

**Notes from Royal Statistical Society (RSS)
International Development Working Group (IDWG): 5 June 2014**

Participants: (around 20 people)

Presentation (20mins)

Neil Jackson, DFID Chief Statistician introduced the topic and spoke about what the main areas DFID statisticians work in.

DFID Statisticians Sian Rasdale, Sam Kutnick and Jane Casey presented the slides on 'How do we improve our aid statistics?' The presentation covered what ODA is, how the UK reports on this internationally and specific information about the content of our national statistics publication and current data about UK aid spend in 2013. At the end of the presentation DFID asked the floor for feedback on DFID's national statistics publication and stated that there would be an online consultation posted on the DFID website.

Judith Randal (Development Initiatives) – Discussant (20mins)

Judith responded to DFID's presentation and put into context the work DFID and the OECD are reporting on around ODA, into larger global issues on aid data, financial flows and the OECD's role in future reporting. Some specific points were discussed noted below:

- There is a change in the external environment. There were around 90 countries that were reliant on ODA as the most important flow, now there are around 40.
- Contextual information around ODA:
 - Need to look at all flows going into countries (Peacekeeping, military, etc.)
 - Currently we don't know what the UK is spending.
- Poverty context:
 - Need to draw attention to data on poverty in developing countries.
 - Unmasking numbers. National averages mask more than they show
 - Absolute numbers of people in poverty very important.
 - Per capita info – need some comparative point of reference.
 - IATI – UK geocoding allows us to see the location and project info. Transaction level detail allows us to get much more accuracy.
- Other points:
 - Don't classify as donors and recipients – the world has changed.
 - Set aid in the context of all flows to countries.
 - Results – target populations – gives you a denominator which is relevant.

Questions / Comments from the Floor (30-45mins)

There was a lively discussion and questions from the floor. The questions were mainly around international development and new and innovative ways of using data out there. Some of the questions / discussion points are noted below.

- Question about raw data – asking about whether the data in its rawest form is disseminated with the publication. DFID Response: ODA data is disseminated on the OECD website in project level detail. But we should release both ODA and GPEX datasets with our publication.
- Data should be open and raw data should be made available, but when we open this out to a more generalist audience it is often the stories and summaries that are most useful. Raw data is good for specialist audiences, but generalist audiences (who might not answer a user consultation) prefer the information in a more summary form.
- It is important to meet the needs of a range of different users of ODA statistics.
- Be clear about the audience – for DFID’s SID publication, the main audience are MPs (hence summary information is more appropriate).
- People want to know the totality of resource flows.
- There is a read across to international organisations on ODA Modernisation, to build a re-invigorated development finance system for the post-2015 world.
- Questions around: Can information on results be published alongside the statistics on spend? DFID response: there is an ongoing programme of work to develop DFID’s results estimates which, over time, should help to provide better information on the outputs from DFID’s spend.
- UNDP used to measure all inflows to countries through their Development Cooperation Reports. But these are impossible to reconcile with DAC data.
- There is much rich data that exists from local foundations, NGOs, etc. Local statistical offices could collect / collate this information as part of DFID’s work. Would also be nice to see data on India broken down in much more detail – regional and local levels.

Summary by Neil Jackson

Neil Jackson thanked all participants and summarised some of the main points on the discussion, these included the following:

- Users, Parliament and the general public are one group, specialist users are another group. We need to make our data more open.