Tracking USAID funding to local organisations;
exploring the potential of current aid data sets
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<u>**Introduction**</u>

Neither Publish What You Fund, nor indeed any global entity, is well placed to define either transparency or localisation as it relates to individual countries and communities. We also recognise that efforts to "shift the power" and increase "localisation" speak to many more issues (such as agency, power, co-creation, etc.) than we are addressing here. To that extent, we recognise that this paper only addresses issues relating to resources, and even then has a limited scope focussing purely on flows and quantities of aid rather than quality of funding. In this context however, we are well placed to understand, interpret and present existing data in a way that enables stakeholders to undertake analysis and track funding based on their own definitions of what it means to be "local".

Our conclusion is that it is feasible to manipulate and present existing data, for a select number of donors, in a small number of countries, to illustrate the extent to which disbursements are made to different types of organisations. Key to this approach is the process of defining and then assigning specific organisational characteristics (such as principle place of business, years of operation etc.) to the recipients of donor funds. This then enables data users to manipulate data to present funding flows in line with their own interpretations of what it means for an organisation to be local.

The data

The International Aid Transparency Initiative open data standard has been in use for more than a decade. Today, the data published to this standard, by the largest international donors, is generally of high quality and suitable for analysis. This data is also becoming easier to access with the advent of new tools, most notably the <u>Country Development Finance Data</u> Tool.

However, the data is not perfect. The main limitations for the purposes of tracking funding are:

1. Definitions of "organisation type" – The <u>current list</u> of options for assigning "organisation type" does not reflect the full variety of organisations which stakeholders in aid recipient countries recognise. Also, for those organisation types on the list, the accompanying definitions and guidance are vague.

2. Consistency and errors – Partly as a result of inadequate guidance and definitions, different IATI publishers interpret the same organisation types in different ways. Also, a cursory review of the data highlights errors in how organisation types have been assigned, for example, we found instances of international private sector organisations assigned as National NGOs. Depending on the publisher there may also be a substantial number of organisations where no organisation type has been selected resulting in a substantial value of disbursements displayed as "no data".

3. Traceability – partly as a result of the complexity of the IATI open data Standard, and partly because of a lack of guidance, it is <u>very difficult to track funding down the delivery chain</u> to identify if and how funds were disbursed through multiple organisations. For example, in most cases we will not be able to trace where the funding goes after it is received by a primary implementing organisation and specifically, how much of the money, if any, might

subsequently go to other organisations such as community groups and grassroots organisations who are unlikely to receive funding directly from international donors.

Important limitations of this work

As stated at the beginning of this paper, our work here represents a very limited contribution to the current localisation/shifting the power debates. The evident limitations are as follows:

1. This work provides little insight into the ways in which funds are passed between organisations other than the donor and the primary recipient. However, it can be argued that other aspects of localisation such as inclusive decision making, co-design, and accountability are less likely to progress while the primary recipients of funds are not the organisations based in the country where activities will happen.
2. This work would provide limited insight as to the type or quality of funding provided (the majority of IATI disbursements are tagged simply as grants).
3. While replication of this work in a selection of countries, for subsequent years, would be relatively straightforward (as many organisations would already have assigned characteristics) it would be very difficult to expand the number of countries without significant additional work.
4. The nature of the secondary research required in order the execute this work, and the fact that many of the indicators used require information which is simply not made public in a consistent manner, means that the conclusions of this work need to be considered as indicative rather than factual.
5. We should also note that this analysis uses organisation, rather activities, as the unit of analysis. As a result this approach presumes that all activities undertaken by a single organisation will be similar in terms of their attention to principles of locally led development.

Methodology

This section outlines the key steps taken by our team. For an initial test of the methodology, our current analysis focuses on **USAID's work in Zambia in 2019**. This is in part a result of political expediency (given USAID's current commitment to increasing funding to "local" organisations) and in part because we are particularly familiar with the USAID data set. Our analysis will be based on data reported by USAID to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Standard. The steps outlined can be replicated and adapted for other case study countries.

STEP ONE: building the dataset

Firstly we used the [Country Development Finance Data](#) tool which allows us to download an IATI dataset, for a single country, as an Excel sheet. Under "Access data files" we selected "Zambia" and then "download file".
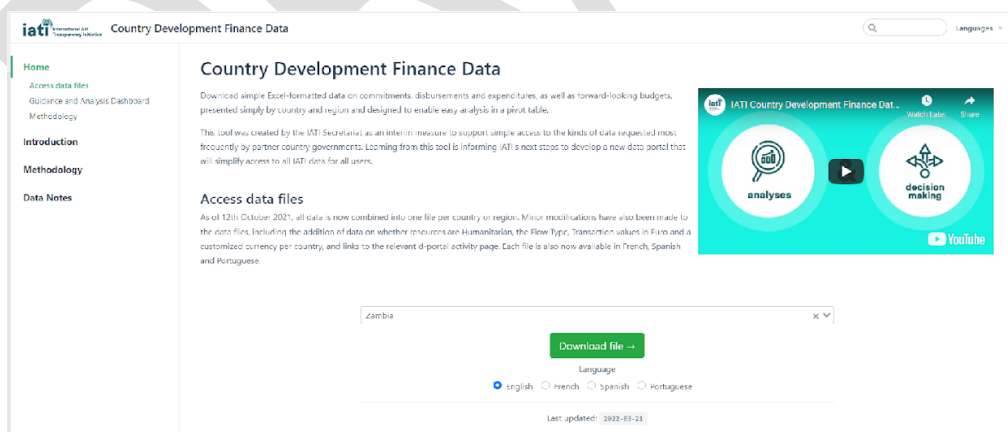

Figure 1. Screenshot of the Country Development Finance Tool

STEP TWO: selecting key information using a PivotTable:

To prepare the Zambian dataset for analysis and filter out unnecessary or irrelevant data, we created a PivotTable. Below are the steps we took to create the PivotTable including selecting the source data, applying filters, compiling rows and presenting values.

a) To form the pivot table, we selected all of the data in the "Data" tab of the Excel sheet and selected "PivotTable" from the "Insert" tab on the Excel menu. We selected the option of presenting the data in a new worksheet.
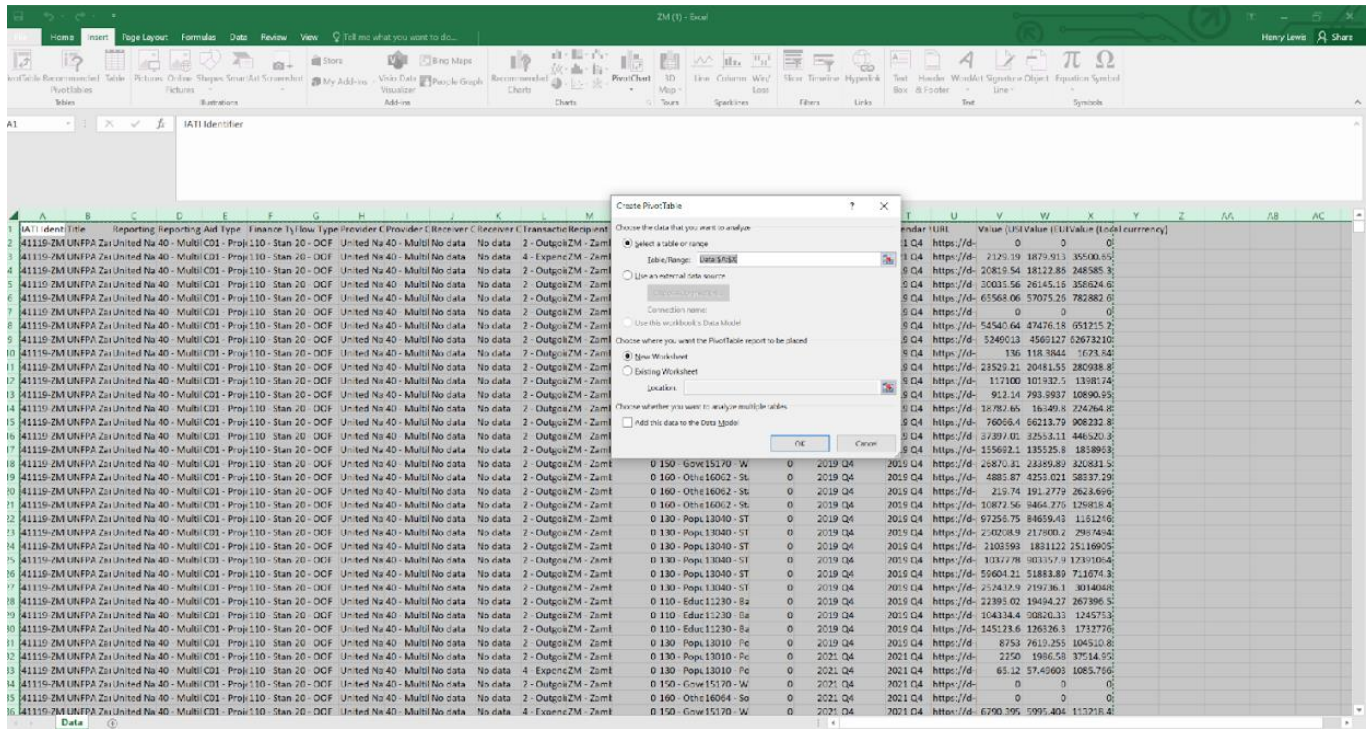
Figure 2. Screenshot of the "Create PivotTable" tool

b) **Filters:** To remove superfluous data we applied the following filters:

   i. *Calendar Year*: as the Country Development Finance Data tool provides all IATI data for the selected country, we applied a filter, selecting "2019".

   ii. *Transaction Type*: in order to display actual sums of money spent by USAID in Zambia, we applied a filter, selecting "*3-Disbursements*".

   iii. *Aid Type*: In order to filter out superfluous aid types such as donors own costs or administrative expenditure, we removed all aid types for Zambia except:
      ● **B03** – Contributions to specific purpose programmes and funds managed by implementing partners
      ● **C01** – Project-type interventions

   NOTE: for each country case study we need to consider which aid types to remove as they would not all be the same.

c) *Rows:*
   ● *Provider Organisation*: as the Country Development Finance Data tool provides IATI data for funds from all provider organisations, we applied a filter, selecting: **"United States Agency for International Development (USAID) [US-GOV-1]"**
   ● *Reporting Organisation:* for the purposes of this analysis we only wanted to analyse disbursements reported by USAID themselves so included "Reporting Organisation" in the rows of the PivotTable and applied a filter, selecting: **"United States Agency for International Development (USAID) [US-GOV-1]"**
   ● *Receiver Organisation:* next we want to display the disbursements according to which organisations had been in receipt of the disbursements. To do this we add "Receiver Organisation" to the Rows of the PivotTable.
   ● *IATI Identifier:* finally we felt it would be useful to see the IATI identifiers associated with the disbursements as this would enable secondary research through tools such as d-portal. Therefore, we added "IATI Identifier" to the Rows of the PivotTable.

d) *Values:* for this analysis we wanted to know how much USAID funding has reached the various Receiver Organisations for 2019. The last step is to add *"Value (USD)"* to the Values box. This should display the amount of funding for each organisation. Once in the box, click on the arrow next to the data name and select "value field settings". Make sure that "sum" is selected. The resulting PivotTable should look like this:

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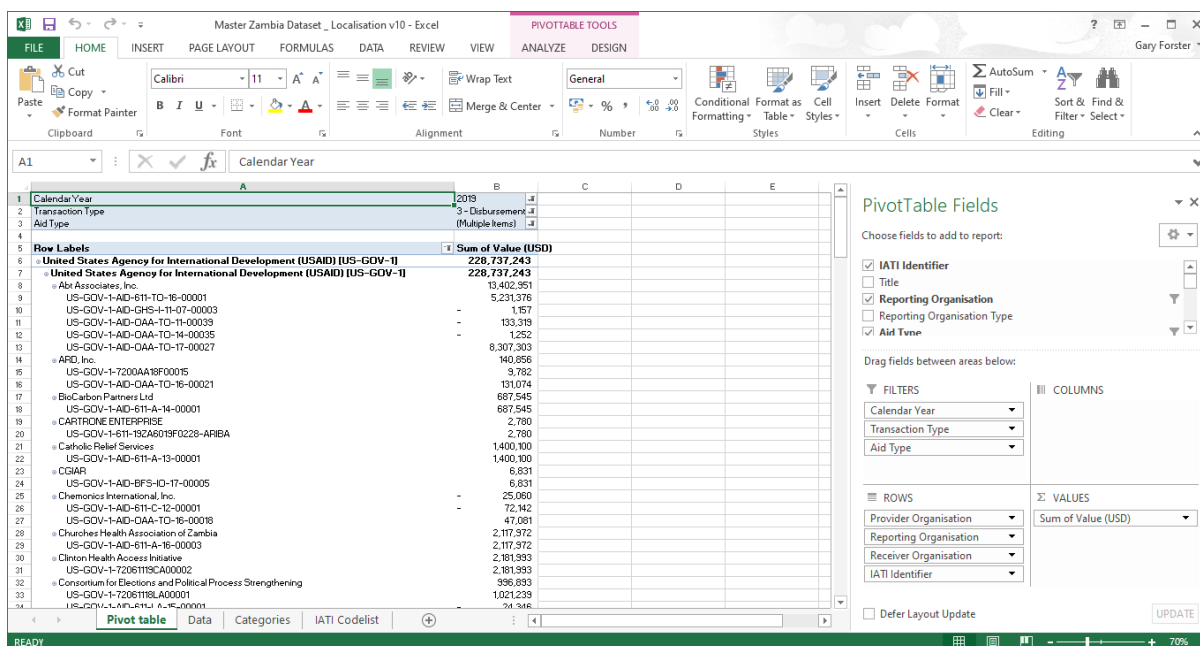
STEP THREE: applying characteristics to receiver organisations:

Following the creation of the PivotTable, the data should now be displaying all the organisations that received funds from USAID in Zambia during 2019. We now need to apply characteristics to each of these organisations based on the 12 criteria agreed by the team. Note that these criteria are derived from a broad cross section of current definitions including those from the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC), PEPFAR, USAID and the Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR).

1. Entity's principle place of business/location of headquarters (donor country, recipient country, third country)
2. Type of entity (private, academia, UN agency, NGO, Public Sector, multilateral, global program)
3. Organisation's focus (sub-national, national, regional, international)
4. Is the organisation a Community Based Organisation (CBO)? i.e. does it only work sub-nationally within the area local to the organisation's HQ (yes/no)
5. Is the organisation legally organised under national laws in the recipient country? (yes/no)
6. Is the organisation a subsidiary/brand of an international organisation? (yes/no)
7. Is the organisation a subsidiary/brand of a regional organisation? (yes/no)
8. How long has the organisation been operating in the country? (no. of years)
9. Is the organisation beneficially owned (the owners) by individuals who are citizens of the country which is the organisation's principle place of business? (yes/no)
10. Is the organisation majority run (the executive) by individuals who are citizens of the country which is the organisation's principle place of business (or else run by and for a specific target group e.g. refugee organisations)? (yes/no)
11. Is the organisation governed (the Board) by individuals who are citizens of the country which is the organisation's principle place of business? (yes/no)
12. Does the organisation have a bank account in the recipient country? (yes/no)

To apply these characteristics, we created a new worksheet and pasted the contents of the PivotTable. We then added a column for each characteristic

Before we can start manually categorising organisations, we need to do some data quality checks and further filter out organisations which are irrelevant for our analysis. Specifically, we checked and excluded recipient organisations which received less than US$5,000 in total (this led to the removal of 11 organisations including NGOs, private organisations and academic institutions based in either Zambia or the US). These were removed simply to save effort and overall represented only 11 projects. (Note that it is necessary to check for compensating negative disbursements which may be hiding substantial positive disbursements as such Receiver Organisations should remain in the data set).

STEP FOUR: manual categorisation of receiving organisations:

The data should now be ready to start manually adding characteristics to organisations based on the criteria. In most cases, information to support decisions was found using a combination of receiver organisation's websites, d-portal and secondary research. Where information could not be found best guesses and deductions were used to determine characteristics (noting again that the findings of this work should be considered indicative rather than factually correct). An example of our workbook is shown below:

Figure 3. Screenshot of workbook used to add organisational characteristics

STEP FIVE: handling exceptions:

There are three receiver organisation types which required special treatment:

- *Unspecified Vendors*: we need to check the data where no vendor has been specified. For our Zambian analysis, unspecified vendors are in almost every case USAID costs relating to payroll, benefits, and other miscellaneous costs. Therefore, we removed "unspecified vendors" from the dataset.
- *USAID redacted*: this category mostly represents large global projects. As such, we want to keep this in the analysis. The team decided to categorise this as follows:
  - i. For the "*Entity's principle place of business*" we input "*United States*".
  - ii. For "*Type of entity*" we input "*Global Program*"
  - iii. For "organisation's focus" we input "*International*"
  - iv. For all remaining columns, we input "*no*"
- *USAID as receiving organisation*: these rows would be dealt with the same as USAID redacted.

Analysis

The purpose of this exercise was to present a dataset illustrating the extent to which USAID funds in Zambia, in 2019, were disbursed to various types of organisations. In total, once organisations receiving less than $5,000 in disbursements were removed (11 projects), we were left with a dataset representing $228,378,811. Below are a series of charts which provide an insight into the data. Figures 4 & 5 provide a snapshot of the types of organisation receiving USAID funds. Figure 6 compares how the disbursement picture changes when different organisational characteristics are used to define "local". In this case our team applied a selection of characteristics with the aim of demonstrating that regardless of the level of rigour applied it is evident that the level of disbursements to organisations which could reasonably be considered local is far below the forthcoming 25% USAID target. Figure 7 digs into the data relating to the proportion of Zambian organisations which are subsidiaries/brands of either international or regional organisations.

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Receiving organisation	Value of disbursements	Number of projects	Entity's principal place of business/location of HQ (Donor country, recipient country, third country)	Type of entity (private, academia, UN agency, NGO, Public Sector, multilateral, global program)	Organisation's focus (sub-national, national, regional, international)
John SNow International	61,067,959	4	United States	Private	International
USAID redacted - the majority of these are large global pr	42,563,312	33	United States	Global Program	International
Right to Care (South Africa)	16,385,832	1	South Africa	NGO	Regional
Pact World	13,890,661	1	United States	NGO	International
Abt Associates, Inc.	13,402,951	5	United States	Private	International
PATH	10,814,187	2	United States	NGO	International
United States Agency for International Development (US	8,140,636	11	United States	Public Sector	International
Education Development Center	5,372,713	1	United States	NGO	International
Development Aid from People to People in Zambia	4,957,822	2	Zambia	NGO	National
FHI 360	4,533,439	3	United States	NGO	International
World Food Program	4,016,827	2	Italy	UN agency	International
Zambia Centre For Communication Programmes	3,544,766	2	Zambia	NGO	National
Development Alternatives, Inc.	3,372,089	1	United States	Private	International
Government - Country Other - Min of Education	3,196,701	1	Zambia	Public Sector	National
Society for Family Health	2,622,057	1	Zambia	NGO	National

Figure 4. Leading recipients of USAID disbursements in Zambia in 2019

Sum of Value of disbursements	Column Lab											
Row Labels	Canada	France	Germany	Italy	South Africa	Sweden	Switzerland	UK	United States	Zambia	Grand Total	
Academia					277,000				795,743		1,072,743	0.5%
Global Program									42,563,312		42,563,312	18.6%
Multilateral									278,947		278,947	0.1%
NGO		6,831	1,469,320		16,385,832				38,760,111	19,103,498	75,725,592	33.2%
Private	350,502				1,609,955			1,728,657	82,062,741	864,845	86,616,700	37.9%
Public Sector						2,427,057			10,283,531	3,196,701	15,907,289	7.0%
UN agency				4,016,827			321,795		1,875,607		6,214,229	2.7%
Grand Total	**350,502**	**6,831**	**1,469,320**	**4,016,827**	**18,272,788**	**2,427,057**	**321,795**	**1,728,657**	**176,619,991**	**23,165,044**	**228,378,811**	
	0.2%	0.0%	0.6%	1.8%	8.0%	1.1%	0.1%	0.8%	77.3%	10.1%		

Figure 5. Principle place of business vs organisation type

	Sum of total disbursements ($)	Percentage of total USAID disbursements to Zambia in 2019 ($228, 378, 811)
A less-expansive definition of local (Zambia based, not a subsidary/brand of an international or regional organisation, managed by Zambians and governed by Zambians, only working sub-nationally and nationally, including funding to the Zambian gov't)	6,704,791	3%
A more-expansive definiton of local (Zambia based, including subsidiaries/brands of both international and regional organisations, managed and governed by Zambians and others alike, working sub-nationally, nationally, regionally and internationally, including the Zambian gov't)	23,165,044	10%

Figure 6. Comparing disbursements to different types of Zambia based organisation

Is the organisation a subsidiary/brand of a **international** organisation?		Is the organisation a subsidiary/brand of a **regional** organisation?	
		No	Yes
Is the organisation a subsidiary/brand of a **international** organisation?	No	7,542,336	9,391,258
	Yes	6,231,450	
	Total:		23,165,044.43

		Is the organisation a subsidiary/brand of a **regional** organisation?	
		No	Yes
Is the organisation a subsidiary/brand of a **international** organisation?	No	33%	41%
	Yes	27%	

Figure 7. Is the receiver organisation a subsidiary/brand of an international or regional organisation?

Considerations:

- Regardless of the definition used, it is clear that the gap between USAID's forthcoming 25% target and the reality of what happened in Zambia in 2019, is significant.
- Key to the upcoming debate around the USAID target will be the denominator from which USAID aim to allocate 25% and specifically:
  a. Which aid types will be subject to the target
  b. How USAID considers large global programmes
  c. How data in redacted fields will be addressed (which raises a bigger question about how transparent USAID will be about its evidence for substantiating its performance claims).
  d. Whether LEPs (Locally established partners) are allowed within the new definition
  e. Whether USAID includes funds that "flow through" to local organisations
- The current IATI "Org Type" field does not have sufficient options, nor guidance, to enable the tracking of the kinds of organisations which localisation stakeholders value in a consistent manner.
- One challenge we've had is figuring out if an organisation is the international version or the national version.
- Many of the characteristics found in official definitions of "local" (such as existence of a local bank account, registration with appropriate authorities, operation under national laws), while useful for due diligence purposes, are relatively low bars to new players entering the market and are not wholly reliable for determining the nature of the organisation receiving funds.
- Defining "beneficial ownership" for NGOs is challenging and has not been adequately addressed herein.