**International Development Sector Transparency Panel**

**Note of Meeting held on 15 May 2013 at Department for International Development (DFID), London.**

Attendance:

Liz Ditchburn (Chair), Director, Value for Money, DFID

Owen Barder, Centre for Global Development

David Hall-Matthews, Publish What You Fund

Fran Perrin, Indigo Trust

Mary-Anne Addo, formerly Government of Ghana

Rufus Pollock, Public Sector Transparency Board

Morag Patrick, Policy Adviser, DFID

Alasdair Wardhaugh, Head of Improving Aid Impact, DFID

Annabel Gerry, Head of Governance, Open Societies and Anti-Corruption, DFID

John Adams, Head of Business Innovation Team, DFID

Roopa Hinton, Social Development Adviser, DFID

Gavin Baptie, Head of Information and Public Rights, DFID

**Welcome**

The Chair welcomed the group to the first meeting of the Panel. This was an excellent opportunity to hear voices beyond DFID to help us take forward the transparency agenda. She invited the group to say what they would like the Panel to achieve. The group discussed a range of proposals, key amongst these were:

* celebrate what the aid system has done, this deserves promotion to keep momentum
* more use of aid data
* help deliver the Aid Transparency Challenge
* effective use of the budget identifier, linking donors’ development assistance budgets to partner country budgets
* greater DFID leadership and influence multilaterally and across HMG
* encourage non-government donors to sign up to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)
* create tools to access IATI open data
* leadership both within DFID and internationally
* drive change by building greater connections between aid transparency, country budget transparency and improved service delivery outcomes
* help turn transparency into accountability.

**Terms of Reference and Reference Group**

The paper on Terms of Reference and Reference Group Membership had been circulated. The Chair invited comments and asked for views on the scope of the Panel’s work in particular. There was a discussion around whether the Panel should focus on the transparency of aid data, or on the wealth of information that surrounds aid data more broadly (including strategic and planning documents, for example). There was consensus that anything that could be published to IATI should be within the Panel’s remit, which would therefore include things like results, strategic and planning documents.

There was a suggestion that the Panel should also think about how aid transparency relates to other types of transparency, like extractives and land transparency. We should be ready to share learning and support the development of other transparency standards.

The Chair asked for views on whether the focus should be aid or development co-operation and finance more broadly. There was a view that development co-operation is the more appropriate focus and would include things like military co-operation, tax co-operation, trade facilitation and export credits. It was noted that other government departments also deliver aid and the Panel should engage with these delivery channels too. MoD, DECC and Cabinet Office should be involved. It was agreed other government departments should be invited to attend when there are specific issues to resolve relevant to their remit. We would expect Cabinet Office to have a presence on the Panel, which would help ensure links other sector transparency boards.

The Panel considered the different perspectives from which we might approach development co-operation transparency. There is a tendency to approach the issue from the perspective of ‘what we do’ or how we organise things. An alternative approach is to start from the perspective of someone in a developing country. Their need could be for information on who is building clinics in a given area, and how to ensure access. Transparency offers part of a solution to this need. There was consensus that the Panel should adopt the developing country citizen perspective and be pragmatic at the same time. We should start with what is achievable and the areas where we can have greatest impact.

**Reference Group**

There was a brief discussion on the Reference Group in which it was noted we would need to consider potential conflicts of interest. The Chair welcomed comments on the balance of the group and invited other suggestions. The group made some specific suggestions.

**How We Operate**

The Chair invited views on how the group should operate. The Panel requested that meeting agendas and papers should be available online prior to meetings so they could be shared and discussed with networks. There was a view Chatham House Rule was too stringent and that the Panel should be able to share with others what was discussed and concluded in meetings, without attributing views or comments. We agreed information about the Panel including papers should be available online. Although there could be occasions on which discussions do need to be confidential.

**Progress**

Alasdair Wardhaugh, DFID, introduced paper 2: DFID Aid Transparency – Progress Update. This paper gave a brief background to DFID’s approach to aid transparency and summarised the key things we have delivered since the launch of our Aid Transparency Guarantee in 2010.

Alasdair outlined how the coalition government has been driving transparency through the Aid Transparency Guarantee. This has led to changes in our processes to make them fit for purpose. Transparency is now better embedded but there is still more to do. In our Open Data Strategy we have committed to improving our data (e.g. geo-coding) and to delivering the Aid Transparency Challenge, which is linked to IATI. IATI was given a boost by the Busan commitment to achieve a common standard on transparency. IATI now has 37 signatories and a broader group of publishers. DFID has led and co-funded IATI over the last 4-5 years and is now handing over hosting and we will influence from the outside. We are using opportunities around the G8 to drive greater leadership on development co-operation transparency.

We have now reached a tipping point and we need to decide on the next mile. The picture is good, but there is more progress to make.

In the interests of time, the Chair suggested we did not discuss the Paper on progress but hold on to reflections for discussion at the end.

**UK Aid Tracker**

John Adams, DFID, gave a presentation on the UK Aid Tracker. The testing phase of the Tracker will be released on 5 June and there may be a further announcement at the G8 3Ts event on 15 June.

The Tracker is a major step towards helping us achieve our vision, namely traceability of global development assistance right through the delivery chain. The challenge is for DFID and its implementing partners to take steps to make all DFID development spending traceable from taxpayer to beneficiary. We are taking a cautious gradual approach to publishing names of DFID implementing partners. The panel was interested in our protocol for excluding sensitive information from publication and noted unique organisational identifiers/ an open corporates approach were critical to achieving greater traceability.

**Action Point**: DFID to send panel our exclusions guidance for comment.

The Panel responded positively to the Tracker – ‘such a powerful tool’ that demonstrates the power of IATI and open, reusable data. There was a discussion focussing mainly on how we engage communities on traceability and the Tracker, and on who we are trying most to engage with it. There was a view that we should focus on how to get other aid organisations to use the Tracker as a starting point.

John invited the Panel to help us build a community of users. We could consider guides for journalists on how to use it, for example. We agreed our next meeting should include a session on outreach and how we market the Tracker. ‘UK Aid Tracker’ is the proposed name and we welcomed the Panel’s views on appropriate names.

**Action Point**: DFID to send the Tracker link and password to the Panel.

Mary-Anne Addo, Ghana, then joined the call. She offered to bring a partner country perspective. The Panel should use its influence and networks to let the citizens of Ghana know about the Tracker and encourage others to follow the UK’s lead.

**Future Priorities**

Morag Patrick, DFID, introduced Paper 3: DFID Aid Transparency – Future Priorities. This paper gave an overview of DFID’s proposed future priorities, and the principles underpinning them. The Panel was invited to note these and to consider four areas in particular:

* How should we make choices between priorities? What principles should guide our decision making?
* Applying these principles, what should our future priorities be? How should we sequence them? Are there gaps in our current plans?
* How should we implement some of our more challenging existing priorities – for example, requiring partners to publish to IATI or monitoring and evaluating the impact of transparency?
* How do we unlock the potential of our open data to improve development co-operation impact and deliver better development outcomes?

The Chair then invited comments on future priorities. The Panel felt we should concentrate on getting others to do more and on convincing others that open data can/will lead to improved development outcomes. So outreach and influence is a priority. Dissemination to others in the UK government and internationally should also be one of the principles guiding our decision making. Other suggested priorities included:

* Traceability – in particular, requiring private sub-contractors to publish how they spend DFID money (the Panel might be able help overcome any barriers); defining the steps to traceability and using this to influence others to deliver the same
* Data use – in particular, learning how DFID country offices use open data to inform decision making, including use of IATI data; increasing use of open data and Aid Information Management Systems (AIMS) by partner country governments; the UK should use its influence with partner country governments to be transparent; linking donors’ development budgets to partner country budgets is another step and will not be easy, so let us start with traceability and AIMS.

There was a discussion around whether we should focus on what is within DFID’s sphere of control (delivering full traceability by publishing our own data and requiring our partners to publish) or front line activities. There was consensus we should strike a balance between delivering what is in our control and influencing others. In particular, we need a small number of examples of how open development information is being used in partner countries and what difference it makes. There was a brief discussion of whether technology and innovation hubs in developing countries could play a role in helping develop IATI tools and case studies.

**Conclusions**

In conclusion, the Chair offered the following summary. Traceability should drive our prioritisation. We should link donor budgets to partner country budgets through budget identifiers. Influencing and engaging others is crucial. We need to build a small number of illustrative examples of how information is being used in partner countries. We should specify and target which users we need to involve.

Finally, the Panel highlighted the Open Government Partnership summit in October as an opportunity to share what we’ve learned so far on how the data is being used, and the progress made on budget identifiers. The Panel also shared experiences that illustrated we are still a long way in reality from achieving the ambitious goals we had been discussing today.

The Chair thanked the Panel for their contributions. The group was invited to consider what they would like to see covered in agendas over the coming year and send suggestions to Morag. This could include suggestions for things they would like to showcase and for speakers.

**Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be in September, perhaps with an interim meeting and/or some one-to-ones.