

Dr. Rajiv Shah
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20523

cc: Daniel Yohannes, Chief Executive Officer of the U.S. Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation
Jack Lew, Director of the Office of Management and Budget
Thomas Nides, United States Deputy Secretary of State
Michael Froman, Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economic Affairs
Gayle Smith, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Global Development, Stabilization and Humanitarian Assistance, National Security Council
Jeremy Weinstein, Director for Democracy on the National Security Staff

January 25th, 2011

Dear Administrator Shah,

Re: Delivering effective aid and February 9 International Aid Transparency Initiative phase two agreement in Paris

We, the undersigned agencies, networks and organizations are writing to thank you for the vital role you have assumed on aid transparency. The commitment the United States Government has already demonstrated to transparency with the launch of ForeignAssistance.gov and the interagency process on aid transparency provides an important and powerful demonstration effect for what other countries can do.

To ensure you get the most of this investment in U.S. transparency, it needs the compatibility that the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) offers. As you know, the development of an international standard on aid information has now reached an historic moment. In July 2010 the first phase of the IATI standard was agreed. The second phase of the standard will be approved at the next IATI Steering Committee on February 9, 2011. The Administration needs to urgently engage in defining the scope of the standard being agreed at this meeting.

The emerging 'common aid language' needs to be shaped by U.S. information and reporting systems and respond to U.S. accountability concerns. The Administration's focus on results and accountability requires comprehensive and timely information on all resources being invested in a country, sector or area. Without the ability to compare U.S. spending to that of other donors, it is not possible to allocate or coordinate resources effectively or meaningfully assess their impact.

The International Aid Transparency Initiative also provides development agencies with a framework for delivering on key aid effectiveness commitments they made at Accra in a consistent and coherent way. At the Accra High Level Forum in 2008 donors committed to "make aid more transparent". This included information about current and future aid flows and publishing details of all conditions. Development ministers from around the world will have to account for their success or failure to meet these commitments at the next High Level Forum in Korea later this year.

To honor these commitments, IATI members need to agree an aid transparency standard that fully addresses the priority issues identified by partner countries. These include:

- the provision of up-to-date information on current and future aid flows; and
- ensuring that published information uses common definitions and formats that are compatible with partner countries' budgets and systems.

We welcome the progress made on developing the IATI standard. Your leadership is now essential to ensure officials and technicians finalize an effective standard and approve a roll-out schedule.

We are writing to ask you as a key observer to ensure that USAID is fully engaged in this process and that the agreement reached on February 9 truly delivers on aid transparency, both for U.S. and recipient country citizens.

Yours sincerely,

Access Info Europe – Helen Darbshire, Executive Director

Article 19 – Agnès Callamard, Executive Director. *Member of the Global Transparency Initiative*

Bank Information Center – Chad Dobson, Executive Director. *Member of the Global Transparency Initiative*

Canadian Council for International Cooperation and Better Aid, Reality of Aid and the Open Forum on CSO Development Effectiveness – Gerry Barr, President. *Member of the IATI Steering Committee*

CARE USA – JoDee Winterhof, Vice President, Policy and Advocacy

Centre for Law and Democracy – Toby Mendel, Executive Director. *Member of the Global Transparency Initiative*

CIDSE – Bernd Nilles, Executive Director

Coordination SUD – Jean-Louis Vielajus, President

FUNDEPS – César Múrua, Executive Director

International Budget Partnership – Warren Krafchik, Director. *Member of the IATI Steering Committee*

ONE – Sheila Nix, US Executive Director

One World Action – Andy Rutherford, Acting Director

Open Knowledge Foundation – Rufus Pollock, Director

OpenAid – Claudia Schwegmann, Director

Oxfam America

Publish What You Fund – Karin Christiansen, Director. *Member of the IATI Steering Committee*

Save the Children USA – Michael Klosson, Vice President, Policy and Humanitarian Response

Transparency International – Corbus de Swardt, Managing Director. *Member of the IATI Steering Committee*

