

# USING AID TRANSPARENCY DATA – A BEGINNER’S GUIDE

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*[Publish What You Fund](#) is a leading expert in aid data and data transparency. It has over ten years of experience working closely with data teams from IATI, OECD-DAC, the UN, and country governments. Its [Aid Transparency Index](#) is an internationally recognized authority on the state of aid transparency and is used around the world by donors looking to increase their accountability.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, the world has seen incredible momentum gather behind the idea of aid transparency. This is an essential step towards maximizing the impact of development spending. Aid data has the potential to improve coordination, accountability, and effectiveness. However, accessing and using the wealth of aid data at our disposal can be overwhelming, even for seasoned development professionals. The following guide explains how to navigate key platforms and tools to make the most out of available information.

## KEY AID DATA RESOURCES

The [International Aid Transparency Initiative \(IATI\) Registry](#) contains data from over 900 publishers, including almost every major aid donor. It includes data on donor budgets, how and where they are operating and links to key strategic documents or fact sheets. The [Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)'s Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\)](#) has a wealth of reliable information on aid flows from most major development donors, as well as detailed statistics on where money is going in the recipient country. Other organisations, including the World Bank, have set up their own aid finance portals. So have many recipient and donor governments.

When combined, these resources can help paint a comprehensive picture of what is happening in a given country. Tools such as the Donor Tracker seek to synthesize the kind of granular data provided by IATI and the OECD in order to provide a more macro-level perspective with which to better inform policy makers and stakeholders.

## DATA USE WEBINARS

At Publish What You Fund, we have consistently heard that the biggest barrier to using this data has been a lack of understanding of where to look, or what tools are available. One of our core principles is to create a world where those who need it can easily access usable aid data. Therefore, we've developed two interactive [webinars](#) (in English and French) on how to make the best use of international aid data. In these webinars we covered tools which can be used to access open aid data, and talked in detail on the use of IATI, OECD-DAC, and World Bank portal data.

## D-PORTAL

[D-portal](#) is a development portal that allows you to explore and visualise IATI data on development and humanitarian aid activities. d-portal refreshes daily and takes data directly from the IATI Registry. New publishers should appear on d-portal on the Monday after their first publication.

d-portal is aimed at providing government departments, parliamentarians, and civil society organisations in developing countries with information that can help with the planning and monitoring of development activities. It contains current data published to the IATI as well as the most recent data available in the OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS).

## IATI DECIPHER

[IATI Decipher](#) was launched in late 2018. Now, for the first time, it's possible to visualise strategic and budget documents in the IATI Registry. This valuable data – encompassing over 22,300 strategic documents and US\$2.6 trillion of global donor budgets – was only previously accessible to those able to read 'xml' code.

IATI Decipher unlocks the data contained within the IATI organisation file ('orgfile'). It enables users to access documents in the following areas:

- Donor budgets by fiscal year
- Donor budgets by sector by fiscal year
- Donor budgets by recipient country by fiscal year
- Donor budgets for a recipient country by sector
- Links to donor documents, such as country strategies

We believe this is a breakthrough in making aid data truly usable, and is the first deliverable from our new strategy, launched at the start of October. The three-year strategy is built around three core commitments:

- Demonstrate how data can be used effectively to create real change;
- Ensure more and different types of donors are transparent; and
- Redouble our efforts to help make the data they provide as useable as possible for key actors in aid-recipient countries.

As well as making aid and development data more usable for actors in aid recipient countries IATI Decipher will enable publishers to see and improve how organizational-level information is shared.

## THE IATI TOOL GUIDE

The [IATI Tool Guide](#) has been developed to help data users navigate the complex environment of tools and applications for using IATI data. The guide features a number of data use tools but also provides explanations of tools used for publishing and data integration, as well as linking to guidance on the IATI Standard itself. It includes detailed instructions and use-cases to help you identify the right tool to deliver the data that you are looking for.

## DATA USE IN ACTION

In the United States (US), as both the Administration and Congress debate the future shape and size of US foreign assistance, it is vital that they possess a solid understanding of the impact of their decisions. To contribute towards this evidence base, Publish What You Fund has been investigating the potential impact of foreign assistance cuts. We used open-source aid data and in-country research to assess the impact of changes in four case study countries.

Our work had three key objectives:

- To make policymakers aware of the potential impact of changes to US foreign assistance
- To demonstrate how better data on foreign assistance can be used to improve budgeting and decision making
- To improve US aid transparency, based on our own experience of accessing the data

Working through our networks, we have fed the findings of our in-country research into the fiscal year 2019 congressional budget debates. We are now working with the leading US aid agencies to improve US aid transparency. Our latest report, [US Transparency: An Assessment of US International Aid Transparency Initiative Data](#), reflects on our user experiences and assesses IATI

data for three US agencies: the United States Agency for International Development, the Department of State, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. We compared information available on the IATI Registry, d-portal, and, for financial information, we also looked at comparable time frames from the data of the OECD-DAC.

## CONCLUSION

Aid transparency data is a key tool for holding governments accountable for their financing, improving coordination between different stakeholders, and increasing the impact of development spending. It's exciting to see so many new tools out there working to maximize the impact of development on the world's poorest and most vulnerable people.

Have a question? Email us at [info@publishwhatyoufund.org](mailto:info@publishwhatyoufund.org).



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