

**Publish What You Fund**

**Annual Report 2017**



## About Us

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 the global campaign for aid transparency - for more and better information about aid, that is accessible and usable by all. The first global campaign of our kind, we were launched at the 2008 Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness by a coalition of governance, aid effectiveness and access to information advocates.

Our 2016-2019 strategy has three key objectives: to raise both the visibility and quality of data on aid and development and to encourage that data to be used. We want these three objectives to lead to more effective decisions on aid and development and for all initiatives to be accountable to the people they seek to help.

By **visibility**, we mean that at least 80% of aid and development information, including humanitarian aid, should be visible and accessible to anyone. The best way to do this is to publish data to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), a global registry of development data.

By **quality**, we mean that aid and development providers should publish data that is timely, comprehensive, accessible and comparable. This includes forward-looking financial data, project locations, activities and results.

By **use**, we mean identifying and removing barriers to using data for effective decision-making, accountability and learning. It is critical that aid and development information is joined-up with other important data sets, for example on other financial flows and domestic budgets, so that those who use this information have the fullest possible picture to base decisions on.

Our head office is in London. We also maintain representation in Washington DC, where our work is supported by Friends of Publish What You Fund.

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## Message from Giles Bolton Chair, Board of Directors

Over the last 12 months, much of the broad consensus of recent years about how aid should be funded, targeted and used has been challenged as never before.

The development landscape continues to fragment, as new donors come with different priorities and approaches. Many developing countries continue to move forward, their declining reliance on aid a welcome sign of success. Aid itself has come under attack from sceptical, populist politics in a number of key donor countries.

Yet aid, done well, still has a critical role to play. There are more than 700 million people worldwide living in extreme poverty, who could benefit from well-targeted assistance. Billions more depend on global public goods like vaccines which are provided through aid. At Publish What You Fund, we know that transparency is essential to making sure the aid is both effective and trusted. If aid has been questioned as never before, then transparency has never been more important.

### Achievements in the last year

Over the last 12 months, Publish What You Fund has broadened its mission. We no longer only work to ensure that clear, trustworthy aid data is published. We also now work to help people use it to make aid and development finance more accountable and effective.

In Benin and Tanzania our research found that there was a great demand for data which was not being met by existing releases. Our work on Open Agricultural Funding (with InterAction) showed donors and tool developers how to identify who their users are and address their needs. Our work on Joined-up Data Standards (with Development Initiatives) has brought together open data and statistics communities to tackle the Sustainable Development Goals.

Meanwhile, we have continued to make the case for and monitor aid transparency; regardless of whether you believe there should be less or more of it. And the last year has seen leading European donors recommit to it, through the European Consensus for Development. In the UK, we have given our strong support to the government's promise to make all aid transparent, whichever departments spend it. In the US, together with our sister organisation Friends of Publish What You Fund, we have made the case for transparency to the new US administration.

Finally, we have revised the methodology of the Aid Transparency Index to reflect the changing development landscape. More than 50 people across 30 countries contributed to the consultation, helping to make the Index more robust and authoritative than ever.

## Plans for next year

- We have always said that transparency starts with publication, but it doesn't stop there. In the coming year, we will work to ensure that making aid data open and accessible becomes an accepted and everyday part of being an effective donor.
- We will produce another edition of our Aid Transparency Index, which will assess the data of 45 leading donors to show who is leading the way.
- We will interrogate open aid data to assess the impact of potential changes to US foreign assistance.
- We hope to work with experts in humanitarian aid to understand how greater transparency could make a difference.

We cannot do any of this by ourselves. More than anyone, we thank our funders, including the Hewlett Foundation, Omidyar Network and InterAction. A special word of thanks, too, to our colleagues at Friends of Publish What You Fund, chaired by the inspiring George Ingram.

On behalf of the Board - Simon Gill, Claire Hickson, Paul Lenz and Hetty Kovach - I'd like to say a particular thank you to the innovative, resilient and hugely capable Publish What You Fund team: James Coe, Elise Dufief, Linda Grimsey, Andy Lulham, Tom Orrell, Sally Paxton, Saara Rashid, Ines Schultes, Catherine Turner and Katie Welford, as well as Nicholas Dorward who left us during the year. And of course to our CEO, Rupert Simons, who drives our work with passion and utter commitment.

Finally, we would like to thank all the Ministers and officials we have worked with in governments and donor agencies, and all the partners we have worked with on key projects, mentioned throughout this report. We know that making commitments and delivering good aid data is not always easy. But aid transparency matters, and it delivers. We look forward to working with you again this year, and to developing new partnerships too.

**Giles Bolton**

**Chair, Publish What You Fund**

## Projects

Publish What You Fund works to make sure that information on aid is transparent, usable and used. Whilst good progress has been made by donors to make their aid and development data available, there is still much work to do. Above all, the quality of that information must improve if governments and civil society in recipient countries are going to be able to use it, as well as the donor organisations themselves.

Our project work aims to find ways to make information easier to use in specific sectors and compatible with other important data sets. During the past year, we worked on two such projects and conducted a scoping study for future work on data use.

### Joined-up Data Standards

The Joined-up Data Standards (JUDS) project reached completion in December 2017. The project explored ways of linking different sources and types of data together to help generate more holistic information on development processes. Publish What You Fund successfully led the advocacy and engagement components of the project and has contributed significantly to its overall success. This culminated in the formation of an international multi-stakeholder Collaborative on SDG Data Interoperability, jointly convened by the United Nations Statistics Division and the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data.

The most significant written output is the project's final discussion paper: *The frontiers of data interoperability for sustainable development*, published in November 2017. The JUDS project was represented at eight international events over the year, with formal session participation / organisation at seven:

1. The 4<sup>th</sup> International Open Data Conference held in Madrid, Spain in October 2016;
2. The 5<sup>th</sup> Open Government Partnership Conference held in Paris, France in December 2016;
3. The 1<sup>st</sup> UN World Data Forum held in Cape Town, South Africa in January 2017;
4. The 48<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Statistical Commission held in New York, USA in March 2017;
5. The Ghana National Forum on Data Roadmaps for Sustainable Development Forum held in Accra, Ghana in April 2017;
6. The Africa Open Data Conference held in Accra, Ghana in July 2017;
7. The International Seminar on Open Data for the Sustainable Development Goals held in Seoul, South Korea in September 2017; and
8. The Open Contracting Partnership Global Conference held in Amsterdam, The Netherlands in November 2017.

Throughout its implementation period, the JUDS project has been an important opportunity for Publish What You Fund to consolidate an institutional knowledge base around joined-up (or interoperable) data. It has developed our thinking on how to facilitate data usability and use. We have built a new

network of important contacts and advocacy targets within the data revolution for sustainable development community. We have also contributed meaningfully to the development of a new and sustainable multi-stakeholder governance forum that has the convening power to take this agenda forward.

## Initiative for Open Ag Funding

The Initiative for Open Agricultural Funding (Open Ag) sought to improve the quality and quantity of agricultural aid data. This is because funders of agricultural projects need this data to make better decisions, especially when designing a programme, targeting an investment, or looking for trusted partners to work with. Currently, the simplest questions can be the hardest to answer, such as “who is doing what, where, with whom and to what effect?”

Our first step was to conduct in-depth interviews with a wide range of potential users of agricultural aid data, including those responsible for donor coordination, policy, research and advocacy. The research identified a wide range of user needs. These included more structured or formal uses of data, for example, to analyse which other donors are operating in a chosen country and/or value-chain, so as to prevent duplication when planning a project. There was also an informal desire to use aid data to establish an international network, whereby those working on similar ventures could be connected to share learnings and garner advice.

The Open Ag project identified some key issues where open source, freely available, technical solutions could help donors enhance the quality of their data. These are the key things that the project has invested in, including:

- **Auto-Geocoder:** This will search for location names contained within an uploaded project document. Once it has identified potential locations it will ask the user to verify. Once confirmed, the tool will generate and export the relevant geocodes. The ability to identify exactly where in a country a project is happening is crucial for funders to avoid overlapping and to identify potential partners.
- **Auto-Classifer:** This will identify the relevant value-chains contained within an uploaded project document. Once identified, it will return the results to the user alongside the relevant machine-readable AGROVOC codes. This will help users find specific projects most relevant to them, for example those related to “cassava” rather than just “food crop production”.
- **Data Validator:** This will assess a donor’s data and report on whether activities and files meet a certain quality. Providing feedback on where to enhance data, as well as why this information is useful, will help donors know how and where to improve their data.
- **Perspective:** We are working on a single data portal, which will enable users to quickly identify who is spending what, where and to what effect. Our research outlined the importance for users to be able to compare different donors’ data at once, so they can more swiftly conduct landscape analyses.

The Open Ag Funding project closed in December 2017 and these tools will be publicly available in early-2018.

## Using open data for accountability

Since the start of our campaign for aid transparency, most major international donors have published open aid data that is unprecedented in its detail and scope. However, to date there are only anecdotal examples of the way this data can be and is being used for accountability and development effectiveness by actors in partner countries.

Earlier this year, we met with donors, government officials and CSO representatives in Benin and Tanzania to explore what happens at country-level once development data is published: who is interested in using it, how and what for? If the data is not being used, what are the obstacles and how can they be overcome? Our published discussion paper highlighted key findings of this scoping work.

First, there is a clear and repeated need for more high-quality information on aid and development finance. Most actors in partner countries are trying to find out where and how aid and development finance activities are implemented, how much is being spent and whether expected outcomes and results were achieved. Existing international donor-led initiatives, however, do not appear to meet those needs yet. Available aid data remains difficult to interpret in the context of national development objectives and needs, which limits its relevance and use. This challenge is further compounded by the fragmenting aid and development landscape.

More diverse actors are getting involved in development activities and all have diverse, even sometimes competing objectives and relations. Data sharing and coordination between – and within – donor organisations, government departments and civil society organisations remains limited, so aid data tends to be produced in silos. Interviewees also raised concerns about the sources of open data, how it was collected, verified and disclosed. The lack of trust in open data and its applications in some of these cases impedes its use as an accountability tool.

Faced with this situation and encouraged to find a way forward, we argue that with publication comes responsibility. Transparency, data and accountability are essentially about people. In that sense, international donors have a responsibility to go beyond the mere publication of data to address some of the challenges voiced by partner country actors. Publish What You Fund intends to play an active role in this agenda for the years to come in order to fulfil our mission. We will be actively continuing these conversations to identify concrete steps and responsibilities that can be taken by donors in particular, in order for development data to be truly used for accountability.

## Website redesign and brand refresh

We embarked on a full website redesign and brand refresh between October 2016 and February 2017. Having last been updated in 2012, the website needed to better reflect the current work of the organisation. A broader colour palette and updated report templates were produced, alongside revised visuals for the website.

This period also saw Publish What You Fund updating website copy and our mission statement. We conducted a number of interviews with current and potential website users to inform our work. The main thing we found was that many people understand the Aid Transparency Index microsite to be the main Publish What You Fund website. This means that many users do not get exposure to the rest of our project and advocacy work. In order to tackle this, the project work we do is much better signposted on the new site and we also plan to bring the 2018 Index results into the main website again.

We are grateful to the Indigo Trust for funding this project. All funds were received during the 2015/16 financial year.

## Future plans

In 2017/18, Publish What You Fund will continue to promote transparency of aid and development finance. We will produce another Aid Transparency Index in 2018, using the updated methodology. We will continue working with governments and civil society in developing countries to understand how they are using data for development and help them use it for better decision-making and to hold donors to account. Publish What You Fund is also starting a new project assessing the impact of changes to US foreign assistance. This project is supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.



# Finance Report

## Statement - Income & Expenditure 2016/17

	2016/17	2015/16
	£	£
Balance b/f from	223,624	234,468
<b>Income</b>		
Voluntary income		-
Restricted	164,429	186,574
Unrestricted	441,945	345,171
Interest	639	470
<b>Total income</b>	<b>607,013</b>	<b>532,215</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Charitable activities unrestricted	379,701	348,383
Charitable activities restricted	206,073	194,676
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>585,774</b>	<b>543,059</b>
<b>Funds c/f</b>	<b>244,863</b>	<b>223,624</b>

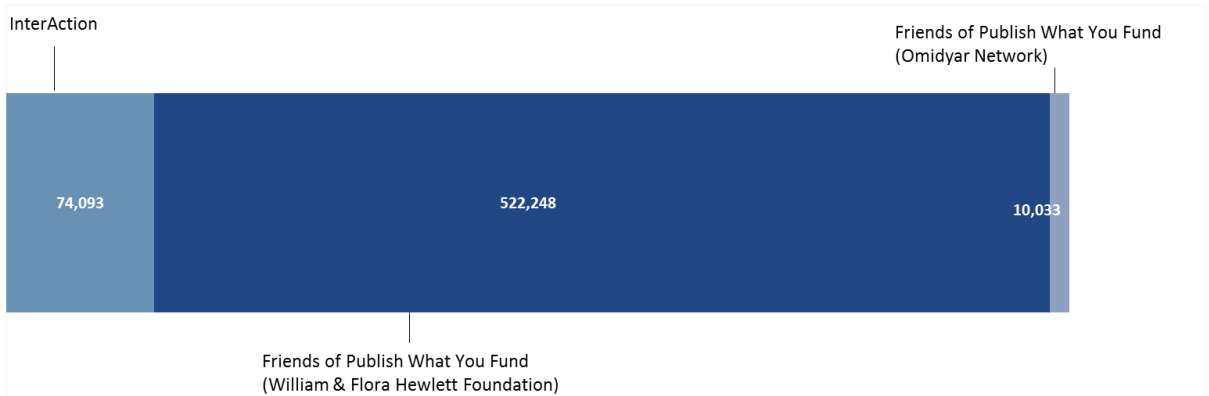
## Balance Sheet as of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017

<b>Current assets</b>		
Debtors	4,840	5,500
Cash at bank	469,649	265,134
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>474,489</b>	<b>270,634</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Deferred Income	201,046	
Creditors	28,577	47,010
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>229,623</b>	<b>47,010</b>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>244,863</b>	<b>223,624</b>
<b>Total Assets less liabilities</b>		<b>223,624</b>
<b>Represented by</b>		
Unrestricted funds	163,005	130,122
Restricted Funds	51,858	93,502
Resignated Funds	30,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>244,863</b>	<b>223,624</b>

## Income

**Total: £606,374**

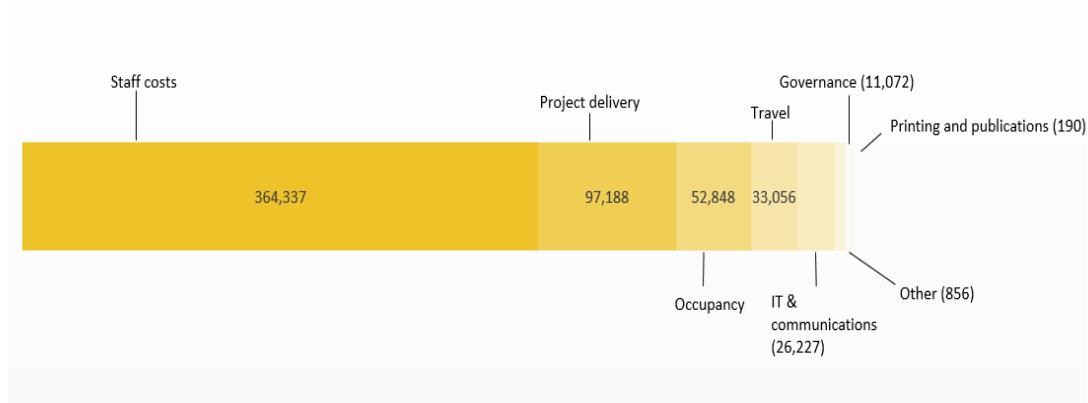
How we were funded



## Expenditure

**Total: £585,774**

How the funds were spent fulfilling our objectives



Balance sheet as of 30th September 2017

Auditors: Buzzacott LLP, 130 Wood Street, London, EC2V 6DL

Detailed annual accounts are available on our website and via our publication to the [IATI Registry](#).