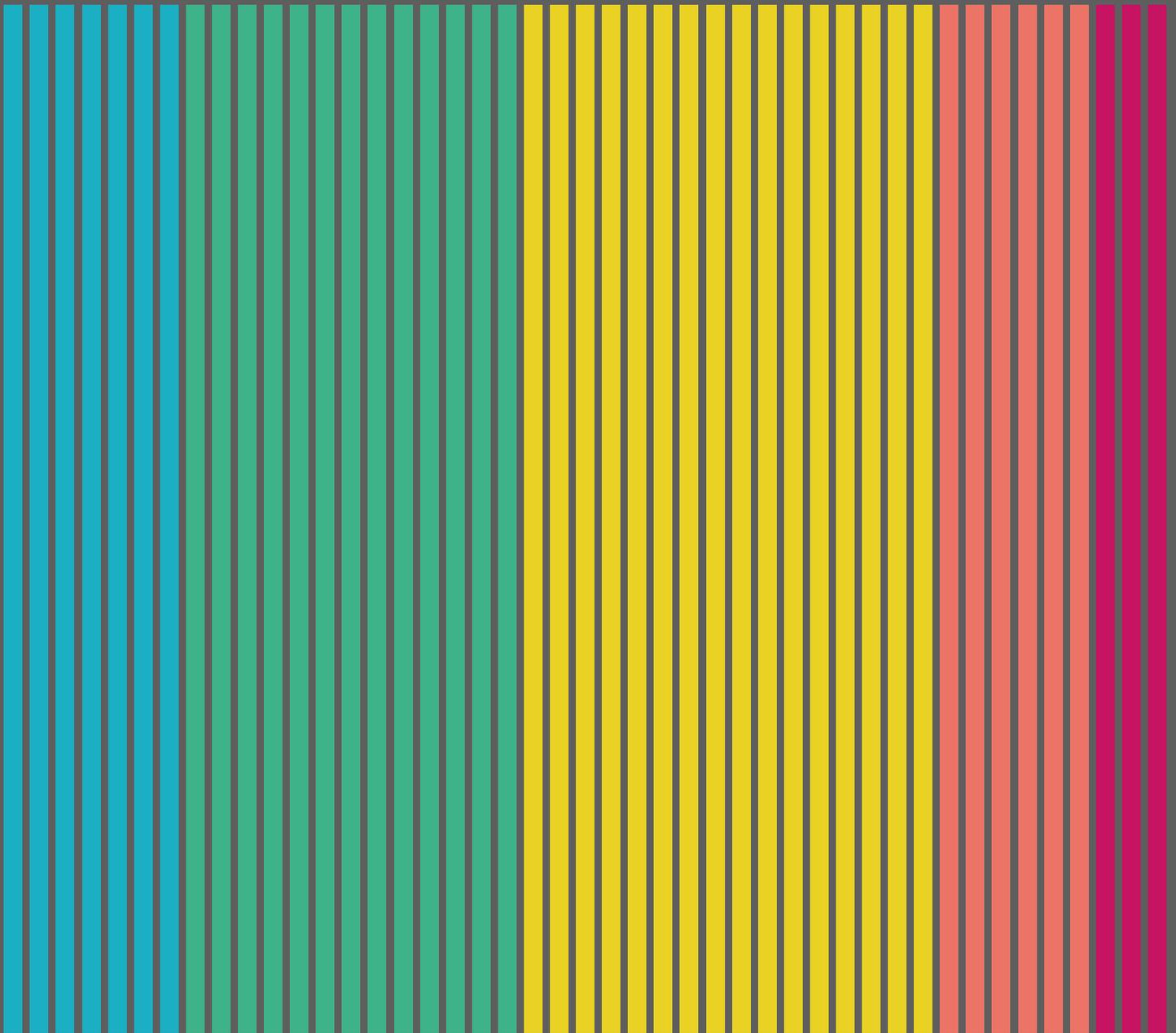


# Aid Transparency Index 2018

**Publish** WhatYouFund  
The Global Campaign for Aid Transparency



Publish What You Fund is the global campaign for aid transparency. Launched in 2008, we envisage a world where aid and development information is transparent, available and used for effective decision-making, public accountability and lasting change for all citizens.

Publish What You Fund is grateful to the many people involved in producing this Index. Particular thanks go to peer reviewers who have advised on the approach, methodology and earlier drafts of this report. Their comments and suggestions were gratefully received.

The 2018 reviewers included:

Bill Anderson, IATI Secretariat  
 Andrew Clarke, Omidyar Network  
 Silvana Fumega, Latin America Open Data Initiative  
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 Winnie Kamau, Association of Freelance Journalists  
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This report has been designed by the Kitchen Agency.

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# Executive Summary

The past year has been a complex and challenging one for aid and development transparency. To help fulfil development needs and ambitious global objectives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), more and better aid and development finance than ever is required, especially at a time when some donors' budgets are being reduced. To help meet this demand, more actors – including development finance institutions (DFIs) and others from the private and humanitarian sector – have become more involved, changing the landscape of aid and development finance forever.

The involvement of a growing number of aid and development actors presents a transparency challenge. To ensure that we can see the whole picture of aid and development finance, information provided for public use must remain consistent, whatever type of donor shares it. This comes at a time when the effectiveness and accountability of aid is under increased scrutiny. This scrutiny is necessary – it is vital to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of future aid and development finance projects.

The 2018 Aid Transparency Index shows how these actors are performing individually and as a whole. Overall, the 2018 results show much to be positive about. For example, 93% of Index organisations are now publishing in the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Standard, which means more timely aid and development data is being made openly available than ever before. Around half of the organisations are publishing essential information on their aid and development spending on a monthly basis. Compare this to just a quarter reported in the 2016 Index.

Although this is, of course, to be applauded, the publishing of timely data in itself is not enough. To be of value, it also needs to be comprehensive and cover all aspects of development projects, including, but not limited to, financial and performance-related data. Only two organisations – the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) – publish on all Index indicators in the IATI Standard.

This year, the AsDB, with a score of 98.6%, knocks the UNDP off the 2016 Index's top spot. Other DFIs, including the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank International Development Association (WB-IDA) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) have also done well. They dominate the 'very good' category. The UNDP, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (UK-DFID) and the United States' Millennium Challenge Corporation (US-MCC) also lead the way in this category.



**A growing number of development actors presents a transparency challenge**

Collectively, however, the 'fair', 'poor' and 'very poor' categories are the Index's largest. Typically, donors in these categories fail to share enough high-quality data across all indicators. For example, in the 'poor' category the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK-FCO) provides information on just 39% of indicators. And both the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Spain-AECID) and Japan's International Cooperation Agency (Japan-JICA) publish on fewer indicators than in 2016.

To help ensure transparency commitments are honoured and to be able to see a more complete picture of aid and development finance, development organisations need to be transparent on all aspects of development work, including on whether objectives are met. Publish What You Fund strongly urges organisations – in both the private and the public sector – to share detailed, timely, comprehensive and comparable data so this can happen.

Only when the missing pieces of the data transparency jigsaw are provided can open data be used and transformed into the life-changing first step required to make aid and development activities more effective and hold organisations and donors to account for significant and lasting change.

# Introduction

## THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

*"Without good data, we're flying blind. If you can't see it, you can't solve it."*  
Kofi Annan.<sup>1</sup>

The aid transparency movement began in earnest a decade ago when major international donors committed to improve the effectiveness of their aid, in part by making it transparent. The objective was to support informed decision-making, as well as improve development outcomes and accountability to citizens everywhere.

Since then, the international transparency agenda has picked up momentum. Transparency on aid and development finance activities has been included in multiple high-level processes at the United Nations (UN),<sup>2</sup> the African Union,<sup>3</sup> the European Union (EU),<sup>4</sup> the United States (US)<sup>5</sup> and others.

The commitment to aid transparency has gradually filtered down into the political leadership of major international organisations. It has also been endorsed by open data supporters, including those outside of the aid and development sector.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the community of actors committed to transparency has become wider and unprecedented amounts of valuable information on strategy, spending, implementation and monitoring of development work have been made publicly available, including in the IATI Standard.<sup>7</sup>

### THE PUBLISH WHAT YOU FUND AID TRANSPARENCY PRINCIPLES

The Aid Transparency Principles are at the core of our work. They cover all forms of aid and related development activities. Over 100 civil society organisations endorsed these principles in the 'Make Aid Transparent' campaign in 2011.

- Information on aid should be published proactively. Not just in response to requests.
- Information on aid should be comprehensive, timely, accessible and comparable. Not just a glossy brochure.
- Everyone should be able to request and receive information on aid processes. Not just officials in governments or aid agencies.
- The right of access to information about aid should be promoted. Not published once and forgotten.

[www.publishwhatyoufund.org/why-it-matters/what-you-can-do/](http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/why-it-matters/what-you-can-do/)

<sup>1</sup> [www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-02386-3](http://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-018-02386-3)

<sup>2</sup> [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/)

<sup>3</sup> <https://au.int/en/agenda2063>

<sup>4</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/european-development-policy/european-consensus-development\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/european-development-policy/european-consensus-development_en)

<sup>5</sup> [www.publishwhatyoufund.org/reports/2018-US-Brief](http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/reports/2018-US-Brief)

<sup>6</sup> See Natural Resources Governance, International Budget Partnership, Open contracting and the Grand Bargain initiatives

<sup>7</sup> See more at [www.aidtransparency.net/](http://www.aidtransparency.net/)



**The  
community  
of actors  
committed to  
transparency  
has become  
wider**

There are now growing concerns, however, that the aid transparency agenda might be losing momentum. While it continues to prove difficult to demonstrate the impact of improved transparency on development outcomes, the promise of the aid transparency movement remains unfulfilled. Available data on aid and development finance is not being used in the ways and to the extent that the visionaries of the aid transparency movement intended or expected.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, in some countries, including donor countries, civic space – essential for citizens and civil society organisations (CSOs) to have a say in decision-making – is shrinking.<sup>9</sup> This context makes it yet harder for everyone to access information and use it to hold donor and partner country governments to account.



**It is estimated that a \$2.5tn aid and development finance gap needs to be filled at the global level**

#### A CHANGING LANDSCAPE

Against the backdrop of scarce Official Development Assistance (ODA) resources and the prospect of budget cuts in some places,<sup>10</sup> it is estimated that a \$2.5tn aid and development finance gap needs to be filled at the global level.<sup>11</sup> Without these funds, development needs cannot be met. As a result, the shape of development assistance is changing, presenting new frontiers for transparency efforts.

A wider range of actors, including those from the private sector, whose primary mandate is not necessarily poverty reduction, are getting increasingly involved in financing and implementing development activities. While this may represent new opportunities for partner countries, these shifts also represent a source of concern from a transparency perspective as these generally receive less public scrutiny.<sup>12</sup>

To take another example, the recent influx of refugees fleeing conflicts and economic hardship crossing into Europe, means that a significant portion of designated aid and development budgets are being spent within European donor countries themselves or are disbursed through trusts or pooled funds. However, their effectiveness at addressing development needs and promoting accountability to partner country actors has been questioned.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, the disbursement of aid and development budgets in some countries is becoming increasingly fragmented across multiple organisations whose levels of transparency greatly vary, making it more difficult to see the full picture of development work.

8 See Publish What You Fund discussion paper on data use for accountability in Benin and Tanzania: [www.publishwhatyoufund.org/projects/data-use/](http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/projects/data-use/)

9 See for example CIVICUS Tracking civic space platform: <https://monitor.civicus.org/>

10 See here [www.oecd.org/newsroom/development-aid-stable-in-2017-with-more-sent-to-poorest-countries.htm](http://www.oecd.org/newsroom/development-aid-stable-in-2017-with-more-sent-to-poorest-countries.htm) and here [www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/politics/trump-budget-2019/?utm\\_term=.274f0a76c432](http://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/politics/trump-budget-2019/?utm_term=.274f0a76c432)

11 [unctad.org/en/pages/PressRelease.aspx?OriginalVersionID=194](http://unctad.org/en/pages/PressRelease.aspx?OriginalVersionID=194)

12 See for example here [www.odi.org/projects/2782-age-choice-developing-countries-new-aid-landscape](http://www.odi.org/projects/2782-age-choice-developing-countries-new-aid-landscape) and here [www.devinit.org/post/will-blended-finance-lead-private-sector-growth-developing-countries/](http://www.devinit.org/post/will-blended-finance-lead-private-sector-growth-developing-countries/)

13 See [www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A8-2016-0221+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A8-2016-0221+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN)

All of these changes require us to take a closer look and renew the call for greater transparency across the board. The 2018 Aid Transparency Index provides an overview of how aid transparency is implemented in practice by major international donors. Unless there is more evidence of enough and adequate resources being allocated on time and in the places that need it the most as a result of this information, then the progress made to date will be hard to maintain and the challenges that lie ahead will be difficult to overcome.

#### TRANSPARENCY FOR WHAT? DEMONSTRATING THE USEFULNESS OF OPEN AID DATA

*“Open aid data needs to be available before work begins, including the amount of money and the channels the aid flows through, the timeframe of the project, project activities, objectives, outcomes, impacts, the subnational locations of the work”,* Oxfam America.<sup>14</sup>

Open aid data needs to be accessible throughout the stages of a development project, including:

- **Before the work begins:** by sharing strategic plans and documents so that actors can anticipate, be consulted on and feed into a project’s design
- **During implementation:** by sharing information on why, where and what work is being done, as well as monitoring project spending and engaging with implementers
- **After the work is completed:** by assessing results and achievements, sharing best practice, including details of challenges and how they were overcome.

The stakes are too high for aid and development cooperation to be guess work. The fight against poverty and inequality to support long-term development must rest on the foundation of timely, comparable and accessible information that is open to all, which in turn enables public scrutiny.

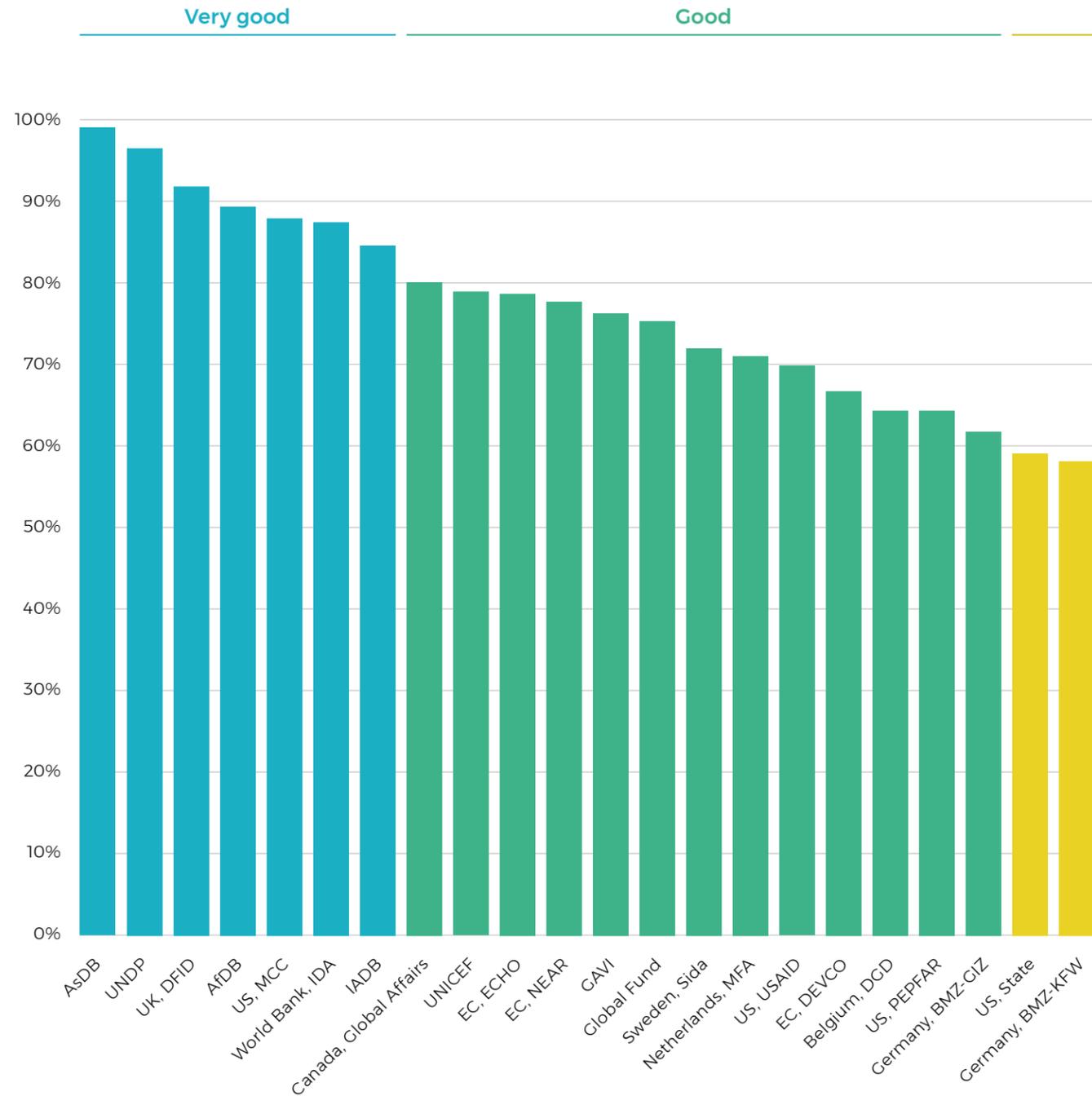
So how have 45 major international donors fared in providing the public with information about their work in the past year?



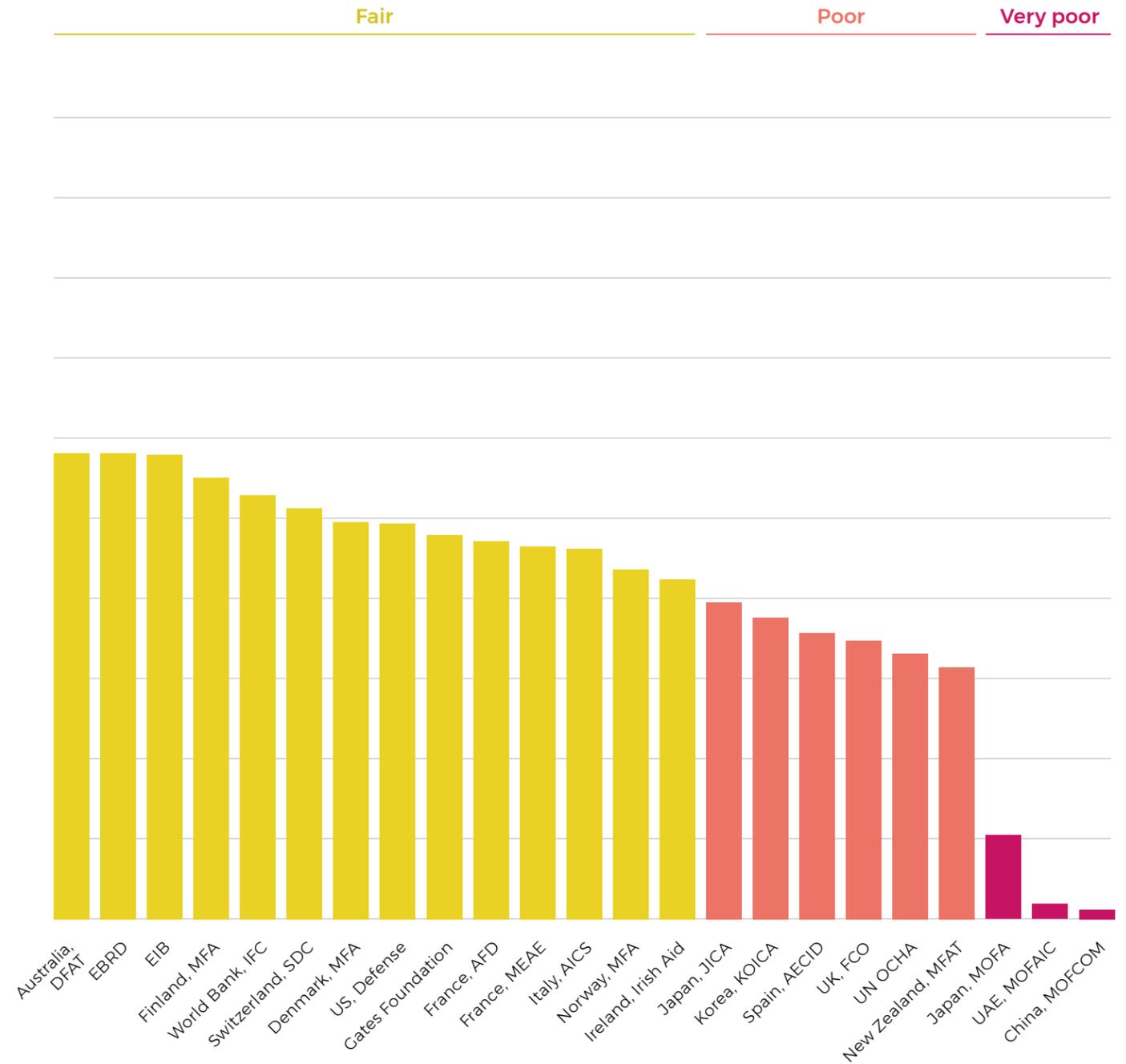
**The stakes are too high for aid and development cooperation to be guess work**

14 [www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file\\_attachments/rr-transparency-more-than-dollars-cents-110917-en.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/file_attachments/rr-transparency-more-than-dollars-cents-110917-en.pdf)

# Overall Results



[www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/2018](http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/2018)



# 2018 Aid Transparency Index Results



**75% of organisations assessed now publish information on their aid and development spending on a monthly or quarterly basis**

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS AND FINDINGS

Unprecedented amounts of timely aid and development data are available in an open and comparable format.

- 75% of the organisations assessed in the Index now publish information on their aid and development spending on a monthly or quarterly basis. 50% of them publish on a monthly basis, which is up from 25% in 2016. Having access to timely information is particularly important to be able to address real-time development challenges and respond to them with adequate solutions.
- Only three out of the 45 major international donors included in the Index do not publish their data in the IATI Standard. This is compared with only one donor that published to the IATI Registry in January 2011. By sharing information in the IATI Standard, it means that all information on development activities by most major international donors can be accessed and compared from a single source.

In order to improve effectiveness and be accountable to their constituencies, all aid and development actors, regardless of their business model or size, can share quality information on their work.

Varied types of organisations perform comparatively well on the Aid Transparency Index. Notably, these include development banks like the AsDB, multilateral organisations such as UNDP and a humanitarian agency, the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (EC-ECHO).

### Too many organisations fail on basic data quality issues.

More data, made available on a more regular basis, does not necessarily translate into usable data if the basics are lacking. For example, more than a quarter of organisations do not provide descriptions of their projects at all or the descriptions provided cannot be understood by non-experts. Nor do all organisations regularly update datasets with accurate dates or provide the most up-to-date documents. While the Index process helps to address some of these issues and provides donors with an opportunity to fix them, too many organisations still fail to provide these basic, but essential, pieces of information.



**Only 15 organisations publish results on their current projects**

The pieces of information critical to assess project and donor impact are the most difficult to find – if available at all.

Despite donors' focus on setting targets, demonstrating results and 'value for money', the performance component in the Index has the most severe data gaps.

- Collectively, donors only score 27% on average for the performance component.
- The performance component includes pre-project impact appraisals, reviews and evaluations, and results. These are the three least published indicators. For example, only 15 organisations publish results on their current projects.

Without access to this information, donors, partner country governments and CSOs cannot monitor projects effectively, assess whether objectives were met or learn from them.

### Some major international donors are not pulling their weight.

- This includes organisations at the bottom of the Index: Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan-MOFA), the Chinese Ministry of Commerce (China-MOFCOM), and the United Arab Emirates' Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (UAE-MOFAIC). These have not joined IATI but also make very little information publicly available elsewhere, despite being among the largest international donors.
- Spain-AECID and the UK-FCO are the only two European organisations included in the 'poor' category, not honouring their commitment to fully open up their aid data.
- Since 2016, some organisations have published data on fewer indicators than they did previously or have reduced the frequency of their publication. This suggests a possible complacency or a risk of backsliding. In stark contrast, other organisations have made rapid progress in a short period of time, which demonstrates that providing the full picture of aid and development is not an impossible task.

# Methodology

## AN INTERACTIVE PROCESS



**Donors also improved the quality of the information published in response to our assessments**

The Index is compiled over a six-month period: three months to collect the data covering 36 indicators and three months to analyse the results, write the report and plan for launches.

Data collection for the 2018 Index started on 1st December 2017 and ended on 9th March 2018. At the start of the data collection process, Publish What You Fund shared with each organisation a preliminary assessment of their level of transparency and remained available throughout data collection period to respond to questions and queries. The assessments included data automatically collected from the IATI Registry, as well as a process of manual verification of this information through sampling and checks conducted by the team. This ‘user feedback’ gave each organisation the opportunity to understand and fix errors, as well as improve the quality and comprehensiveness of their data before the close of the data collection period.

To ensure both the accuracy and impartiality of this exercise, independent reviewers also provided feedback, comments and suggestions on these assessments. They typically came from CSOs, think tanks or universities familiar with the donor organisation concerned or the development sector more broadly. Further input was provided by a group of peer reviewers, comprised of recognised experts in the development sector and/or on open data. They advised Publish What You Fund on the methodology and related assessments.<sup>15</sup>

Additionally, for the first time, Publish What You Fund provided donors with the Data Quality Tester, a new open source tool which allows organisations to independently test the quality of their data against the Index methodology.<sup>16</sup>

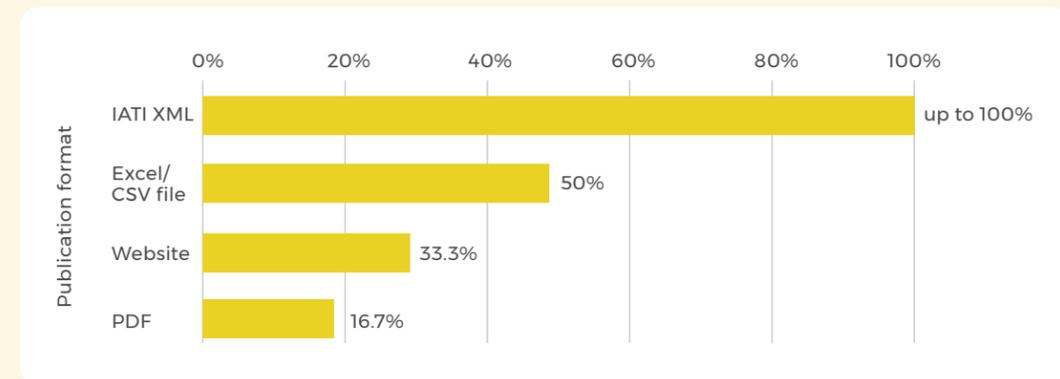
This interactive process worked. It created a positive feedback loop for donors to iterate and improve the information they share. Working directly with donors, Publish What You Fund noted that:

- On average, donors improved the comprehensiveness of their publication in just three months, publishing data on more indicators between the first and final assessments.
- Donors also improved the quality of the information published in response to our assessments. Indicators passing the manual checks and sampling went from 58% to 71% between the first round at the beginning of data collection and the final round after data collection had ended.

<sup>15</sup> See Acknowledgments on inside cover page  
<sup>16</sup> [dataqualitytester.publishwhatyoufund.org](http://dataqualitytester.publishwhatyoufund.org)

## A NEW METHODOLOGY

Changes in the methodology for 2018 mean that the scores are not directly comparable with those of the 2016 Index or earlier. Some indicators, however, remained unchanged, as did the measurement for the frequency of publication. General trends can still be interpreted through the categories used in the Index ranking. Further details on the process, the methodology and its modifications are available online at [www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/methodology](http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/the-index/methodology)



Graph 1: Scoring formats

Data published in more useful formats score more points. As shown in the chart above, the graduated scoring rewards publication in standardised, machine-readable and/or open formats like IATI XML, XLSX and CSV, as these facilitate better analysis, comparability and visualisation compared to text documents. For more details on the scoring system and why IATI XML is scored highly, see the 2018 Aid Transparency Index Technical Paper, p.11.



Chart 1: The components of aid transparency

# Performance categories

As in previous years, five categories are used for comparing performance in the Aid Transparency Index. They are 'very good' (100-80%), 'good' (79-60%), 'fair' (59-40%), 'poor' (39-20%) and 'very poor' (19-0%). In 2018, seven organisations are in the 'very good' category and 13 in the 'good' category. Sixteen organisations achieve a 'fair' performance, whereas six have 'poor' and three 'very poor' results.



**The AsDB tops the Index for the first time**

## Very good

The 'very good' category includes seven organisations, three fewer than in 2016. All seven were already in this category, but for the first time the AsDB tops the Index. Multilateral development banks dominate this category, with four representatives – the AsDB, the AfDB, the WB-IDA and the IADB. They are joined by UNDP, UK-DFID and US-MCC, all of which have consistently performed well over the years. The AsDB and UNDP are the only two organisations publishing all Index indicators in the IATI Standard, making their information fully open and comparable.

## Good

With a total of 13 organisations, the 'good' category features a mix of organisations, including those that have made efforts to improve their levels of transparency. It is also home to organisations that have failed to maintain 'very good' levels.

The US Agency for International Development (US-USAID) and Belgium's Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (Belgium-DGD) are both included in the 'good' category for the first time. They have generally made more information on their development activities publicly available, including in the IATI Standard.

Three organisations – Belgium-DGD, the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI) and the German Agency for International Cooperation (Germany-BMZ-GIZ) – improved the frequency of their publication, increasing the total number of monthly publishers in the 'good' category to 11. US-USAID and the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (US-PEPFAR) are the only two organisations in this category publishing quarterly.

EC-ECHO takes the lead among the European Commission agencies, closely followed by the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (EC-NEAR), while the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (EC-DEVCO) brings up the rear.

Overall, donors in the 'good' category publish more than 65% of the indicators in the IATI Standard and perform comparatively well, providing organisational and strategic documents, information about project attributes, as well as basic joined-up development data. However, less than half score for evaluations and pre-project impact appraisals. Six donors do not score at all for project budget documents and contracts.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the United Nations Children's Fund and The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) maintain 'good' levels of transparency as they publish timely, open and comparable data on a majority of indicators. However, these organisations have made less high quality information available than in 2016. For some indicators, data and documents on development activities did not contain the right information, were out-of-date or not detailed enough.

## Fair

Sixteen donors form the largest group, the 'fair' category. It includes two new IATI publishers: the World Bank International Finance Corporation (WB-IFC) and the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development. As a result of providing some data in an open and comparable format for the first time, both of these organisations moved out of the Index's bottom categories.

Organisations in this category publish between 41% (Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to 71% (the United States' Department of State) of the indicators in the IATI Standard. Mostly, they provide basic organisational and project information. On the financial side, commitments, disbursements and total organisation budget are published by a significant majority. However, fewer than half of the organisations score on more detailed data, such as project budgets. Whereas the majority of donors in the 'very good' and 'good' category provide forward-looking budgets for at least three years or more, only six donors do so in the 'fair' category.

Further improvements are also needed regarding information used to monitor projects and hold decision-makers accountable. Only the two French organisations – the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs and the French Development Agency – along with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation score for sub-national location information. Significant gaps are also found in information about performance. No organisation scores on pre-project impact appraisals, results or evaluations. Only limited information is available on contracts and tenders.

## Poor and Very Poor

Japan-MOFA, the UAE-MOFAIC and China-MOFCOM are the only three organisations in the Index not publishing open and comparable data to the IATI Registry.



**The 'fair' category includes two new IATI publishers: the World Bank-IFC and Italy-AICS**

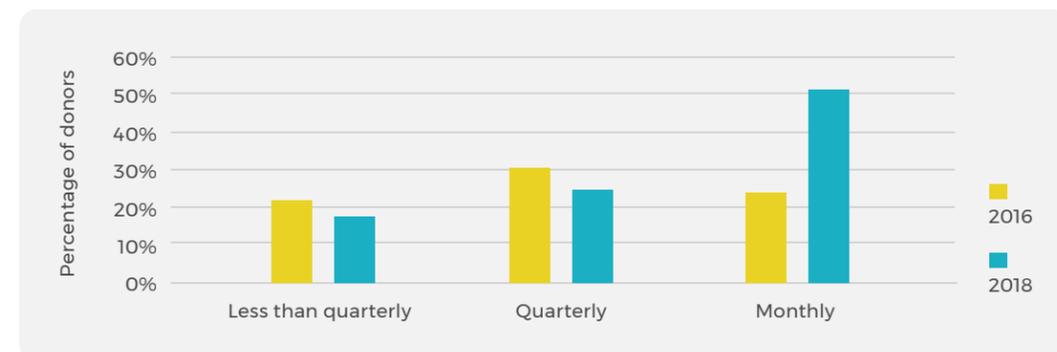
Information about the development work of these organisations is only found in other sources for a limited number of projects or not at all.

In the 'poor' category, Korea's International Cooperation Agency (Korea-KOICA) is a new IATI publisher and has made progress but only provided 29% of all Index indicators in this format. Spain-AECID and Japan-JICA have dropped within the 'poor' category. Both organisations generally published on fewer indicators than in 2016. In stark contrast with UK-DFID's performance, the UK-FCO performs poorly with no information available on 39% of the indicators.

Overall, the performance of these organisations is well below average with little to no information on finance and budgets or performance. Additionally, when it is provided, information is not timely. Apart from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), which publishes its information on a monthly basis, all organisations in the 'poor' and 'very poor' categories publish less than quarterly.

### FREQUENCY OF IATI PUBLICATION

Overall, very positive developments have taken place regarding the frequency of publication and the availability of timely data since the last Index in 2016. 50% of the organisations included in the Aid Transparency Index now update information on their development activities on a monthly basis. This is particularly important because the Index only assesses the availability of current data. It is also essential because it provides donors, partner country governments and CSOs with information that better matches the reality on-the-ground and so is better able to support informed decision-making and effective monitoring processes.

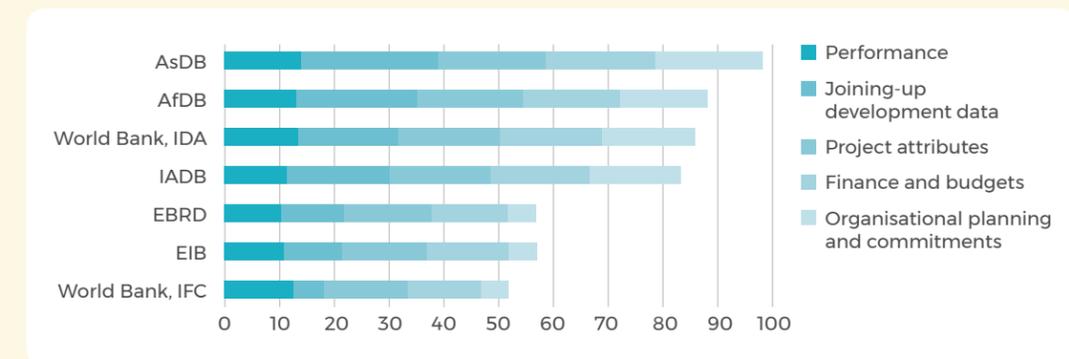


Graph 2: Frequency of IATI publication

## Focus on Development Finance Institutions

*"We need trillions, not billions, of dollars to accomplish [the SDGs], and the money will come from many sources: developing countries, private sector investment, donors, and international financial institutions. By working together, we can help people build better lives with good education, quality health care, clean water, and proper sanitation. Those investments in people will help end extreme poverty in just 15 years."* Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group.<sup>17</sup>

As an increasingly complex and diverse financing landscape develops, DFIs are expected to play a more prominent role.<sup>18</sup> However, since the transparency movement emerged, these major institutions operating with a slightly different model than other bilateral donors have sometimes struggled to demonstrate their added contribution to and impact on development,<sup>19</sup> especially in an open, transparent and comparable manner. The 2018 Aid Transparency Index results demonstrate that this is no longer the case for some, with DFIs as a group generally performing above average.<sup>20</sup>



Graph 3: 2018 Aid Transparency Index results for development finance institutions

<sup>17</sup> [www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/07/10/international-financial-institutions-400-billion-sustainable-development-goals](http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/07/10/international-financial-institutions-400-billion-sustainable-development-goals)

<sup>18</sup> [siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVCOMMINT/Documentation/23659446/DC2015-0002\(E\)FinancingforDevelopment.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVCOMMINT/Documentation/23659446/DC2015-0002(E)FinancingforDevelopment.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> On the topic of additionality, see for example [https://www.eurodad.org/Three\\_principles\\_aid\\_and\\_private\\_sector](https://www.eurodad.org/Three_principles_aid_and_private_sector)

<sup>20</sup> "National and international development finance institutions (DFIs) are specialised development banks or subsidiaries set up to support private sector development in developing countries. They are usually majority-owned by national governments and source their capital from national or international development funds or benefit from government guarantees. This ensures their creditworthiness, which enables them to raise large amounts of money on international capital markets and provide financing on very competitive terms." [www.oecd.org/dac/stats/development-finance-institutions-private-sector-development.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/stats/development-finance-institutions-private-sector-development.htm). For the purpose of the Index, the focus here is on multilateral development banks.

### ASDB: SHARING BEST DATA-IMPROVEMENT PRACTICE

AsDB's performance in the 2018 Aid Transparency Index is the result of strong political will, dedicated resources and technical work. Following an internal transparency review, cross-departmental staff identified potential improvements in their data management processes and agreed an implementation timeline. Agnes Surry, Planning and Policy Specialist at AsDB, shares more about their approach: *"...the bank paid more attention to the transparency agenda and allocated more resources to modernise data management. Having a champion for the process was important. The fact that one department facilitated close coordination among key offices [was] critical in the [successful] production of aid data reports in the IATI format."* Improvements included formatting and/or mapping of existing data. In addition, the preparation of IATI submissions was partially automated and streamlined to enable more frequent submissions of aid data.

### KEY FINDINGS

**All DFIs included in the Index are now publishing open and comparable data on their operations in the IATI Standard.** This is up from one in March 2011, the WB-IDA. The WB-IFC published for the first time in January 2017. This is a significant step, enabling comparison between DFIs, bilateral agencies and other development actors as the aid and development sector diversifies.

**All DFIs now publish on a monthly basis to the IATI Registry (barring the WB-IDA which publishes quarterly).** This is a key improvement from 2016 when all DFIs published on a quarterly basis only; apart from the EIB, which already published on a monthly basis. The WB-IFC had not joined IATI at the time. Accessing timely information is key to supporting appropriate and time-sensitive aid and development work in a fast-changing environment (see Box Why this matters on the right hand page).

**On average, DFIs as a group perform better than other organisations included in the Index but disparities exist between them.** DFIs score relatively well on organisation planning and commitments and project attributes, collectively scoring between 84% and 88% for these components respectively. The majority of the information is available in the IATI Standard or on each DFI's website. Their publications also include the provision of financial and budgetary data for some years ahead. All provide commitments. Notable exceptions are the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which do not provide any disaggregated budget information and provide country strategies inconsistently.

While progress has been made over the years, the available data also points to a number of limitations where further transparency is needed:

### Contributions to development outcomes

While DFIs have been part of development-related work for many years, poverty reduction is not necessarily their primary mandate or that of their partners. As a result, questions are raised about the extent to which some of their operations directly contribute to improved development outcomes. Data collected in the 2018 Index illustrates this point. While organisations provide information on the objectives of their operations, only four DFIs – the AsDB, the AfDB, the IADB and the WB-IDA – publish details or summaries of their pre-project impact appraisals, evaluations and review documents and results. This limits the ability for others to hold them accountable.

More worryingly, the EBRD, the EIB and the WB-IFC do not score on six key indicators: conditions, impact appraisals, results, evaluation and reviews and sub-national locations. This information is either not provided or is not consistently available.

### The role of the private sector

The extent to which detailed information is provided on private sector operations remains unclear.<sup>21</sup> The 2018 Index demonstrates that within the DFIs group, institutions that work primarily with the private sector, such as the WB-IFC and the EBRD, perform comparatively less well. Commercial constraints and sensitivities are, for example, generally cited by banks as a justification for some of these gaps, particularly around contractual information and conditions. The WB-IFC is the only DFI that does not provide any kind of contract-related information, while the EBRD makes summaries available only in some cases. This may be in the interests of DFIs, and in some cases their borrowers but is rarely in the public interest. Further steps can be taken to move the transparency agenda forward and further clarify where legitimate exemptions may apply.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

#### Using DFI planning information in Asia and Africa

In Asia and Africa, local communities and the organisations that support them, use an Early Warning System founded by the International Accountability Project (IAP) and the Center for International Environmental Law.<sup>22</sup> The System enables them to access verified information about proposed projects from 13 DFIs, most likely to impact the environment and human rights. Jocelyn Medallo, Director of Advocacy and Policy at IAP, explains how this supports Banks' effectiveness and promotes accountability to local communities: *"...making detailed data visible and usable helps improve project design and helps with anticipation – before communities are in a situation of crisis. It helps [to work] upstream [with the relevant banks] and involve communities before projects start."*

<sup>21</sup> To read more on Publish What You Fund's work to date on the need for a visibility threshold, see [www.publishwhatyoufund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/IATI-visibility-discussion-paper.pdf](http://www.publishwhatyoufund.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/IATI-visibility-discussion-paper.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> See: [accountabilityproject.org/work/community-organizing/early-warning-system/](http://accountabilityproject.org/work/community-organizing/early-warning-system/)

# Getting the basics right



**IATI data should be accurately updated in a timely manner by donors**

Through the Index process, Publish What You Fund found fundamental errors in IATI data that could be a barrier to being able to use it across the board. These are as follows:

## Incorrect activity dates and activity statuses

Many activities published to the IATI Registry have apparently inaccurate dates and activity statuses. For example, some activities are marked with an 'implementation' status, even though any physical activity appears to have finished several years previously. As described in the Standard, activity dates and statuses should be linked so they correspond. It may be reasonable for actual dates to be missing (for example, when a project is in the pipeline phase). If an activity changes (it is extended or cut short, for example) the data should be updated to reflect this.

Similarly, there are occurrences of activity dates that are invalid, impossible (dates in the future, for example) or simply missing. These sorts of errors not only affect data filtering but can also damage users' trust in the data as they will not be able to find the information they need. As more information becomes available, IATI data should be accurately updated in a timely manner by donors.

LOCATIONS (1)		[ - ] HIDE
1. Afghanistan		
PLANNED START DATE 2016-10-01	ACTUAL START DATE 2016-10-01	
PLANNED START DATE 2107-09-30	ACTUAL END DATE 2107-09-30	

Source - d.portal

## Missing or invalid country codes

For some projects, publishers fail to provide recipient country codes or use invalid codes. Most IATI tools, including those used by partner countries and CSOs, rely on this basic information - for example, to filter for activities in a given recipient country. However, this is not possible without an accurate country code. Publishers should ensure they follow the IATI Standard by using ISO 3166-1 alpha-2 codes for recipient countries.

## Misleading transaction information

Transactions record committed or actual funds flowing in or out of an aid activity. It is not uncommon to find transactions on activities years after the physical activity was completed. Often, these transactions have zero or negative value, and reflect internal accounting systems/book balancing - sometimes as a consequence of donors using IATI as an internal accounting tool. This creates confusion for automated tools

importing data from the IATI Registry and displaying it for external users. Such tools treat the project as being still current and may confuse data users in the absence of any contextual explanation.

Transactions (26)					[ - ] HIDE
DATE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	PROVIDER	RECEIVER	VALUE
2015-12-31	Disbursement				0 EUR
2015-12-31	Disbursement				0 EUR
2015-12-31	Disbursement				0 EUR
2015-12-31	Disbursement				0 EUR

Source - d.portal

## 'Noisy' data

Finding specific and useful data on a website can be tricky. Even if the information is available, it can be hidden down a rabbit hole of links or nestled among unrelated documents. The same can be true when searching IATI data. For instance, Publish What You Fund found one single activity which contained more than 70 documents tagged as 'review of project performance and evaluation'. The information needed was hidden in plain view among mislabelled content. Donors should use appropriate codes that form the standard. Adding extra document metadata, such as document dates, also helps but only six of the publishers included in the Index use this feature in their activity data.

## Units of aid

Since the publication of the 2016 Index, Publish What You Fund has found an increase in the number of donors using hierarchies to structure their data around different units of aid. For example, that means overarching programmes may be published as a 'parent' activity and individual projects published as 'child' activities. Explicitly connecting different activities may provide useful information for the data user because it reflects the way aid and development work is structured from the general level (programme) to the more disaggregated level (projects and activities).

There is a risk, however, that important elements like evaluations are then published at the general level only, which may not be sufficiently granular. Publish What You Fund encourages donors to consider the most appropriate way to structure their data without compromising transparency at the lowest levels.

The interactive Index process demonstrates that it is not beyond publishers to rapidly resolve these issues. Clearer guidance on how to publish in the IATI Standard would certainly help, as would tools that prominently flag data issues to publishers.

# Performance by components



## 1. ORGANISATIONAL PLANNING AND COMMITMENTS

Is information on donors' strategic plans, development policies and commitments to aid transparency available to the public?

ORGANISATIONAL PLANNING AND COMMITMENT	FINANCE AND BUDGETS	PROJECT ATTRIBUTES	JOINING-UP DEVELOPMENT DATA	PERFORMANCE
UK - DFID	AsDB	AsDB	AsDB	AsDB
AsDB	UNDP	UNDP	Canada - Global Affairs	UNDP
UNDP	UK - DFID	AfDB	Global Fund	UK-DFID
EC- ECHO	GAVI	GAVI	UNDP	World Bank-IDA
UNICEF	Global Fund	EC-ECHO	World Bank-IDA	IADB

Table: Top five performers per component

Information on the global functioning of organisations is made available by donors via annual reports (91% of all donors), audits, organisational strategies and allocation policies (80%). All donors except China-MOFCOM provide a procurement policy. Country strategies or Memoranda of Understanding is the least published indicator within this component and is only made available by 25 donors. The UAE-MOFAIC and UN-OCHA are the only two organisations without a freedom of information law or disclosure policy. While no organisation gets full points for this component, donors score well on average with 67% points of the maximum score.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

#### Using open aid data to inform budget planning in Burkina Faso

Alimatou Zongo works for the Ministry of Economy and Finance in Burkina Faso. Alimatou puts together accurate plans for Burkina Faso's national budget. To help achieve this, she engages directly with donors to collect financial and budgetary information on their contributions. Here, she shares what is involved: "As part of our work for the government of Burkina Faso, every year, we produce a report on the state of development and cooperation work in the country. We also produce a budget, including for the years to come. Both documents are shared with ministers as well as presented at more local levels." Alimatou represents Burkina Faso as an IATI member. She strongly supports the need for better data on development: "We need to know the resources at our disposal as well as a sense of what worked or not. We need reliable and detailed information."



## 2. FINANCE AND BUDGETS

Where does the money go after it leaves donors' accounts and what is it spent on?

Finance and budgetary information allows anyone to follow the journey of development money. It can be used for planning purposes and to hold donors, as well as partner country governments, to account. 37 donors publish their total organisation budget, with 20 organisations giving an outlook for up to 2019 or beyond. Only five donors fail to publish their total organisation budgets to the IATI Registry but do publish it elsewhere.

However, the more specific and disaggregated budgetary information is, the less extensively it is published. Only 31 and 30 organisations provide disaggregated and project budgets respectively. Project budget documents that contain financial breakdowns for the different lines of individual activities are only provided by 17 donors.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

#### Using data to ensure donor money is being best spent according to plans and commitments in Mexico

After an earthquake hit the country in September 2017, Paola Palacios, Programme Coordinator with Transparency International Mexico, tried to track plans and commitments made by donors to support emergency and reconstruction work. However, this was not straightforward, as Paola notes: "We found a lack of information from the government in their response. The databases we are looking at don't match. International donors don't always have transparency and accountability built into their processes." In response, Paola's team created a platform of around 100 CSOs to call for transparency. They are now using data from some of the Aid Transparency Index components to ensure that the money spent meets the needs of affected communities.

### WHY THIS MATTERS

#### Informing the national budget and demonstrating accountability to citizens in Tanzania

Basil Malaki is Manager of the Hatua Project in Tanzania. As part of this project, Basil and his team use civic technology to enrich governance, accountability and transparency. One example of this is an online platform, called Kodi Yangu, which allows Tanzanians to see how their taxes are being spent. It is based on the government's national budget data, which also includes contributions from donors, when available. Basil explains how this is done: "We look at the key figures and visualise these figures [so that] citizens [can see] how the government uses their money.. The platform also shows an employed ordinary citizen how much tax they are supposed to pay from the percentages that are given by the government. [We] use that platform to make people aware about how the government is using their tax money."



The more specific and disaggregated budgetary information is, the less extensively it is published



### 3. PROJECT ATTRIBUTES

Who is doing what, where and when?

This component provides descriptive, non-financial data on development activities. These pieces of information are necessary to understand the fundamentals of the activities taking place. Of all the components, indicators for project attributes are most comprehensively published across donors. The vast majority is available in the IATI format. Donors score highest on indicators of this component, achieving on average 74% of the maximum score.

However, a number of donors still fail to provide the most basic information, such as titles and descriptions. Eight donors failed to meet the definition for titles, including top performers, such as the WB-IDA and GAVI. More than a quarter of organisations do not provide descriptions of their projects at all or the descriptions provided cannot be understood by non-experts.

The biggest information gaps are evident for sub-national location information with fewer than half of the donors publishing this information. Only 19 organisations make it available in the IATI Standard and three consistently publish it in other formats.

#### Researchers – Oxfam France

When researchers are interested in understanding what is being done at a certain point in time by donors on specific topics such as renewable energy or support to leveraging domestic resources, having access to high quality data is essential. *“It is often difficult to know how many years a project will run for. There is confusion sometimes on the date the project was approved and when it actually starts. This means that it is very challenging [for our teams] to independently evaluate a project.”*

#### WHY THIS MATTERS

##### Enabling local communities to hold government to account in Nigeria

While a portion of the Nigerian government’s budget and donors’ contributions support rural communities, few are aware of what is happening and most are not directly involved in the decision-making process. To empower local citizens, Celestina Obiekea, a Community Manager for Connected Development and her team have involved rural communities in the tracking of public projects and funds in the health, water supply, sanitation and hygiene sectors. For example, in Kano and Yobe states, communities have monitored EU-funded projects. Celestina believes that access to data enables people to hold their government to account: *“All of this information is very valuable for us to push at the local level. When there are delays we can ask questions and involve the community. It’s an important part of our process to push for responsiveness [from decision makers].”* She also explained how her team use the Index and IATI *“to write letters to public authorities when the information is not available publicly.”*



**Eight donors failed to meet the definition for titles, including top performers, such as the WB-IDA and GAVI**



### 4. JOINING-UP DEVELOPMENT DATA

What type of information is particularly useful to link up with other datasets, beyond aid?

Joining-up development data refers to the diverse nature of flows, activities and actors within the sector. It helps provide a full picture of development for the user by linking and connecting data. It also helps everyone understand the mechanisms chosen by organisations when implementing aid and development finance work. Project information on the types of flow, finance and aid is made available by 42 donors, usually in the IATI Standard. Less information, however, is made available on procurement. Only 45% and 25% of the information for contracts and tenders respectively is made available in the IATI Standard. Canada-Global Affairs and the Global Fund are two organisations that perform comparatively well on this component, and better than donors included in the ‘very good’ category.

#### WHY THIS MATTERS

##### Recognising the need for greater aid transparency in the health sector in Mozambique

Mozambique relies heavily on aid, particularly in the health sector. Full transparency is difficult to achieve when so many actors are involved. Keeping track of the different spending modalities and the results they achieve is important for Jorge Matine, Researcher at the Centro de Integridade Pública. Here Jorge explains why aid transparency is needed and valued: *“There is a lot of appetite for this information. We had the debt crises, we all became aware of when you leave governments to do their own thing, it can go wrong. Newspapers all want to know about these issues and report on them. We have been working for 10 years in Mozambique and there is increasing interest in transparency...It’s become a very sensitive political issue. This might be different in a country where aid doesn’t play such a big role but here, it matters.”* Jorge and his colleagues know that with the right information informing their decisions, their work can make a difference. They want to start implementing small projects using the Aid Transparency Index methodology and IATI data to get more information about specific sectors.

##### Economist, Donor office, Cotonou, Benin

*“...on top of contextual information, we also need to know what lessons have been learned by us and others, what others are doing, where and when. All that put together will help us defining our next interventions.”*



## 5. PERFORMANCE

**Have the objectives and targets of development projects been met?  
What are the lessons learned and results?**

Performance data and documents are essential for monitoring the progress of projects. They are also key for assessing whether a project is on track or has achieved its development objectives. Despite donors' focus on setting targets, demonstrating results and 'value for money', performance is the component with the most severe data gaps. The least number of organisations publish or score on these indicators.

Although 27 donors provide information on general objectives, the publication numbers drop significantly for indicators that can be used for detailed monitoring of projects and holding donors accountable. Only 15 organisations provide results information. Thirteen provide pre-project appraisals. Only eight consistently publish reviews and evaluations. These are the three least published items of all indicators in the Index. When available, between 93% (results) and 50% (reviews and evaluations) of the performance indicators are published in an IATI format. The average percentage score for the performance component is just 27%. Organisations scoring on pre-project appraisals, results and evaluations and reviews are almost exclusively in the 'good' and 'very good' categories. Although reviews and evaluations, as well as results, can sometimes be found by searching donors' websites, gaps persist as this information is not provided consistently. No organisation achieves full points for all indicators of this component.

### Director of a NGO platform in Cotonou, Benin

*"We cannot play our watchdog role if we do not know what the objectives are, what results are expected. We have asked, for example, the European Union to share their log frame with us right at the beginning of their projects. That way, we have a roadmap we can follow."*

### WHY THIS MATTERS

#### Using data to strengthen evidence-based journalism in Kenya

Working with a network of freelance journalists, Winnie Kamau advocates for the use of open data to drive factual, evidence-based journalism. To create a data-driven story, Winnie gathers data from a number of sources, including Kenya's National Bureau of Statistics' database and the government's relatively new Open Data Portal. Winnie then triangulates the data she has gathered to check for inconsistencies or gaps. Winnie says that she would like to see: *"More financial information about projects and their impact. This is hard to find at the moment, especially on IATI. It's hard to even see which organisations have been mandated to distribute the money."* The Association of Freelance Journalists where Winnie works runs the online publication, Talk Africa, which reports on development issues and human-interest stories. It is one of the many growing bodies of journalists in the region demanding and using data to tell stories.



**Pre-project appraisals, reviews and evaluations are the three least published items of all Index indicators**

# Conclusion

The 2018 Aid Transparency Index demonstrates that unprecedented amounts of data are made available by major international donors on a regular basis, in an open and comparable format, such as IATI. This is particularly encouraging and demonstrates that progress is achievable.

However, at a time when ambitious global development goals, such as the SDGs, have been agreed and donors are increasingly under pressure to demonstrate that budgets are being spent effectively and have impact, the 2018 Index also reveals serious data shortfalls. These need to be addressed for the aid transparency movement to fully deliver and provide donors, partner country governments and CSOs with information that can be used to improve development outcomes. Without it, aid and development work cannot be accurately assessed and improved upon. Donor and partner country governments are unable to demonstrate their effectiveness and share best practice. And, parliaments, journalists and citizens cannot get involved in decision-making or hold institutions and governments to account. Unless more and better data is made available by all major international donors, the promise of the aid transparency movement will remain unfulfilled.

Furthermore, as the development landscape becomes more varied, it is imperative that the transparency agenda moves forward also to encompass these new actors. To name but a few, growing needs in the humanitarian sector, the more prominent role of the private sector and DFIs, as well as the use of more recent instruments, such as trust funds, require greater attention and public scrutiny. Publish What You Fund will play an active role here, helping to ensure that the full picture of aid and development finance is made publicly available.

Finally, the publication of data on aid and development work is only the start of the transparency journey. Data alone does not bring change. People do. For transparency and open data to truly deliver and drive more efficiency and accountability, more needs to be done with the information that is available. Voices included in this report – from donors, partner country governments and CSOs – highlight the importance of using data to start a conversation, to ask questions, to address concerns and ultimately drive change. Publish What You Fund has started pushing the agenda in this direction and will continue to do so, learning from our work to date with donors, partner country governments and CSOs.



**It is imperative that the transparency agenda moves forward to encompass new actors**

# Recommendations

## DONORS SHOULD IMPROVE THEIR TRANSPARENCY LEVELS BY:

### Getting the basics right.

As more information is made available by donors more frequently, it is important that available information remains truly transparent and accessible. That means getting the basics right to provide structured and comparable data. Understandable titles, descriptions, accurate dates and activity statuses, as well as sub-national locations and sectors are gateway pieces of information that allow non-experts to access and use the data. This way donors, publishers and non-experts can harness the potential use of such information.

### Improving the publication of performance data.

Improving performance data helps ensure lessons can be learned and best practices shared. If aid and development work is to deliver on its objectives and allocate budgets on that basis, current information on objectives, results and evaluations should be made available and accessible to everyone.

### Leading by example and making the picture complete.

The picture of aid and development finance is becoming clearer but without some of the major international donors, it remains incomplete. All donors should make comprehensive information on their activities readily available. Additionally, organisations with high levels of transparency in a specific country or sector should share best practice and work with others to support their efforts.

## DONORS SHOULD OPEN UP NEW FRONTIERS OF AID AND DEVELOPMENT TRANSPARENCY

At a time when the aid and development landscape is changing, the first step is to get a sense of the extent to which information from donors' portfolios remain hidden, including beyond aid. One step towards this is for donors to provide clarifications on what their entire portfolio consists of (ODA, private sector operations, blended finance, humanitarian, military operations). Another is to apply the principle of openness by default to these sectors and clarify exceptions where applicable, for example to protect stakeholders from direct or indirect harm as a result of sharing information.

## DONORS SHOULD FULFIL THE POTENTIAL OF THE AID TRANSPARENCY MOVEMENT BY ACTIVELY ENCOURAGING THE USE OF THEIR DATA

The unprecedented amounts of timely, open and comparable data made available by most major international donors offers new opportunities to support greater effectiveness and improve development outcomes. However, until this information is accessed and put to use by donors, government representatives and CSOs, the original promise of the aid transparency movement will remain unfulfilled. We all have a role to play in making this happen. But for their part, donors should go beyond mere publication of the data. Publication should involve further engagement internally with donors' staff, including in partner countries, for them to use the data. Externally, we urge donors to explore creating online and in-person feedback loops with other relevant aid and development actors within set timeframes. By providing clear opportunities and concrete tools for actors to engage directly with them on their aid information, donors will be taking significant steps towards improving the effectiveness and accountability of their aid and development efforts.

# Acronyms

AECID	Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo)
AfDB	African Development Bank
AsDB	Asian Development Bank
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung)
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DEVCO	International Cooperation and Development (European Commission)
DFIs	Development Finance Institutions
DFID	Department for International Development (UK Government)
DGD	Directorate General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (of Belgium)
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (European Commission)
EIB	European Investment Bank
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (of the United Kingdom)
GAVI	Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization
GIZ	German Corporation for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
Global Fund	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IAP	International Accountability Project
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IFC	International Finance Corporation (World Bank)
IDA	International Development Association (World Bank)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KOICA	International Cooperation Agency (of Korea)
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (of Japan)
MOFAIC	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (of the United Arab Emirates)
MOFCOM	Ministry of Commerce (of China)
NEAR	Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (European Commission)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PEPFAR	US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
US	United States (of America)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

**“We need to know the resources at our disposal as well as a sense of what worked or not. We need reliable and detailed information.”**

Alimatou Zongo, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Burkina Faso