

International Development Sector Transparency Panel Note of meeting on 5th March 2015

Attendees

Les Campbell (DFID) – Chair
Mary-Anne Addo (Ministry of
Employment & Labour Relations,
Government of Ghana)
Fredrik Galtung (Integrity Action)
Penny Lawrence (Oxfam)
Judith Randel (Development Initiatives)

John Adams (DFID and Chair of IATI
Technical Advisory Group)
Alasdair Wardhaugh (DFID)
Jane Carter (DFID)
Toby Wicks (DFID)
Morag Patrick (DFID)
Fiona Ross (DFID)
Ross McInnes (DFID)

Apologies:

Rufus Pollock (Open Knowledge
Foundation)
Owen Barder (Center for Global
Development)

Welcome and introductions

- The Chair welcomed the group and extended a particular welcome to the new Panel members – Fredrik Galtung, Penny Lawrence and Judith Randel. He emphasised the opportunity that having new members provided to bring a new perspective the Panel's work.
- The importance of the Panel's work in challenging and advising DFID and influencing the sector was highlighted, as well as the opportunity that meetings gave to learn from one another.

The work of the Panel

- Papers had been circulated previously. Ross McInnes, DFID, introduced the topic – giving an overview of the Panel's previous successes and the original goals of its work. With new members joining, there was an opportunity to consider the Panel's methods of working and the scope of its work.

Methods of working

- The Chair invited comments on the methods the Panel could use to work together and to ensure DFID was able to get members' inputs.
- There was a general consensus that the most appropriate tool would depend on the issue being tackled. The methods suggested included holding smaller meetings between wider Panel sessions, online collaborative tools such as Google apps, and maintaining a central contact point in DFID.
- Mary-Anne Addo noted the occasional difficulty in accessing emails in Ghana due to ongoing power shortages, and the delays this might cause in providing input.
- The importance of an email flag to highlight any new required actions was highlighted.
- Toby Wicks, DFID, offered to circulate a paper on the Department's new Management Information strategy. This would give the opportunity for input from Panel members, as well as the chance to test collaborative working methods.
- **Action 1: Management Information paper to be circulated to Panel for comment**

Scope of Panel work

- The Chair invited comments on the scope of the Panel's work. The focus had previously been largely on aid transparency, but – in line with the Panel Terms of Reference – this was an opportunity to consider extending work into other areas of international development transparency.
- There was consensus amongst members that they were happy to consider other areas of transparency. Particular interest was expressed in work to extend the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) to achieve better coverage of non-aid financial and resource flows, as well as work to raise awareness of transparency, and to increase the use of data by finding ways to link IATI data with other datasets.
- **Action 2: To broaden future agendas to consider wider transparency issues**

Role of the Panel

- The Chair highlighted the importance of the Panel in providing challenge and advice to the Department, and invited further comments on the Panel's role.
- Alasdair Wardhaugh, DFID, noted that the Panel helped the Department to allocate resources to priority issues in transparency and that the different viewpoints offered by the Panel are valuable in broadening DFID's plans and reflections.
- John Adams, DFID and Chair of the IATI Technical Assistance Group (TAG), asked how the Panel and DFID could work together to provide useful input to

the TAG, and highlighted the importance of the key themes of the next TAG meeting – getting the data right, using the data and next steps.

Key topics in transparency

- The paper had been circulated previously. Ross McInnes, DFID, briefly introduced the topic, giving an overview of DFID's current work and next steps. This included publishing further geocodes and project documents, as well as developing case studies of data use and improving the [Development Tracker](#).
- The Chair invited comments on the Department's priorities, and the Panel's ambitions for the international transparency community for the next three years.
- A number of key themes emerged, as summarised below.

Data usage

- There was a strong consensus in the group that finding ways to use transparency data to improve development outcomes was crucial to increasing the quality and quantity of data available, creating buy-in for those reluctant to adopt transparency, and in realising the potential open data has to deliver accountability.

Developing examples of using data

- DFID staff from the Procurement and Commercial Department highlighted the value in having examples of data use in helping to convince DFID's suppliers of the value of transparency. Suppliers are keen to adopt IATI, but it would be much easier to persuade them if they could see why there were being asked to publish.
- Mary-Anne Addo echoed this view in relation to partner countries. In order to convince governments to publish and use IATI, the community need to be able to show how it is useful and that it will be worth Governments' time.
- Penny Lawrence also noted this would be crucial in convincing NGOs to publish further data. The next stages of publication will be even more difficult, and organisations need to be able to understand the purpose of their efforts.
- DFID policy staff described the case studies which will be developed in partnership with several country offices. These will provide examples of data being used to affect development outcomes at a local level. They will also be very useful in getting further buy-in from country offices.
- John Adams, DFID, asked how the Panel and DFID could encourage further competition and innovation in utilising data. In response, Fredrik Galtung recounted previous experience in running competitions to develop apps which use open data. To run a successful contest, it is important that end-users, who understand development issues, have their views taken into

account. Morag Patrick, DFID, suggested the Department was already active in this area through the 'Making all voices count' programme.

- Mary-Anne Addo mentioned a workshop being hosted by the Ghanaian government on the 19-20th March, which will focus on encouraging use of IATI data. The Panel and DFID staff were encouraged to attend.

Ensuring the right data is available

- There was consensus that, in order for data to be used, there would need to be further effort to ensure that transparency data was accurate, available in sufficient volume, and provided the information users needed.
- Several Panel members suggested IATI may need to be widened to include non-aid resource flows. This would allow partner countries a better understanding of the value of resources flowing in and out of their countries, and to incorporate more comprehensive data into their financial management systems. It is important that these flows could be categorised and disaggregated.
- It was suggested that improving IATI to allow consistent reporting of results data could lead to useful changes in the evaluation of development interventions. By linking IATI data with other datasets, the total effect of development programmes on populations could be determined, in place of existing evaluations which focus on outcomes from specific projects.
- Several attendees suggested that improving traceability and geocoding coverage was crucial to making transparency useful at a community level. Others questioned how practical it was to gather data at a sub-national level, and suggested it was more important to ensure data was complete at each level of the delivery chain before proceeding with roll-out to other sub-levels.

Using IATI for project results reporting

- There was much interest in the Panel around donors utilising IATI data for project results reporting. This would replace current procedures, which require implementing agencies to report results directly to donors, and could save implementing agencies time, and allow donors to have access to more up-to-date results data.
- DFID staff stated that this had been considered previously, but that IATI lacked the capacity to allow for sufficient narrative around results statistics. IATI results reporting would need to be implemented in such a way that it would actually save time, and not, in effect, be the same as current results documents in a different format.
- Penny Lawrence indicated that Oxfam would be more than happy to find ways to assist in trialling IATI results reporting.

Action 3: In order to facilitate discussion on IATI reporting, Ross McInnes to make connections between relevant Oxfam and DFID staff

Generating support for transparency

- There was consensus amongst the Panel that there was a need to create wider support for international development transparency. Again, providing examples of data usage was seen as the best way of doing this.
- DFID staff asked how they could get buy-in from the Department's country offices, who have limited resources and a number of competing priorities. To do this, it was suggested that the Department needed to change perceptions of transparency by demonstrating how IATI can improve country offices' project outcome.
- Panel members also asked if DFID was providing the right incentives to staff to adopt transparency. Do Departmental reporting systems reduce the burden of reporting as much as possible, and are staff able to access DFID's IATI data? Does the Department promote a positive message of transparency?
- In reply, DFID highlighted that the publication process was largely automated, but that this could be improved further. The Department currently puts out a lot of communications, but having examples of usage are likely to strengthen the impact of these.
- **Action 4: To engage between meetings on ways to increase support for transparency, and to consider including this topic on future agendas for more detailed discussion.**

Learning lessons from other transparency initiatives

- Fredrik Galtung noted that it would be useful to examine transparency programmes other than IATI, such as the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative, to learn lessons that could be applied to IATI, and vice versa.

Concluding remarks

- The Chair thanked the Panel and group for their contributions, and noted that the meeting had provided highly useful insights and learning for him and the Department.

Appendix: Summary of actions

1. Management Information paper to be circulated to Panel for comment
2. To broaden future agendas to consider wider transparency issues
3. In order to facilitate discussion on IATI reporting, Ross McInnes to make connections between relevant Oxfam and DFID staff
4. To engage between meetings on ways to increase support for transparency, and to consider including this topic on future agendas for more detailed discussion.