

Donor Tracker's 2020 in review: Tracking donors' development policy and finance in times of COVID-19

BY DONOR TRACKER TEAM, SEEK DEVELOPMENT
DECEMBER 10, 2020

2020 came with unique challenges, not least of which were brought on by the COVID-19 crisis. Through it all the [Donor Tracker](#) has remained committed to providing the global development community with evidence-based analyses of donors' financing and policy.

We know it has been a stressful and busy year, so in case you lost track of the Donor Tracker amid this global crisis, here comes an overview of some highlights of our work over the last 12 months. We hope that what we have done will prove useful to advocates reflecting on 2020 and that it provides an evidence base for forward planning as we look toward a more hopeful 2021.

The Donor Tracker is a unique platform supporting evidence-based advocacy for global development

The Donor Tracker maintained its commitment to being a central source of information on donor countries' strategic priorities, funding trends, and decision-making processes. Read our [donor profiles](#) and [sector pages](#) for analyses of the most up-to-date Official Development Assistance (ODA) data, donors' latest policy and budget documents, and recent information on countries' responses to COVID-19. This year we also added new analyses on ODA to [gender](#) and [climate](#) to every donor profile. All of these resources are available on our newly launched [website](#), which brings you the same high caliber analysis as before, through a more intuitive platform.

In addition to our signature donor profiles and summarizing sector pages, the Donor Tracker's team of experts has spent 2020 elevating the work of advocates for global development by writing, presenting, and sharing information on key trends in global development. Like the rest of the global community, the focus of some of our work shifted toward **COVID-19** this year, but we also published on topics including **gender equality**, **climate finance**, and **education**, and **engaged in collaborations** with a broad range of development organizations and media outlets.

The Donor Tracker supported advocates trying to make sense of the unfolding COVID-19 crisis

In March, as overwhelming volumes of information about the worsening COVID-19 crisis were being shared, the Donor Tracker worked to amplify reliable data. To reflect on just how much has changed since the crisis began, take a look back at this [list of resources](#) we compiled to help our readers understand the global community's initial response to the pandemic.

We supported advocates with an in-depth analysis of preliminary findings on how donor countries responded to COVID-19, highlighting trends to watch. Many of the findings and recommendations shared in this [publication](#) and our [webinar](#) (almost 1,000 people tuned in) remain relevant, even seven months on.

When the world came together to pledge support for the development and deployment of COVID-19 vaccines, tests, and treatments at the 'Global Goal: Unite for Our Future' summit on June 27, the Donor Tracker hosted a webinar. Watch the [recording](#) of this event for a perspective on the goals and outcomes of the summit and reflections on what it meant for donor countries' international response to COVID-19.

Most recently, our very own Donor Tracker expert was featured on Deutsche Welle (DW). Watch the [interview](#) (in Spanish) for insights into the COVAX Facility and equitable global access to COVID-19 vaccines.

Through it all, our [Policy Updates](#) have remained an important source of development news: With more than 100 updates published per month throughout 2020 — many of them related to donors' COVID-19-related commitments — there is a wealth of information to look back on. We encourage you to subscribe to our weekly digest to get a tailored list of our policy updates delivered directly to your inbox each week.

The Donor Tracker shared in-depth analyses on policy and financing toward gender equality

In recognition of the importance of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 in the Decade of Action, gender equality was a principal focus of the Donor Tracker in 2020.

We worked on a series of three Donor Tracker Insights, which provide detailed analyses of three main elements, or ‘pillars’ of gender equality endeavors. Read the first two publications in this series for data on [funding for women’s economic empowerment](#) and [efforts to end gender-based violence \(GBV\)](#).

We used webinars, Partner Perspectives, and presentations to strengthen our partnerships in the global development space, particularly on the topic of gender equality.

The Donor Tracker hosted two webinars on the topic of gender-related ODA. Watch the [first in this series](#), which was hosted jointly with The ONE Campaign, for an introduction to the OECD’s gender policy marker, a description of the current state of donor finance for gender equality development programming, and an explanation of how countries spend on economic empowerment initiatives. Watch a recording of the [second webinar](#) for a discussion on donor finance, advocacy, and research to combat GBV by experts from the Donor Tracker, Oxfam Canada, and Promundo.

Read this [Partner Perspective](#) from Equal Measures 2030 for an introduction to their SDG Gender Index which can help illuminate how ODA spending and domestic efforts are helping to leverage progress towards SDG 5. For an explanation of the challenges of using OECD data to track gender-related funding, check out the [Partner Perspective](#) written by ONE. The bottom line: We need more and better data on donor’s gender-related spending.

Later in the year, we collaborated with Publish What You Fund and Friends of Publish What You Fund on an instructional video series designed to teach gender equality advocates how to use OECD data. The video will be released in early 2021.

We presented our findings on the state of ODA funding for gender equality at Bond’s digital [#Funding4Dev](#) week in November and at the [Australasian AID Conference](#) in Canberra, Australia in February. You can read the findings presented in Australia on the Australian National University’s [DevPolicy blog](#). While the Donor Tracker team was Down Under, we met with a host of wonderful partners — including Policy Cures Research, Results

Australia, World Vision Australia, and 350.org — to discuss opportunities for collaboration and explored ways of deepening our partnerships.

The Donor Tracker shone a light on the complexities of climate finance

The COVID-19 crisis is a stark reminder of the importance of collective action in tackling global challenges. The recommendations included in our report on [‘Climate finance and the role of ODA’](#) are more important than ever, especially as COVID-19 stands to distract attention (and funding) from the climate emergency. Watch the accompanying webinar to hear about the pressing need for international climate finance in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) and the role that ODA can and should play in funding for climate action.

Members of the Donor Tracker team were sought out as [experts](#) on the topic of climate finance by Devex for their series on [‘The Climate Finance Challenge’](#). Devex also drew on the newly added climate sector pages of our donor profiles to inform their [evidence base](#).

The Donor Tracker examined the state of funding for education in emergencies

With just ten years left to achieve the SDGs, prioritizing the educational needs of the world’s most vulnerable children is more important than ever. This year, the urgent need to safeguard education funding especially in emergency settings was made more clear than ever as the COVID-19 crisis exacerbated precarious humanitarian situations around the world and resulted in the largest known disruption of education systems globally. So, are donors dedicating sufficient attention to education in emergencies? Read our Donor Tracker [Insights](#) for an analysis of donors’ ODA and humanitarian financing of education. You can see the author of this Insights speaking about the paramount importance of education in crises in the [second episode](#) of ‘Catch up with the Donor Tracker’, a short video series we launched this year in an attempt to strengthen our digital connection with the development community.

For a deeper dive into current funding and policy trends for education in emergencies, and a discussion of the role of multilaterals, including Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in providing education in emergency settings, watch a recording of the [education in emergencies webinar](#). The event featured representatives from the GPE and the UNHCR.

The Donor Tracker didn't stop there

In addition to our work across the key themes covered above, the Donor Tracker team provided ad-hoc support to advocates on other hot-topics throughout 2020.

The first episode of 'Catch up with the Donor Tracker' for example, explored the implications of the US election on global development. Watch the [clip](#) to hear about what a Joe Biden Presidency will mean for US development assistance.

The Donor Tracker team served as experts on German development finance. Watch this Devex [Conference Call](#) on the future of German development assistance and read this Devex [piece](#) on German development spending for some of our key insights.

Our work was also cited by the media, including in this Reuters [piece](#) on small scale agriculture, this CNN [article](#) on Britain's ties to the African continent following Brexit, and this [post](#) from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) on Spain's Sustainable Development Council.

What's coming in 2021?

In short, 2020 has been an eventful and challenging year.

We hope that despite the innumerable disruptions caused by COVID-19, you were able to rely on the Donor Tracker's evidence-based resources to support your work. We appreciate all the feedback we received in our 2020 user survey, which we will use to inform our planning. Among many other things, in 2021 you can look forward to the

Donor Tracker bringing you more Insights on:

- **Donors' international response to COVID-19:** Even though the rollout of COVID-19 vaccines is already underway in some countries, the pandemic is not behind us. Throughout 2021, the equitable distribution of vaccines, as well as the economic fallout from the crisis, will remain central concerns of the development community. We will therefore continue to look at how donor countries respond to the crisis, through Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, the COVAX Facility, and their wider response to mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on LMICs, using ODA budgets but also — and increasingly so — non-traditional sources of development finance.
- **Climate finance:** Throughout 2021, in anticipation of COP26 in November, we will continue to arm advocates with the latest data and cutting-edge insights into donors' climate finance.
- **Gender equality:** Gender equality will continue to be critical to the global development community in 2021. Throughout the next year, the Donor Tracker will support the work of advocates in the space, especially during important moments such as the Generation Equality Forum scheduled for the first half of 2021.
- **Education:** 2021 will be another important year for global education, including key events such as the GPE replenishment, set to take place next June.

As we look toward a brighter 2021, we are excited about continuing to work together on driving positive change in global development.