for all stakeholders in development cooperation.

The signatories of IATI are five multilateral organisations (World Bank, African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Commission and UNDP), three private donors (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the Hewlett Foundation) and twelve bilateral donors (Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and UK). In contrast to the OECD DAC data platform, the Creditor Reporting System (CRS)²¹, IATI is also open to non-OECD members, to private foundations and to non-governmental donors.

In February 2011 members of IATI agreed upon the first international open aid data standard, the IATI standard²², and created the IATI Registry²³, as a one-stop-shop for donor data. The ambition was for the signatory organisations to provide data in IATI standard before the Busan conference. The first to publish information through the registry were the World Bank, the UK Government's DFID, the Hewlett Foundation and the British NGO AidInfo. Other donors such as Sweden, Australia, UNDP and the European Commission have followed or are planning to provide some IATI data.

Cost – Benefit Analysis for IATI

Estimates for all IATI signatories	US \$
Expected one-time costs:	8 million
Expected annual savings through improved reporting mechanisms:	7 million
Expected annual savings through reduced corruption and increased predictability	1,6 billion

²⁰ <http://www.aidtransparency.net/>

²¹ <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=CRSNEW>

²² <http://iatistandard.org/>

²³ <http://iatiregistry.org/>

A research paper²⁴ by Matthew Collin, Asma Zubairi, Daniel Nielson and Owen Barder published in October 2009 analysed the potential costs and benefits of IATI. The analyses are based on discussions with four donor agencies (the World Bank, DFID (UK), BMZ (Germany) and DGIS (the Netherlands)) and a survey of donor country offices and aid recipient governments.

According to this preliminary analysis the overall costs of implementing IATI in all signatory agencies are at most 8 million US\$. The estimate varies between 3,8 million and 8 million US\$. Costs will relate to a change of IT systems, staff training and change management processes. These costs are a one-time investment.

The benefits gained through improved reporting mechanisms include improved information management systems and reduced costs for duplicate manual reporting of aid information, particularly at the country office level. Donors are expected to save around 7 million US\$ annually through improved reporting mechanisms.

Further benefits could be gained through improved aid effectiveness. According to conservative estimates about 18 billion US\$ of ODA is lost annually through corruption. According to the IATI cost-benefit analysis the potential annual benefit through greater aid transparency, reduced corruption and improved predictability is about 1,6 billion US\$ annually.

IATI and NGOs

IATI is increasingly becoming the 'industry standard' with donors such as the UK DFID demanding that funded organisations report on their activities in line with IATI regulations by July 2012. Three IATI tools have been specifically designed for recipient NGOs to use to comply with these demands.²⁵ These are:

- AidStream.org,²⁶
- OpenAidRegister.org,²⁷ and
- the AVKO.org Really Simply Reporting (RSR) tool.²⁸

There are however differing views on the use of IATI standards. The INGO Accountability Charter for example has adopted the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) as their standard for annual reports, with a special "Annex C" format for NGOs. The IATI Technical Advisory Group however has looked at GRI Annex C, and chose to develop its own standard since its scope and purpose was different. Efforts are underway however to bring these two streams together more through a joint working group.

²⁴ <http://www.aidinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/10/Costs-and-benefits-analysis.pdf>

²⁵ <http://acclar.org/2012/02/09/iati-tools-for-the-ngo-community/>

²⁶ <http://aidstream.org>

²⁷ <http://www.openaidregister.org/>

²⁸ <http://www.akvo.org>

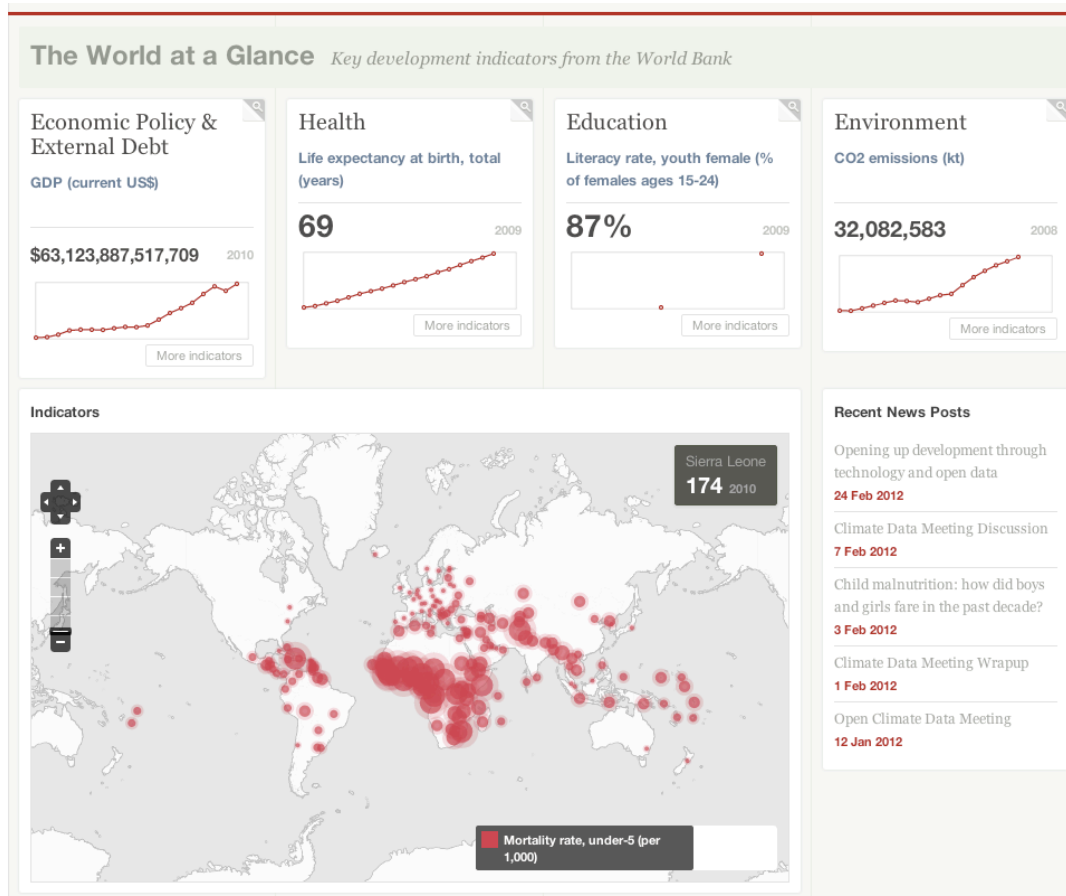
AidInfo's IATI Toolkit

The International Aid Transparency Initiative has created an XML standard and processes for donors to publish information on aid projects, budgets and spending. A log of all published IATI data is kept on the IATI Registry where you can download XML files directly from donors and other information sources.

The IATI toolkit²⁹ from AidInfo provides a set of web services and tools to users work with this data. It hosts a copy of data from the IATI Registry, updated daily, and makes it available to query - allowing users to extract and reformat information from across all the reported aid projects, budgets and spending.

World Bank Open Data Initiative

Several donors have also successfully demonstrated through other initiatives that more transparency is possible. In 2010 the World Bank launched its Open Data Initiative, with a Data Catalogue that provides access to over 7,000 indicators from World Bank data sets.

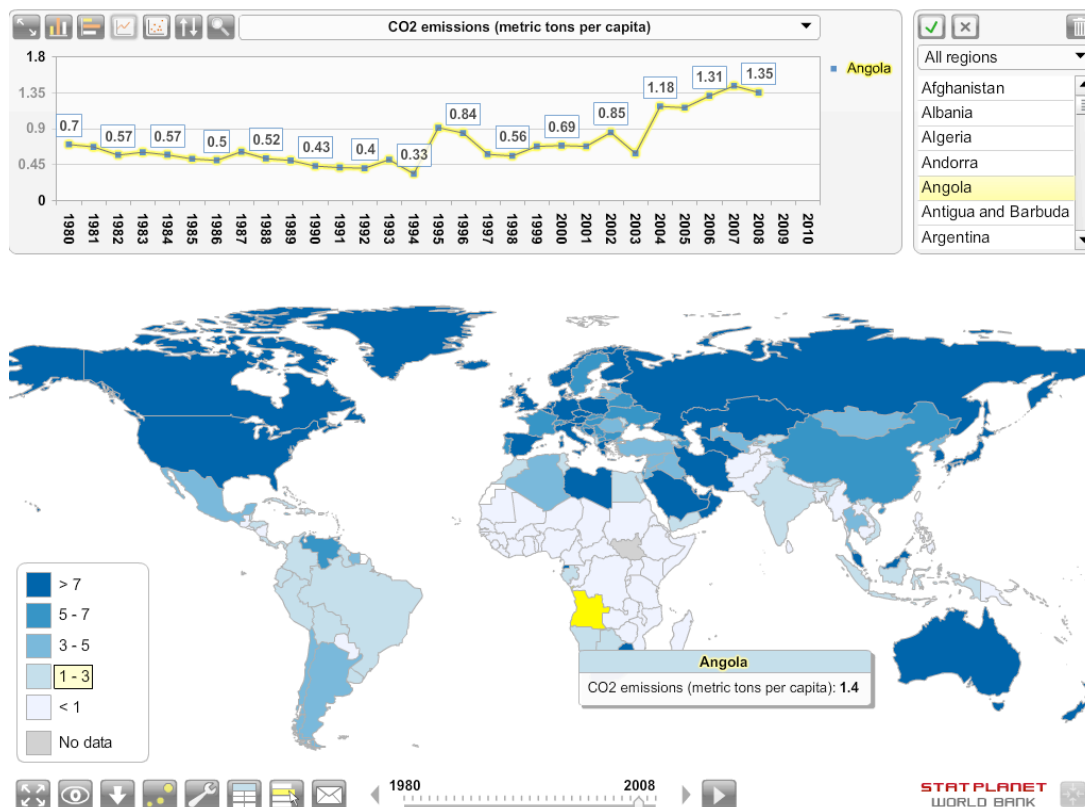


Source: <http://data.worldbank.org/>

To promote the public use of its data, the World Bank launched a programming contest,

²⁹ <http://tools.aidinfo.org/>

Apps4Development³⁰. With App4Development the World Bank aims to bring together the best ideas from both the software developer and the development practitioner communities to create innovative apps for using World Bank data. The goal was to find solutions to today's development challenges and through technology, help tackle some of the world's long-standing problems. The Contest has brought about exceptional Applications such as the first prize winner: "StatPlanet World Bank", an application for exploring and analysing the 3000+ indicators available from the World Bank database through interactive maps and graphs.



Source: <http://appsfordevelopment.challengepost.com/submissions/1516-statplanet-world-bank>

The World Bank Institute has also been actively backing the Open Development Technology Alliance³¹ to help developing countries adopt open data tools and technologies.

OECD-DAC International Development Statistics Database

The OECD's Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD-DAC) has developed the International Development Statistics (IDS) online databases on aid and other resource flows. The DAC databases cover bilateral and multilateral donors' aid and other resource

³⁰ <http://appsfordevelopment.challengepost.com/>

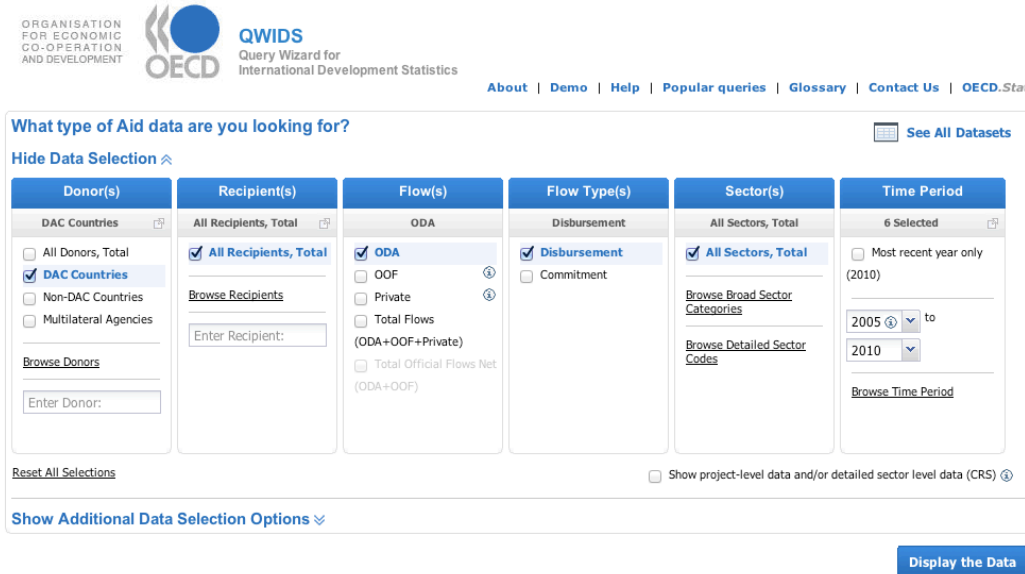
³¹ <http://www.opendta.org/Pages/Home.aspx>

flows to developing countries in two separate databases:

1. The DAC annual aggregates database, which provides comprehensive data on the volume, origin and types of aid and other resource flows;
2. The Creditor Reporting System (CRS), which provides detailed information on individual aid activities, such as sectors, countries, project descriptions etc.

These databases are accessible through two interfaces:

- The OECD.STAT browser for users familiar with the DAC and CRS databases;
- The wizard QWIDS (Query Wizard for International Development Statistics) pulls data from OECD.STAT and offers an intuitive interface for users less familiar with the structure and content of the DAC and CRS databases.



ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
OECD QWIDS Query Wizard for International Development Statistics

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What type of Aid data are you looking for? [See All Datasets](#)

Hide Data Selection

Donor(s)	Recipient(s)	Flow(s)	Flow Type(s)	Sector(s)	Time Period
DAC Countries <input type="checkbox"/> All Donors, Total <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DAC Countries <input type="checkbox"/> Non-DAC Countries <input type="checkbox"/> Multilateral Agencies Browse Donors Enter Donor:	All Recipients, Total <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All Recipients, Total Browse Recipients Enter Recipient:	ODA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ODA <input type="checkbox"/> OOF <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Total Flows (ODA+OOF+Private) <input type="checkbox"/> Total Official Flows Net (ODA+OOF)	Disbursement <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disbursement <input type="checkbox"/> Commitment	All Sectors, Total <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All Sectors, Total Browse Broad Sector Categories Browse Detailed Sector Codes	6 Selected <input type="checkbox"/> Most recent year only (2010) 2005 to 2010 Browse Time Period

[Reset All Selections](#) Show project-level data and/or detailed sector level data (CRS)

[Show Additional Data Selection Options](#)

[Display the Data](#)

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Source: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/50/17/5037721.htm>

Although the OECD is offering access to highly relevant data for private use, the limitations on re-use as stated in the terms and conditions indicate that the potential of Open Data has not yet been fully understood:

“All rights reserved. You can copy, download or print content for your own use, and you can also include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. You should cite the Title of the material, © OECD, publication year (if available) and page number or URL (uniform resource locator) as applicable. All requests for commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org.”

These terms and conditions are problematic for academics, civil society organisations, journalists and others who wish to make use of the published data for their work as the terms of use do not allow for a re-use of the data. Access and re-use of data might be inhibited legally because it is published under Copyright expressed in licenses or terms of use regulating the conditions under which it can or can not be re-used and re-distributed. For data to be re-used as Open Data it must be made available under a license that explicitly allows anyone to re-use, re-mix and re-distribute the data free of charge for any purposes, including commercial use.

Donor Governments

Among individual donor governments, a number including Sweden, Norway and the USA have created dashboards to allow citizens to get a better track and understand of how ODA funds are being used. The UK Government Department for International Development (DFID) and Sweden have given aid transparency guarantees to make aid fully transparent to citizens in both the donor and recipient countries. The UK Government Aid Transparency Guarantee³² states that:

- We will publish detailed information about all new DFID projects and programmes on our website, in a common standard with other donors.
- Information published will be comprehensive, accessible, comparable, accurate and timely.
- Information will be published in English and with summary information in major local languages, in a way that is accessible to citizens in the countries in which we work.
- We will allow anyone to reuse our information, including to create new applications which make it easier to see where aid is being spent.
- We will provide opportunities for those directly affected by our projects to provide feedback on the performance of projects.

Following an independent review³³ recommending stronger focus on transparency the Australian government has launched a Transparency Charter³⁴ in November 2011.

Non-Governmental Donors

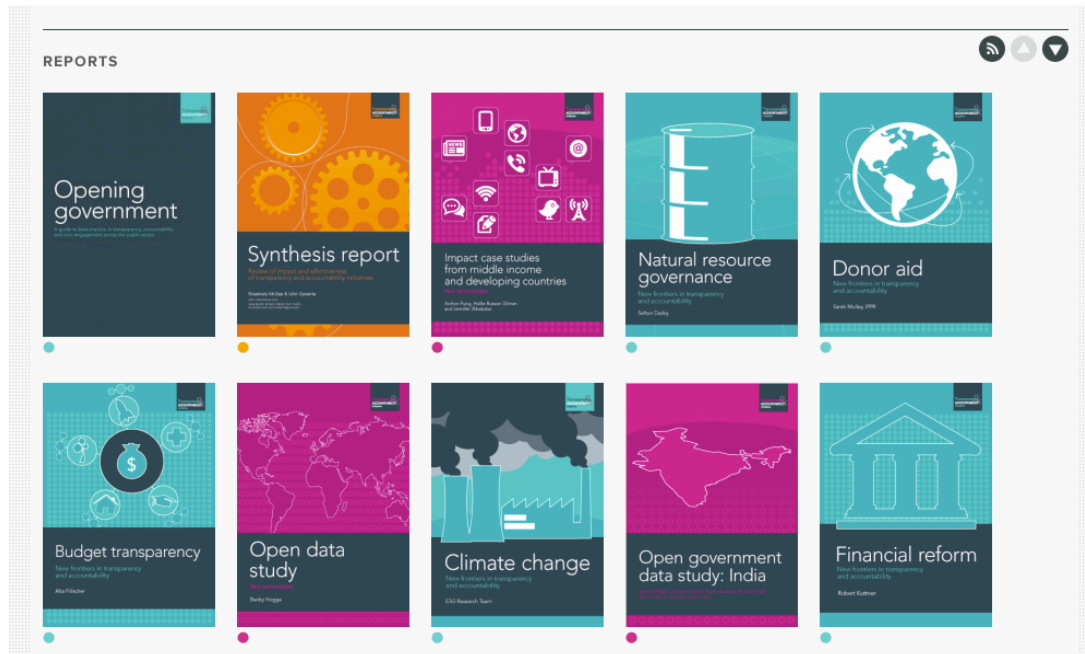
In 2011 a group of international donors including HIVOS, the Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundation and the Hewlett Foundation have launched the Transparency and

³² <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/ukaid-guarantee>

³³ <http://www.aidreview.gov.au/report/index.html>

³⁴ <http://ausaid.gov.au/country/pdf/ausaid-transparency-charter.pdf>

Accountability Initiative³⁵ to enhance learning about the potential of technology for transparency and to promote scientific research about the impact of aid transparency. Some of their publications such as the report on open data, budget transparency, donor aid and impact case studies from middle income and developing countries have become important resources on the topic.



Source: <http://www.transparency-initiative.org/publications>

Recipient Countries

Aid transparency is also an issue within recipient countries. For example in Nepal various activities are underway focusing on the transparency of aid flows. Faced with a political vacuum and administrative standstill donors in Nepal, coordinated by UNDP, launched an aid transparency initiative to improve coordination and cooperation at the national level. International NGOs such as ActionAid³⁶ have developed new standards on what they report to citizens about their activities. The national chapter of Transparency International in Nepal will soon undertake a study on aid transparency and a group of independent researchers in Nepal have created the Alliance for Aid Monitor Nepal³⁷. This local interest provides a conducive environment to promote the use of aid information.

The UK based NGO AidInfo³⁸, part of the IATI secretariat, chose Nepal for a pilot study on the availability, the accessibility and the use of aid data. Part of this pilot was a barcamp³⁹ on aid data organised in November 2011 by YoungInnovation (YIPL) in Kathmandu. Aid

³⁵ <http://www.transparency-initiative.org/>

³⁶ <http://www.actionaid.org/>

³⁷ <http://aidmonitor.org.np/>

³⁸ <http://www.aidinfo.org/>

³⁹ <http://nepalaid.yipl.com.np/>

Transparency Barcamp Nepal is branded as an Open for Change event, linking it to a network of events and organisations around the world, which are focused on transparency and collaboration in development.

A noteworthy project has been The Web Foundation's Ghana Open Data Initiative, in which the Ghanaian government has been co-operating with the foundation.⁴⁰ As a result, an eGovernment Network Infrastructure (GovNET)⁴¹ across the 10 regions in Ghana was completed allowing for easier and faster data collection and dissemination by Ministries, Departments and Agencies will Furthermore, The Web Foundation plans to support Ghana in 2012-2013 to develop an Open Data strategy for the Government of Ghana, taking into account the three layers of actors (political, public administration and civil society) and six dimensions of Open Data (political, legal, organizational, technical, social and economic).

Non-Governmental Organisations

Not only bilateral and multilateral donors have been challenged to increase their transparency. Non-governmental donors and implementers are also under pressure to make their aid more effective and to respect the Paris principles in their activities. The International NGO Accountability Charter⁴² is a network of large international NGOs to improve the accountability of NGOs. In June 2011 representatives of this network met in Geneva to analyse how they can adopt IATI and whether changes are needed so that NGOs can report data according to the IATI standard. As mentioned above, currently there are some differences between the GRI and IATI approaches, which are to be addressed by a joint working group.

A further initiative is the "Open Forum for CSO Development Effectiveness", which has been a more civil-society focused effort running in parallel to the more government-oriented Paris and Bussan processes. The Forum has developed the "Istanbul Principles" and an "International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness".⁴³

Publish What You Fund, a UK based NGO campaigns for aid transparency – more and better information about aid. The 2010 Aid Transparency Assessment⁴⁴ and 2011 Index⁴⁵ indicate that the aid information currently made available by donors is poor and that they all need to improve their transparency.

Other activities: Conferences & Hackathons

There have been a series of conferences on aid transparency over the last years accompanied by a number of code sprints and hackathons. Its impossible to list all of them but it is worth to mention the importance of these events in bringing together traditional

⁴⁰ <http://www.webfoundation.org/projects/godi/>

⁴¹ <http://www.nita.gov.gh/pages.aspx?id=5>

⁴² <http://www.ingoaccountabilitycharter.org/>

⁴³ <http://www.cso-effectiveness.org>

⁴⁴ <http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/resources/assessment/>

⁴⁵ <http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/resources/index/2011-index/>

aid professionals from NGOs, representatives from donor and recipient countries as well as technologists from the open data community and members from recipient country communities. The impact of these kinds of events can not be underestimated. Outstanding examples are:

The Water Hackathon in 2011, were software developers and designers teamed up with water experts to create new tools for solving water problems simultaneously in multiple global locations, including in Nairobi, Bangalore, London, Kampala, and Washington DC.

Open for Change⁴⁶ is a label for conferences as in Amsterdam, Nepal, Berlin, and other places. Christian Kreutz, co-organiser of the Berlin based Open Aid Data Conference⁴⁷ held in November 2011 in Berlin said:

“It is high time for donor agencies, civil society organisations, media representatives and the government in donor countries to make the transparency of development cooperation a high priority.”

New Tools: Geocoding AidData

Geocoding, or recording the location of aid projects at the sub-national level, enables visual tracking of where the money is flowing and traces what kind of aid each area receives. Geocoded aid project data can be overlaid with a variety of other geographic data, including poverty rates, environmental vulnerability, income, social statistics, infrastructure, and real-time incident reports. Mapping aid information enables a better understanding of the allocation of aid within a country, highlighting any potential financing gaps, and helps in displaying inequities in aid distribution. Once mapped, geocoded aid information presents development stakeholders with a simple platform to assess current performance and to plan future projects. Mapped sub-national data can provide partner countries with a better understanding of how and where aid should be working for their benefit. Geocoded data will also allow donors, countries, auditors, and citizens to verify that projects are being implemented in their intended locations, thereby decreasing opportunities for waste and corruption.

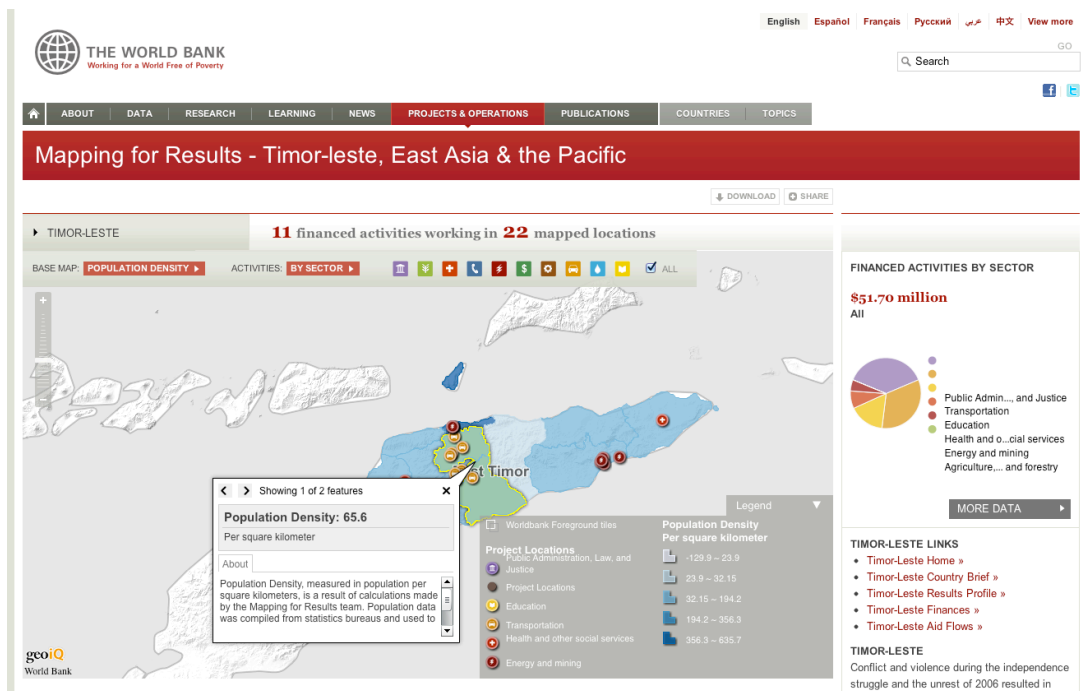
The civil society organisation AidData⁴⁸, in collaboration with Uppsala University, has developed a comprehensive way to geocode aid projects. By defining multiple levels of geographical precision, AidData is able to accurately identify the locations of all types of development projects. Using this rigorous yet flexible methodology, teams of trained researchers work with donor and country agencies to determine the precise location of development activities. The methodology is compatible with the IATI data standard and can be downloaded⁴⁹ for use by any organisation.

⁴⁶ <http://openforchange.info/>

⁴⁷ <http://openaiddata.de/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.aiddata.org/>

⁴⁹ <http://open.aiddata.org/>



Source: <http://maps.worldbank.org/eap/timor-leste#>

To demonstrate the power of geo-enabled aid information, and with support from Esri⁵⁰ (a leading provider of interactive mapping platforms), AidData created Development Loop. This web application incorporates data on projects funded by the World Bank and African Development Bank, overlaid with regional development statistics and project success stories reported by GlobalGiving, to produce a visual story of aid, need, and impact. Future versions will employ crowdsourcing tools, allowing development professionals and aid beneficiaries to create or update project data from anywhere in the world via web and mobile applications.

7 Conclusion

The Accra Agenda for Action states that transparency and accountability are essential elements for development results, as well as drivers of progress. Mutual accountability and transparency is one of the five partnership commitments of the Paris Declaration. Through transparency, donors and recipients can be held accountable for what they spend and aid can be made more effective by knowing: **Who** gives money to which recipient, **What** project is being funded and for what purpose, and **Where**.

Transparency in Aid offers a valuable answer to better understand, how aid is spent, what works and what does not, making aid more predictable and reliable. Transparency has been shown to improve service delivery and to reduce opportunities for diversion and therefore corruption.

⁵⁰ <http://www.esri.com/>

The international community has been seeking to address aid effectiveness the Paris Declaration and the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action. Governments and aid agencies have made commitments at the leadership level, but for the moment most efforts have been top-down, aggregate targets. Decades of development have shown that if countries are to become less dependent on aid, they must follow a bottom-up approach, where they determine their own priorities and rely on their own systems to deliver that aid.

In spite of the fact that the international community has raised the issue of aid effectiveness in the Paris Declaration and the subsequent Accra Agenda for Action, the implementation of this agenda has been difficult.

Increased use of Open Data in aid has the potential to address a number of these concerns: as on other fields of governance, transparency and accountability can be increased while various actors will also be better able to harmonise their approaches. Opening data for re-use also allows interested citizens to create innovative ways of combining, displaying and otherwise re-using data, which has huge potential for re-thinking and re-configuring the way aid is currently implemented. In order to avoid fragmentation, though, it is necessary for actors at various levels - from grassroots to ministries - to harmonise their efforts while not cutting off creative potential. Some of the initiatives described in this paper are already showing the way.

Appendix

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About the Author

Daniel Dietrich was born in 1973 in Frankfurt, Germany. His academic work surrounds political science, computer science and communication science in Frankfurt and Berlin. He worked as Research Associate at Technical University Berlin, Department of Internet and Society until the end of 2011. He has been working for the Open Knowledge Foundation (OKFN), since 2009 and is Chairman of the German Chapter of the Open Knowledge Foundation. He is the Project Coordinator for the OKF Project Open Definition as well as the Coordinator of the Working Group on Open Government Data and the Working Group on Open Data in the EU. He is the co-founder of the Open Data Network, a non-profit advocacy organisation to promote Open Data, Open Government and Transparency in Germany and beyond. In 2011 he became Editor of the ePSIplatform.

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