A Future for Aid Data: Research towards a South-South Cooperation Data Categorization to complement on-going IATI Categorizations

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Introducing the Research Project

The International Development Department, University of Birmingham has been a recipient of DFID's **Future of Aid and Beyond Research Competition 2010-11**. This research window is expected to prepare for future challenges and opportunities, identify and better understand fast-emerging issues, such as the rise of newly powerful economies, engage with some of the best new ideas and help prepare for future 'unknowns'.

Background

Lack of aid data availability of the non traditional donors can be attributed to non-access to data as either the data is not captured or methodology to measure the data is not in accordance with existing set standards like OECD's CRS classification. Given the growth in the number of official donors, and especially when the non traditional donors like BRICs are continuously increasing their respective aid financing, it becomes apparent that exclusion of their aid data will prohibit getting a full picture of the future aid architecture. In order to respond to the future trends of such aid flows from non traditional donors, it is essential to better understand the ways to engage them with the existing aid reforms initiative such as standardization of aid data within the ambit of IATI.

Challenges in asking non traditional donors to adhere to OECDs CRS include its definitions, categories and format, which is non-binding in nature. Recent initiatives like AidData in March 2010 (merger of Development Gateway and PLAID) have attempted to build upon the existing CRS database and included other non traditional donors like India and others in their comprehensive development finance database. Further, the IATI 'is expected to finalize standards that will include how and what kind of information to be published, a common system of categorization, a common electronic format and a code of conduct (IATI). But with only 18 bilateral or multilateral agencies having signed the IATI leaving behind a few major DAC donors like USA and Japan, the larger issue remains as how IATI would bring non traditional donors like India and China on board to adhere to its data standards.

Research Area

The research project will investigate the incentives and disincentives for non traditional donors to adhere to International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) categorization and code of conduct and in the wake of such non binding IATI or OECD-DAC standards, what challenges and opportunities such donors bring to the IATI.

The specific research questions to be answered are:

1. What are the data gaps with the Indian aid data generated through AidData initiative vis-a-vis proposed IATI standards?

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2. What are the similarities and differences between classification of OECD Creditors Reporting System (CRS), AidData initiative and IATI categorization and S-S categorization?

3. How does the existence of IATI categorization shape the dynamics of emerging donors under S-S cooperation?

The focal output of the research will be a proposed south-south cooperation data categorization that has the potential to complement ongoing IATI categorizations.

Project Researchers

The project will be managed by Michael Hubbard as research leader. He will work with Pranay Sinha, a researcher with a mix of advanced methodological skills, knowledge of the aid system and area expertise, particularly from working with Indian aid data.

Research Mode

The research will be principally desk based. Involvement of primary users will be an integral component of the research i.e. the policy makers and think tanks involved in promoting and implementing aid architecture reforms globally, including AidData initiative, IATI, Publish What You Fund, United Nations Development Cooperation Forum and UN forums on South-South Cooperation.

Information Dissemination

A dedicated and interactive project website will be used to disseminate the project highlights, methodology, approach and results. A workshop will be organized by the University of Birmingham to pilot the proposed South-South cooperation data categorization, at which the research report will be launched. Invited participants will include UN Development Cooperation Forum, Task Team on South-South Cooperation, IBSA and southern think tanks.

Institutions Likely to be Involved with the Research

International Aid Transparency Initiative

OECD

AidData initiative

Publish What You Fund

United Nations Development Cooperation Forum

IBSA

Better Aid

South Centre

South-South Opportunity

Indian development aid agency (Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Commerce and EXIM Bank of India)