How Can Data Revolutionize Development?

An Assessment of U.S. Foreign Aid Transparency and Putting Data at the Center of U.S. Global Development

Name	Title	Organization
Civil Society Advocates and Implementers		
Sally Paxton	US Representative	Publish What You Fund
Larry Nowels	Consultant for Hewlett Foundation	Friends of Publish What You Fund
George Ingram	Senior Fellow	Brookings
Taryn Davis	Senior Associate	Development Gateway
Diana Ohlbaum	Accountability Working Group Co-Chair	Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network
Lori Rowley	Accountability Working Group Co-Chair	Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network
Joe Powell	Deputy Director	Open Government Partnership
Paul O'Brien	VP for Policy and Campaigns	Oxfam America
David Saldivar	Policy and Advocacy Advisor for Aid Effectiveness	Oxfam America
Tessie San Martin	President/CEO	Plan International USA
Nora O'Connell	VP for Public Policy and Advocacy	Save the Children
Gretchen King	Program Specialist, Aid Effectiveness	Save the Children
Laia Grino	Data and Outreach Manager	InterAction
Catalina Reyes	Stakeholder Associate	Thomson Reuters
Current or Former USG Implementers		
Cindy Huang	Senior Advisor	Former State, former MCC
Rob Goldberg	Former Director of the Office of Foreign Assistance	Former State
Jessica Klein	Special Assistant	State Department
Sheila Herrling	Former VP for the Department of Policy and Evaluation	Former MCC
Chantale Wong	Former VP and Chief Financial Officer in the Department of Administration and Finance	Former MCC
Sarah Lucas	Former Senior Policy Advisor	Former MCC
Heather Hanson	Former Senior Policy Advisor in the Department of Policy and Evaluation	MCC
Catherine Marschner	Data Program Manager	MCC
Jason Orlando	Acting Director, OTA	Treasury
Kelley Noonan Vito	Budget Analyst for OTA	Treasury
Amy Zuckerman		Treasury
Irum Zaidi	Director of the Country Impact Team	Office of Global AIDS Coordinator
Brian Atwood	Former Administrator of USAID	USAID
	Staff member in the Bureau for Program, Policy, and Learning	USAID
	Staff member in the Bureau for Program, Policy, and Learning	USAID
	Counsellor to USAID	USAID

Questions for Interviews

1. **Initial commitments**
   a. Were you involved in the preliminary discussions on how to make US aid data more transparent (through the foreign assistance dashboard, OGP, or the IATI commitment in Busan?) Or do you have any second-hand knowledge of how those discussions went?
   b. Do you have a sense of the primary motivations for making aid data more transparent? What do you think have been the main drivers of change?
   c. What about the primary concerns?
   d. Do you think the decision-makers had a clear sense of the costs, time, or technical resources need to meet the commitments?
   e. At the time the commitments were made, do you feel that management or staff at the agencies (your agency) understood the benefits of making aid data more transparent?
   f. Do you think management or staff understood the costs?
   g. At the time the commitments were made, do you feel most US agencies (your agency) were prepared to meet them? In which ways were they prepared? In which ways weren't they prepared?

2. **Implementation**
   a. At what point do you feel like agencies (your agency) began implementation efforts in earnest?
   b. What have been some periods of increased momentum over the course of implementation? What was the catalyst for that momentum?
   c. Were there internal champions that helped the process along? What techniques did they use?
   d. What hurdles did agencies (your agency) face during implementation?
   e. Were you able to overcome these? If so, how? If not, why not? What do you think you would need to overcome it?
   f. As you worked to implement aid transparency, did you discover unanticipated costs?
   g. How about unanticipated benefits?

3. **The Role of Civil Society**

   a. Were you aware of efforts from civil society to advocate for more transparency in aid data? If so, which ones did you think were effective? Which were not effective?
   b. Did you engage with civil society at any point on the topic? How did that engagement go?
   c. Were you aware of Publish What You Fund's Aid Transparency Index?
      a. If yes, how did you perceive the Index? How did it influence your agency's work in aid transparency?
      b. How could it be more helpful for you or your agency?

4. **Lessons Learned and Recommendations**

   h. Looking back, what has gone well in making aid more transparent in your agency to date? How does your agency plan to build on those successes?

        i.   What have been the main hurdles?
        j.   If you could go back to the beginning of implementation efforts, would you do anything differently?
        k.   If you were to make recommendations to others trying to make their aid more transparent, what would they be?
        l.   Once aid data is made public, how do you think US agencies and NGOs can make it as useful as possible?
        m.   What do you think the next step for US agencies and civil society *should* be, in terms of aid transparency?
        n.   How likely do you believe that goal is?

NB: Due to time constraints and varying expertise, most respondents were only asked a subset of these questions.

Survey Questions

Section 1: Personal Information

- ➤ Name:
- ➤ Agency or Organization:
- ➤ Type of agency or organization (USG agency, Hill, NGO, think tank)
- ➤ Your primary role in foreign aid transparency efforts (Political leadership, coordinator or lead, policy or program staff, M&E or data analyst, technical or IT expert, advocate for transparency)
- ➤ Is your organization primarily focused on making its own aid data more transparent or primarily focused on advocating for aid data transparency broadly? (Primarily own data, primarily advocacy, or both. If both, please fill out all sections below.)

If your organization is focused on making its own aid data more transparent, answer sections 2 – 5.

Section 2: Initial commitments and strategies

- ➤ Did your organization participate in the decision to make aid data more transparent through the following initiatives? (Yes or no)
    - ○ The creation and maintenance of the foreign assistance dashboard ___
    - ○ The commitment to join IATI made at Busan ___
    - ○ The Open Government Partnership's commitment to be more transparent about foreign assistance___
    - ○ The creation of the NGO Aid Map___
- ➤ Initially, did your organization have any of the following concerns about making aid data public? (Check all the apply)
    - ○ Doing so might reveal shortfalls in programs or operations___
    - ○ Doing so might make the organization less competitive for donor funding or Congressional budget ___
    - ○ Doing so might jeopardize the privacy or security of staff or program beneficiaries ___
    - ○ Doing so might be too expensive ___
    - ○ Doing so might be too time consuming ___
    - ○ Other concerns (please write in) _____
    - ○ No initial concerns ___
- ➤ What was the primary motivation for making aid data public in your organization?
    - ○ Fulfilling the commitments made by the Administration ___
    - ○ Pressure from Congress ___
    - ○ Encouragement from civil society or the public ___
    - ○ Internal desired to improve data systems, management, and usefulness ___
    - ○ Other (please write in) ___
- ➤ Which of these best describes the extent to which leadership in your organization understood the actions and resources needed to meet aid data transparency commitments?
    - ○ Leadership fully understood the actions and resources needed and had a strategy in place for implementation ___
    - ○ Leadership had a general understanding of the actions and resources needed and was committed to forming a strategy ___

- Leadership understood the value of aid data transparency but did not have a clear strategy, action plan, or budget to meet the commitments ___
- Leadership did not truly understand the value, actions, or budget needed to meet the commitments ___
- None of the above ___

- At the time of the commitment, did your organization had sufficient resources to meet the commitments in the following areas (Yes, no, somewhat, or n/a)
  - Leadership and political will ___
  - Budget or financial resources ___
  - Staff time and expertise ___
  - Comprehensive and high quality data sets ___
  - Technical skills and IT resources ___
- At the time of the commitment, which best describes the state of aid data in your organization
  - Most data were already collected and believed to be accurate and complete ___
  - Some data was already collected and believed to be mostly accurate and complete ___
  - Data was already collected but not verified and not always complete ___
  - Data was only collected on an ad hoc basis or not at all ___
  - None of the above ___
- Please describe how prepared your agency or organization was to meet the aid transparency commitments at the time they were made? (Open ended)

Section 3: Implementation

- Is the implementation effort in your organization coordinated or lead by an accountable individual or office? (Yes, no, partially, n/a)
- Do staff working on aid transparency efforts have regular access to and communication with the following: (Yes, no, partially, n/a)
  - A central coordinator that can offer direction or assistance when needed ___
  - Leadership in the organization ___
  - Relevant colleagues in other offices or teams in your organization ___
  - IT or technical support ___
- Do staff working on aid transparency efforts have adequate resources in the following areas (Yes, no, partially, n/a)
  - Leadership support and political will ___
  - Budget and financial resources ____
  - Staff time and expertise ____
  - Comprehensive and high quality aid data sets ___
  - Technical skills and IT resources ___
- In your organization, are there systems to ensure data quality? (Yes, no, somewhat, n/a)
- Which best describes the data quality control for your organization's aid data?
  - There ae systems to check data quality and they regularly find and correct errors, discrepancies, or questionable or incomplete data ___
  - There are systems to check data quality and they regularly find errors, questionable, or incomplete data, but sometimes they are not able to make corrections ___
  - There are no systems in place to check data quality ___
- Is there an open data policy in your organization? (Yes, no, in progress, n/a)

- Is there a system to ensure that the release of any sensitive data protects the privacy and security of staff or beneficiaries, including redacting data if needed? (Yes, no, I don't know, n/a)
- Is there a system in place to track progress towards aid transparency commitments? (Yes, no, somewhat, n/a)
- Is the tracking system used effectively to ensure targets are met? (Yes, no, somewhat, n/a)
- Please describe the top 2-3 key issues your organization met while trying to implement transparency commitments. How, if at all, were these issues resolved? (Open ended)

Section 4: Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- In your opinion, how successful have aid transparency efforts been in your organization to date (Scale of 1-5 with 1 being totally unsuccessful and 5 being very successful) ___
- To the extent that efforts have been successful, which of the following were most important for your organizations success (Score each on a 1-5 scale with 1 being "not very important" and 5 being "crucial")
    - Clear direction from a coordinating mechanism ___
    - Strong leadership support and political will ___
    - Sufficient budget and financial resources ____
    - Sufficient staff time and expertise ____
    - Comprehensive and high quality data sets ___
    - Sufficient technical skills and IT resources ___
    - External assistance such as consultants or tech teams ___
    - Other (please write in) _____
- To the extent implementation has been challenging, what factors serve as the biggest constraints (Score each on a 1-5 scale with 1 being "not a constraint "and 5 being "a major constraint")
    - Lack of clear directions from a coordinating mechanism ___
    - Insufficient leadership support and/or political will ___
    - Insufficient budget / financial resources ____
    - Insufficient staff time and expertise ____
    - Lack of comprehensive and high quality data sets ___
    - Insufficient technical skills and IT resources ___
    - Other (please write in) _____
- Based on your experiences making aid data more transparent, what are your top 2-3 lessons learned? What recommendations would you make to improve the process and the outcome in the future? (Open ended)

Section 5: The role of civil society

- To what extent did the efforts of civil society, including advocacy groups or think tanks, influence your organization's efforts to make aid data more transparent? (Scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "not at all" and 5 being "a major influence")
- To what extent did the following civil society efforts impact your organization's aid transparency efforts (Scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "very negative impact", 3 being "no impact", and 5 being "very positive impact")
    - Information or opinion pieces about the benefits of data aid transparency ___

- Information or opinion pieces that were critical of your agency/US progress on aid transparency ____
- Advocacy efforts such as Publish What You Fund's "Aid Transparency Index"___
- Coordination efforts such as InterAction's NGO Aid Map ___
- Technical assistance ___

➢ To what extent did the Aid Transparency Index provide an incentive to improve transparency efforts in your organization? (Scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "not at all" and 5 being "major incentive.")

➢ To what extent did the Aid Transparency Index create tensions within the organization when results were not good? (Scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "not at all" and 5 being "significant tension")

➢ Did your organization's Index score made it easier or more difficult to strengthen aid data transparency efforts internally? (Easier, more difficult, no impact)

➢ In your opinion, what civil society efforts were most helpful to furthering aid data transparency in the US? Which efforts were least helpful or even counter-productive? (Open ended.)

If your organization is focused on advocating for aid data transparency broadly, please answer sections 6 and 7 below.

Section 6: Initial commitments, strategies, and implementation

➢ Did your agency or organization play an advocacy role in promoting aid transparency and IATI compliance? (Yes or no)

➢ When advocating for aid data transparency, what arguments about the benefits of transparency did you find were compelling to agencies or organizations? (Score each on a scale of 0 – 2 where 0 = not compelling, 1 = somewhat compelling, 2 = very compelling)
- Aid data transparency enhances donors and recipients ability to plan, coordinate, and implement aid programs ___
- Aid data transparency improves monitoring, evaluating, and learning about aid effectiveness ___
- Aid data transparency allows tax payers to better understand where resources are going and hold their governments' accountable ___
- Aid data transparency allows recipient governments to fully understand what aid resources are coming into their country ___
- Aid data transparency allows citizens of recipient countries to better understand what resources are coming into their country and hold their governments' accountable ___
- Other (please write in) _____
- None of the above ___

➢ When advocating for aid data transparency, what were the main sources of resistance from agencies or organizations? (Check all that apply)
- Aid data information was not available in current systems __
- Aid data transparency might reveal shortfalls in programs or operations___
- Aid data transparency might make the organization less competitive for donor funding or Congressional budget ___
- Aid data transparency might jeopardize the privacy or security of staff or program beneficiaries ___
- Aid data transparency might be too expensive ___

- Aid data transparency might be too time consuming ___
- Other concerns (please write in) _____

➢ In your opinion, how prepared were the majority of US agencies or organizations to meet the commitments they made regarding IATI compliance?
- Very well prepared ___
- Somewhat prepared ___
- Not very prepared ___
- I don't know or N/A ___

➢ At the time the commitments were made, do you believe most US organizations or agencies had sufficient resources to meet the commitments in the following areas: (Please answer yes, no, somewhat, or n/a)
- Leadership and political will ___
- Budget / financial resources____
- Staff time and expertise ____
- Comprehensive and high quality aid data sets ___
- Technical skills and IT resources ___

Section 7: Lessons Learned and Recommendations

➢ How successful would you rate your organization's advocacy efforts to increase aid transparency over the past five years? (Scale of 1-5 with 1 being totally unsuccessful and 5 being very successful)

➢ How successful would you rate the US governments' efforts to increase aid transparency over the past five years? (Scale of 1-5 with 1 being totally unsuccessful and 5 being very successful)

➢ Are there agencies you believe did a particularly good job? What about a particularly poor job? (Open ended.)

➢ How successful would you rate the US NGOs' efforts to increase aid transparency over the past five years? (Scale of 1-5 with 1 being totally unsuccessful and 5 being very successful)

➢ What do you perceive as the largest hurdle to organizations implementing their aid data transparency commitments? (Please score each on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being "not a hurdle" and 5 being "a very large hurdle.")
- Lack of leadership support or political will ___
- Lack of clear direction from a coordinating mechanism ___
- Insufficient budget or financial resources ____
- Insufficient staff time and expertise ____
- Lack of comprehensive and high quality aid data sets ___
- Insufficient technical skills and IT resources ___
- Other (please write in) _____

➢ Based on your experiences with promoting more transparent aid data, what are your top 2-3 lessons learned? What recommendations would you make to improve the process and outcome in the future? (Open ended)

➢ Is there anything else you want to share about your experiences or recommendations regarding making aid data more transparent? (Open ended)