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Enabling Open Development: An Overview of Initiatives to Improve Information

The Open Development Vision

Over the last 10 years, the legitimacy and effectiveness of one-size-fits-all models of development and top-down models of governance have been challenged, most recently by citizens' demands for more open, transparent and accountable governance. "Open development" sets out a new vision of what development means, how it comes about and what role external partners can play. In this vision, there is a key role for open data—information that is freely available and reusable. This information can enable citizens to hold governments accountable and to ensure that resources—aid and domestically-generated resources—are invested wisely in poverty reduction and progress towards prosperity, rather than being squandered or siphoned off for politicians' personal gain.

The rapid global expansion of mobile phone and internet coverage means citizens increasingly expect to be able to access information on projects underway in their communities, information on how their taxes are being used, and more. Rather than being passive consumers of services, they want to have a voice in the way government operates. The vision of open development recognizes these new realities and offers a more collaborative model for pursuing economic growth and socioeconomic development.

Open development requires that all development stakeholders—from citizens to journalists, NGO workers to government officials, parliamentarians to entrepreneurs—are able to access the information they need to make informed choices, exercise their voice, and be more effective in their development efforts. This note, albeit non-exhaustive, describes a number of initiatives related to making development information more available and summarizes the ways they complement each other to help public and private institutions adopt more open policies and practices. As public information becomes more open and accessible, it will help enable ordinary people to take charge of their own development.

Supporting Transparency, Accountability, and Participation

The **Open Government Partnership (OGP)** is a new multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. Supporting open data is therefore an important part of OGP's mission. OGP was launched in 2011 and has 53 participating national governments to date. Member governments embrace a high-level Open Government Declaration; deliver a country action plan developed with public consultation; and commit to independent reporting of their progress. With respect to open data, OGP's scope covers the breadth and depth of government activities, including international development assistance, which a number of governments have chosen to highlight in their country plans. Beyond data, OGP also focuses on increasing government accountability

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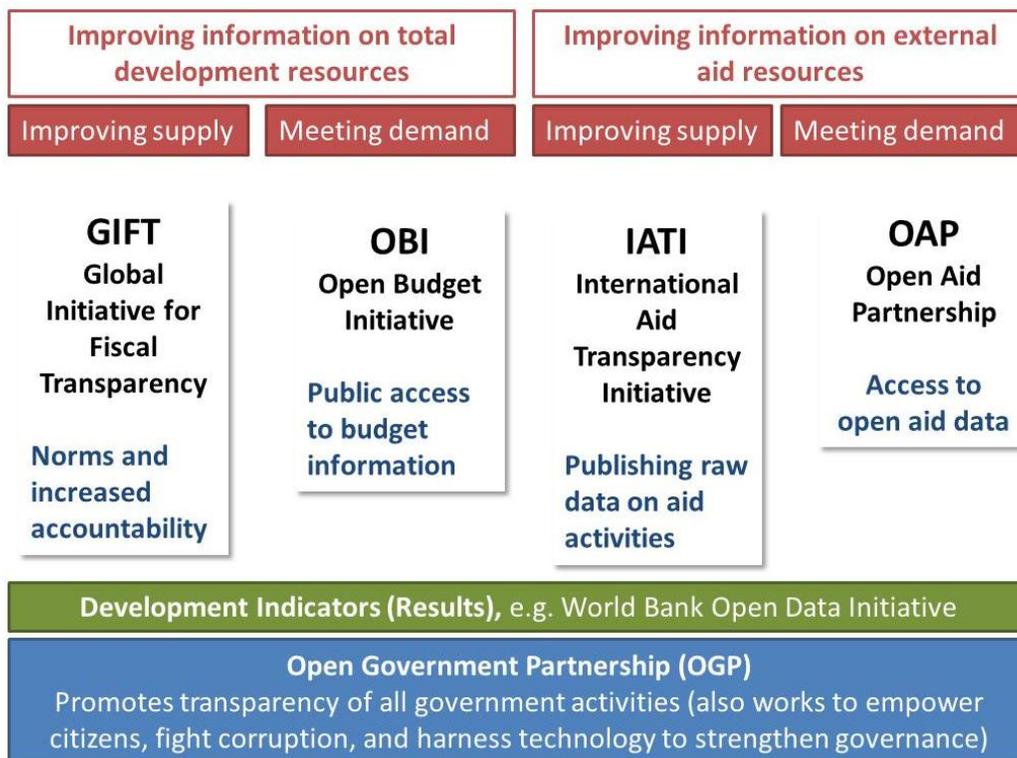


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(such as anti-corruption reforms and social audits) and civic participation efforts (such as citizens' budgets, and Open311 programs for citizen access to non-emergency services).

Other initiatives at the individual country level are working to make public information more accessible, such as the Kenya Open Data Initiative and the Timor-Leste Transparency Portal. Meanwhile, projects that gather data directly from citizens through crowdsourcing methods, such as the UReport project in Uganda, illustrate new approaches that could help realize the open development vision of collaboration and feedback loops. Other specialized initiatives such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which sets a global standard for transparency in oil, gas and mining contracts between governments and private companies, could also be considered as advancing the open development vision.

Open Data Initiatives contributing to an Open Development Vision (non-exhaustive)



Making Aid Transparent

Aid information is a critical input into decision making processes in the many countries where external aid comprises a large share of the resources available for development. The **International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)** is a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative to increase aid transparency in order to maximize the effectiveness of aid in reducing poverty. Launched at the Accra High Level Forum

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on Aid Effectiveness in 2008, it has expanded to include 29 signatories and 22 partner country endorsers, including many governments who have also joined the Open Government Partnership. IATI aims to make information about aid activities easier to access, use and understand through the promotion of a common global standard for the publication of aid information. The IATI standard includes definitions and a technical format that can be used by all aid providers – whether public or private, members of IATI or not—to publish information on their activities. This makes it possible for anyone to download, compare, and repurpose data from any participating agency. IATI’s approach supports the broader goals of the Open Government Partnership to make public data more open.

While IATI is focused on standardized publication of aid information, the **Open Aid Partnership (OAP)**, launched in 2011 by the World Bank Institute and with seven participating donors to date, brings together partners from developing countries and donor countries to enhance the openness and effectiveness of development assistance. OAP will work in close collaboration with IATI and the Open Government Partnership. For example, it will act as an intermediary, turning IATI’s raw data files into information that is accessible to a wider audience.

OAP’s focus will be on geocoding aid activities so that they can be visualized in an Open Aid Map. The geocoded data will be available to the public in IATI format. The OAP will map activities of participating donors and support developing countries in building national mapping platforms. At the same time the partnership intends to build capacity of civil society to use this data and act as information intermediaries for citizens. In a second phase, building on local data, the OAP will promote citizen feedback initiatives for better reporting on development assistance and public service provision. This will enhance transparency and accountability and build government capacity to receive and respond to feedback.

Shedding Light on Fiscal Management

Aid information is only one part of the picture. To have a comprehensive view of all the resources available for development in a country, it is necessary to have accessible information on domestic public budgets, revenues and expenditure. The **Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT)**, initiated in 2011, is an action network to advance and institutionalize global norms and to promote significant, continuous improvements in fiscal transparency, engagement, and accountability around the world. The Lead Stewards of GIFT are the Office of the Comptroller General of Brazil, the Department of Budget and Management in the Philippines, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the International Budget Partnership. A wide range of other stakeholders from the public sector and civil society are also engaged as Stewards.

GIFT’s collaborative working approach focuses on areas with the potential for scaled impact over time, sequencing from potential early victories to more ambitious opportunities. The action agenda is

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organized across four Working Groups, each with broad stakeholder representation: Aligning Incentives; Advancing Global Norms; Technical Assistance and Capacity Building; and Harnessing New Technologies.

With a related but more specific agenda, the International Budget Partnership's **Open Budget Initiative** is a global research and advocacy program to promote public access to budget information and the adoption of budget systems that support accountability.

Keeping Track of Development Progress

Financial data on aid, government spending, and private initiatives provide important information about development inputs. To assess whether interventions are working, there is also a need for socioeconomic data on outputs and outcomes. The **World Bank Open Data Initiative** is a pioneering effort to open up not only project and financial information, but also other kinds of data that the Bank has historically sold to users. Now, all data such as the World Bank Indicators are available free of charge and in an open format that makes it easy to combine them with other types of information (such as financial data).

Ultimately, better information can only support better outcomes if citizens and decision makers have the ability to access, interpret, and react to this information. Data aggregators, information visualization services, mobile applications, and other tools are emerging to help different kinds of users leverage available data. As progress continues to be made on the supply side (in terms of information provision), it will be increasingly important to focus on the demand side (ensuring that stakeholders can take advantage of the information).



Political mandates and civil society initiatives enable the country information ecosystem, allowing citizens and stakeholders to participate in the development process

To Learn More:

Open Government Partnership - www.opengovpartnership.org ; info@opengovpartnership.org

International Aid Transparency Initiative - www.aidtransparency.net ; aidinfo@devinit.org

Open Aid Partnership - www.openaidmap.org ; bgigler@worldbank.org

Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency - www.fiscaltransparency.net ; skhagram@scalingimpact.net

Open Budget Initiative - <http://internationalbudget.org> ; info@internationalbudget.org

World Bank Open Data Initiative - <http://data.worldbank.org> ; data@worldbank.org

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