# International Development Sector Transparency Panel Note of Meeting held 23 January 2014

***Attendees***

Liz Ditchburn (DFID): Chair

Owen Barder (Centre for Global Development)

David Hall-Matthews (Publish What You Fund)

Rufus Pollock (Open Knowledge Foundation)

Bill Anderson (Development Initiatives)

Matthew Brown (Cabinet Office)

Rupert Koci-Edwards (MOD)

Tim Robinson (Chair, DFID Digital Advisory Board)

Bob Gibbons (DFID)

Morag Patrick (DFID)

George Turkington (DFID)

Alasdair Wardhaugh (DFID)

John Adams (DFID)

Kevin Gardner (DFID)

Jennie Barugh (DFID)

Ross Mackintosh (DFID)

Aine McGowan (DFID)

Glen Deakin (DFID)

***Welcome and Introductions***

* The Chair welcomed everyone to the 3rd meeting of the Panel, with special welcome to Tim Robinson who is chair of DFID’s digital panel. Apologies were received from Panel members Fran Perrin and Mary-Anne Addo.

***Building the vision: Humanitarian aid transparency***

* The Chair set the scene, reminding the Panel this was a first conversation on the issue and conclusions wouldn’t be reached in 60 minutes. The panel was encouraged to think about what the sector could do, not just DFID.
* Owen began by setting out how the humanitarian sector might benefit from adopting open data. The benefits included:
  1. Governments and NGOs making better decentralised decisions on how resources are used.
  2. Resources on the ground being delivered to those who need them most.
  3. Local government and citizens holding donors to account.
  4. Reduced waste and corruption, lower overheads, more efficiency.
  5. Greater public trust.
* Transparency is viewed as a luxury for humanitarian aid; however it shouldn’t be if public support is to be maintained. The improvements in reporting should be praised, but new technology means the gap between what could be done and what is being done is growing.
* Implementing agencies should be publishing real time information on what they are doing and plan to do, for donors this should come through their International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) feed and data exchange with user platforms (EDRIS, FTS etc) created. DFID should build international consensus on open and shared data in humanitarian aid, much as it did for IATI.
* There was general agreement with much of this analysis. It was noted that humanitarian aid can sometimes be something that gets done to beneficiaries and there is a need to redress that balance. Technology was viewed as one part of the solution. DFID wants to be part of a process that takes forward a vision for humanitarian aid transparency.
* David highlighted that the potential for using humanitarian data through IATI is greater than any other. He suggested IATI needs to have an extension for humanitarian publishers and encouraged DFID to seek some international urgency for this through the IATI Steering Committee.
* Other opportunities to accelerate progress were discussed including: ensuring this on the agenda at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016, and reviewing whether DFID systems can better capture useful and timely information for publication.
* There were questions about incentives for organisations to publish real time data, whether there are tools to help them and whether the data will be used.
* Views differed on the need for incentives. Owen suggested that people working on the ground are passionate about their work and want aid to be effective, bureaucracy back home needs to give them the tools to publish the data.
* DFID explained that work had been done during the Philippines on tweaking the IATI extracting process. **John took an action point** to work with CHASE to streamline the process to capture data on ARIES, and make sure the information is useful. In the longer term, DFID’s Aid Management Platform (in development) should go some way towards addressing these issues. DFID is also working with UN OCHA to look at doing for humanitarian data what IATI has done for aid data.
* There was discussion of whether the problem is more an effectiveness and efficiency issue than a transparency issue. It illustrated a wider issue around data analytics that is going to be important for DFID. Lessons could potentially be learned from the MOD. It was agreed efficiency is important but this is a transparency issue as well, Haiti was given as an example where lack of transparency caused problems.
* The importance of security protocols around publishing sensitive location information was noted – IATI is looking at this issue.
* The Chair summarised: there are clearly a lot of international activities to consider. She invited the panel to continue the conversation and to think about what other incentives could encourage transparency in the sector. Could Publish What You Fund do a specific piece on humanitarian aid, for example? She noted that in the past DFID has taken a lead internationally on aid transparency. Our model to date is to show leadership through publishing our data to prove it can be done and drive others to act. She asked whether there’s a different engine room on this occasion. We’re in a position now of uncertainty – how much is open data being used to improve efficiency and effectiveness of cooperation? Should we therefore consider an alternative model, whereby we work with other partners to demonstrate the data right through from publication to use in a specific crisis? Would that ‘worked example’ model better drive change?
* DFID emphasised that humanitarian interventions are largely effective, giving the example of the Pakistan response which was reviewed and deemed hugely effective. There was consensus that humanitarian aid transparency was important and **George took away an action point** to ensure this was on the agenda of the next top 10 donor humanitarian directors meeting insert date.
* The panel were thanked for their contributions. George indicated he is content to be the DFID link point on humanitarian aid transparency.

***Increasing data use and strengthening impact evidence***

* Rufus introduced the topic, summarising key aspects of the Aid Transparency Impact Fund proposal.
* DFID added that it has made good progress on supplying open aid data however there is a need to focus on how to stimulate the use of data. Engagement with relevant networks had highlighted two important constraints on increasing data use: (a) understanding users’ needs sufficiently, (b) creating sustainable tools that can address those specific needs. The proposal to integrate the Fund with the ‘Follow the Money’ network and ‘Making all Voices Count’ fund was aimed at helping address those constraints.
* The group responded positively to the proposed goals and outputs, and particularly welcomed the case studies which were much needed. The following questions were raised:
  1. Is the Fund focusing on aid transparency in isolation? If so, why collaborate with ‘Follow the Money’ which covers data on many flows but doesn’t focus strongly on aid data?
  2. There is a need to disaggregate ‘southern groups’ (e.g. different types of Civil Society Organisations and citizens). Are southern governments not target users?
  3. What about linkages - shouldn’t northern NGOs be involved in disseminating information and persuading others to use the data?
  4. Should this work be such a priority or was the opportunity cost of this to DFID resources too high relative to other aid transparency work?
* There was clarification that the project is not focused on aid transparency in isolation, but will encourage use of aid data connected with other data which meets user needs – the collaboration with ‘Follow the Money’ and ‘Making All Voices Count’ aims to ensure a wider data focus. Part of the reason for a two stage approach is to better understand and disaggregate the variety of southern groups and how to engage them. Southern governments are a target group. BOND is keen to support the project and has indicated it would be willing to convene workshops with northern NGOs to raise awareness of the Fund and help DFID link with southern NGOs
* Owen agreed the work was important but was not sure whether it should be done by DFID. There are things only donors can do and things others can do. Only donors can improve the supply of open aid data. What are we giving up in ability to supply data to do this? DFID should prioritise a new humanitarian data system and upgrading its ARIES financial management system. Rufus proposed that we’ll be better placed to answer the cost benefit question after stage 1 of the project is delivered
* DFID welcomed this challenge and highlighted that helping DFID prioritise among the many potential activities was part of the panel’s role. It had been assumed that making data available would lead directly to its use and impact, but it has not happened. Addressing the gap in data use and evidence of development impact would help DFID encourage partners in generating more and better data in the future.
* There was further discussion on the need for case studies to illustrate the use of open data and the difference it makes to development outcomes. There was general consensus that there is a gap in this area that DFID should fill. DFID could use stage 1 to flush out other actors, challenging them to take the outputs from stage 1 and fill the gap, or DFID will.
* The Chair summarised that she felt DFID should take this forward and there should be very explicit sequencing to address some of the questions raised - in particular identifying other actors who could better take forward stage 2. DFID should keep the panel informed on this going forward. The collaboration between Panel members and DFID on this work thus far was welcomed and is how DFID envisaged the Panel working.

***Any Other Business***

***DFID ‘Open Data Strategy’ refresh***

* The Panel was asked for thoughts and feedback on the proposals for the ‘Open Data Strategy’ refresh. DFID proposed only minor changes to the strategy. Comments were invited by email.
* David was content with DFID’s plans. However, he wanted to see reference to IATI and open data about development spending in all other relevant government departments’ open data strategies.
* **Action point: Matt responded that Cabinet Office (Matthew Lloyd)** could convene a further discussion with other departments on this issue.

***DFID Resource Allocation Round***

* Owen praised the previous resource allocation process, but was concerned that resource allocation options should be made public in future so that beneficiaries and taxpayers can offer views and inform ministers’ decisions. He challenged that the current approach offers insufficient opportunities for stakeholder engagement and scrutiny.
* DFID emphasised that ministers and officials have been talking with external experts on the process and this will feed into the process. The resource allocation round is not where the action is taking place, it is taking place in all other kinds of fora. Owen did not think that was enough to allow others to engage.
* **Jennie took away an action point** to think about what areas of the process could be opened up. DFID was grateful for the challenge provided and would take away and reflect upon this discussion.

***Group exemptions from parts of the IATI standard***

* There was a brief discussion on whether IATI should adopt clearer protocols for when certain types of organisations should be exempted from routinely publishing less than the full IATI standard.
* The group indicated it was happy to have that discussion online. **David took an action point** to circulate a paper on the issue.

***Concluding Remarks***

* The Chair thanked the panel and stated this would be her last Panel meeting as she is moving post. She wished her successor luck for future meetings.