

## Aid Management Program: 2012 AMP Best Practices Workshop

### **Introduction**

The “AMP Best Practices Workshop”, Development Gateway’s annual flagship event, took place for the fifth consecutive year in December 2012, in Dakar, Senegal. Focusing on development related themes such as **transparency, accountability and results**, the event attracts a growing number of participants from countries using the Aid Management Platform (AMP), donors and partner organisations. Since the first event, organised in Nairobi in 2008, the AMP family has grown to 22 countries<sup>1</sup>, spread over four continents.

The workshops are designed around a series of thematic discussions and country presentations on key issues related to aid information, coordination, transparency and the usage of AMP. The aim is to facilitate discussion on key issues pertaining to AMP; challenges in aid information management and coordination; to foster partnerships among AMP countries; and to capture user feedback to strengthen the AMP application and program.

While the purpose of the workshop is to promote the exchange of good practices and lessons learned on aid information management, the event is also an opportunity for participants to tap into the latest policy developments in the field of aid effectiveness and transparency, thanks to DG’s presence at fora such as the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan.

Moreover, the workshops provide an exceptional opportunity for members of the AMP family to meet, discuss and learn from each other’s experiences, and thus further strengthening “south to south” co-operation. The recurrent “Country Expo” is a popular part of the event, which allows countries to showcase local best practices and solutions to common issues that may be replicated elsewhere.



*2012 AMP family photo, Dakar, Senegal*

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<sup>1</sup> Burkina Faso, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Honduras, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Moldova, Nepal, Niger, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo and Uganda

The 2012 event, entitled “**Resources, Results, Voices**”, captured the state of play of DG and its partner countries within these three areas. In his opening statement, Development Gateway’s Director General Mr Jean-Louis Sarbib stressed the challenge in changing the reference framework to talk about resources as a whole, rather than aid solely. Instead of the common perception of aid, it should be viewed as a catalyser of economic growth and a part of a nation’s resources. As the emphasis shifts to resources, internal and external, and private sector contributions, the end goal for these should be to contribute to development objectives. At a practical level, this new approach is helped by countries linking up all existing systems, such as AMP and all national systems involved in resources processes, to ensure that the information is shared transparently and made available to all stakeholders, including citizens, and development partners.

### **Resources**

The focus of the opening day was accurate and timely **tracking of resources**. This includes means of comprehensive management of resources through integration of AMP with national budget systems. A couple of countries that are currently linking their budget systems with AMP were able to share their experiences to date.

The Post Busan follow-up and news from IATI session took stock of the impact of the global economic crisis in terms of driving down the level of aid and how the ramifications of this can be eased by boosting countries’ domestic economies. The solution also includes domestic resource mobilization, with clear results, which requires systems to transparently share knowledge and allow for more accurate statistics.

Since the High Level Forum in Busan in 2011, the **IATI** has increased its signatories from 22 to 35, including some significant players - the US, Canada, UNOCHA, and the World Food Programme. The IATI Secretariat has been working with the OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee) on the commitments made in Busan to implement a common standard for publishing information resources provided through development cooperation. The common open standard allows for electronic publication of timely, comprehensive and forward-looking information on resources provided through development cooperation. A central part of IATI’s work is improving the quality and availability of information required by developing countries, something which is crucial as 100 organisations have started publishing. As one of the first IATI pilot countries, **DRC** shared its experiences as an IATI member and on the four IATI missions that have taken place to date. These have resulted in an automatic data exchange between the AMP and some donor partners’ systems, using the IATI Standard. This has produced several benefits for the government in terms of improved accuracy, timeliness and frequency, as well as adding to forward looking budgets.



Linking aid and national budgets is a way of *reflecting* aid in internal and external budget documentation, as well as fully *integrating* aid information in the decision-making process. The actual link can be done by a mechanism for information sharing between an aid management system and a

budget management system. The information shared is mainly on planned disbursements for on budget aid projects and actual disbursement from donors to governments. When aid is not integrated onto budget, it means that countries cannot manage their own resources effectively and efficiently, and domestic accountability is weakened.

In **Timor-Leste**, DG has worked with the government to create a “combined sources budget”, tracking all resources, including all donor information. According to the Timorese experience, the process was facilitated by having a clear focus on budget systems integration from the onset of the project. Therefore, the necessary next steps, such as aligned aid information management data and stakeholder buy in were more easily put in place and implemented. Moreover, thanks to interactive dashboards creating clear visuals of project locations, analysis for decision making is allowed in a few minutes.

In the case of **Nepal**, the budget systems’ integration supports the country’s Resource Committee to estimate multiannual projections. It also enables a better understanding of the financial status of development projects and supports the subsequent monitoring and evaluation.



*Delegates from Liberia and Malawi*

**Liberia**, which is to launch AMP in early 2013, has decided to include aid information in the national budget and to use it in the budget planning. In anticipation of the AMP implementation, the newly established Aid Management Unit has requested data covering medium term projections for the next three years from all donors. Drawing on a best practice from Malawi, Liberia has also created a donor score card as an incentive method for receiving donor information on time.

## **Results**

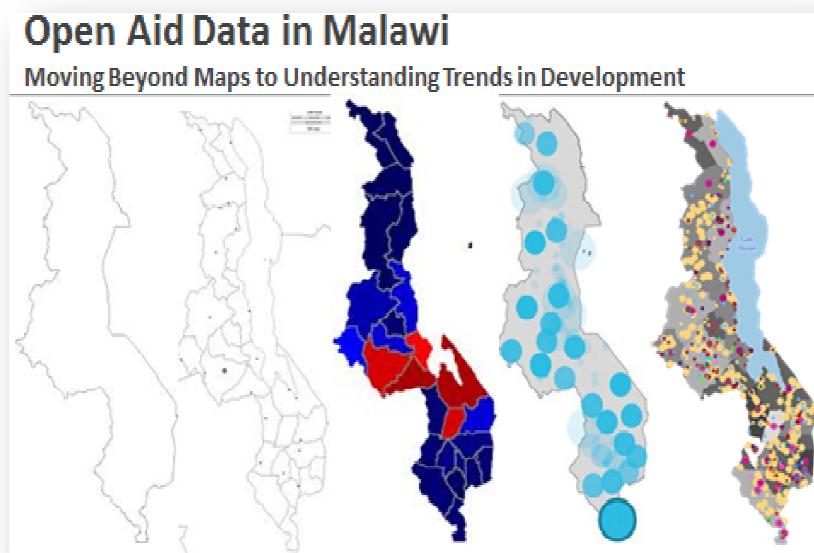
Day two of the workshop was devoted to tools and methods for **monitoring and measuring results** of aid in the larger context of development finance. Sessions were aimed at taking a close look at tools for geo-coding activities at the sub-national level, Geographic Information System (GIS) modules for mapping and creation of data visualizations, all of which provide decision-makers and managers with up to date information of the situation in their country.

The presentation “Why Results Matter” introduced the participants to the basics of monitoring and evaluation, as well as the importance of results management. Moreover, it highlighted how using feedback is key to changing, and correcting mis-targeted policies and programs. Results management is about the use of performance data, which provides a way to understand and make decisions related to intended and unintended effects of the policy or program. For instance, at the national level, this info enables policymakers to assess and guide progress toward achievement of national development

strategies. At the provincial level, policy makers are able to assess progress toward implementation and adjust to changing conditions. Also, the information on results can ensure that a program is meeting needs of citizens.

While avoiding the pitfalls of “M&E fragmentation”, it’s also important to recognize that one size does not fit all. Lessons learnt point to the need to promote results management as a country system, focusing on country level results, not just on donor reporting. Other crucial points include the need to exploit new technologies, some of which may reduce the cost of data collection, and to visualize existing data on results in order to engage citizens in providing feedback.

DG also took the opportunity of taking stock of the geo-coding and visualization work done in 2012, particularly the GIS modules implemented in Liberia, Nepal, Laos and Haiti, as well as the geo-coding of aid activities in Nepal and Laos. The lessons learnt from these undertakings are being incorporated in the upgrade of the IATI geo-referencing standard. Next steps include further enhancements of the AMP Map Module/Dashboard, based on in-country feed-back, as well as geo-coding of all donors in several countries. A presentation on open aid data in **Malawi** offered a look at the geography of aid and why it



is vital for understanding in-country aid allocations and better monitor on-the-ground progress of activities, as well as identifying underserved regions.

Following the growing global commitment to improving aid transparency, the US government has launched its own foreign assistance dashboards<sup>2</sup>, which are to become a one stop shop for USG data on foreign assistance. Data visualized include heat maps, interactive charts and graphs, as well as data query pages allowing users to download full data sets, and enabling users to access and analyze all data currently available on the dashboard.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.foreignassistance.gov](http://www.foreignassistance.gov)





*Delegates from Ethiopia*

The Open Aid Partnership (OAP) brings development partners (the World Bank Institute, bilateral donors, foundations and civil society) together to enhance the openness and effectiveness of development assistance. The OAP builds on the Mapping for Results initiative, implemented by Development Gateway, which comprises 30,000 mapped activities in 143 countries. It aims to improve aid transparency and coordination by developing an Open Aid Map that visualizes the location of donor-financed programs at the local level. The partnership also intends to better monitor the impact on citizens and enhance the targeting of development programs, as well as foster accountability by empowering citizens to provide direct feedback on project results.

Geospatial technologies are also a priority for USAID which has established a new GeoCenter. The objective is to incorporate geospatial concepts, and draw on lessons from monitoring and evaluation in the program design and implementation cycle. An important part of the center's work will be to create maps and conduct spatial analysis of programs in the countries where USAID works. This work will, in part, be conducted by Development Gateway through its partnership with the College of William and Mary to create the AidData Center for Development Policy. The session on results also included a discussion on the future of the AMP program.

### **Voices**

During the final day focus turned to ways of **capturing citizen voices** and the potential that the spread of mobile technology has for the involvement of citizens in the development process. Mobile apps can enable feedback loops between donors, governments, and other stakeholders. With geographically specific information about projects, citizens and stakeholders on the ground could access records of projects in their communities. They could augment these records with comments or photos about progress and results, or participate in the planning of new projects. Importantly, this session took stock of the growing number of public views of the AMP and discussed the transparency gains involved.

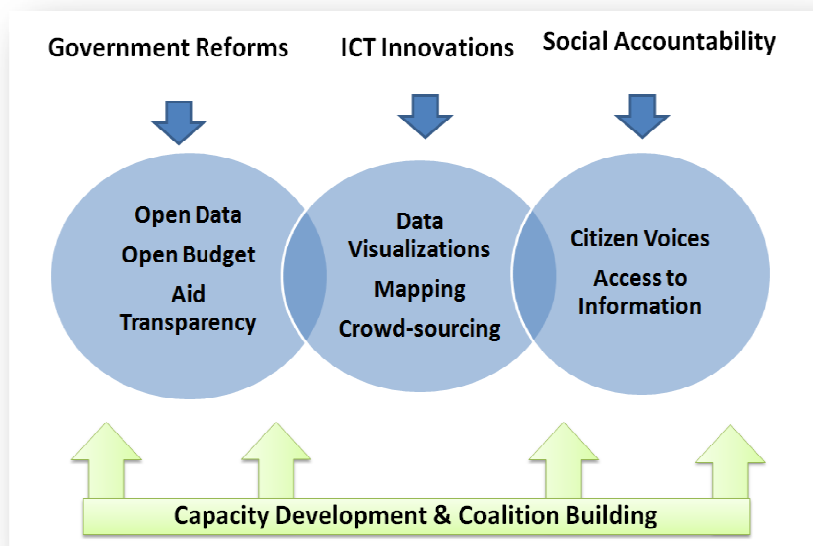
One of the end goals of open data and the use of ICT tools is increased accountability in public services and development activities. To this end, access to information is crucial so as to ensure citizens' insight into public projects. Kosovo and Timor Leste are two examples of countries that have created public portals of their AMPs so that society at large is able to follow how development financing is being spent. In **Kosovo's** case, the decision was made at an early stage since the government wanted to promote AMP<sup>3</sup> as the official source on foreign aid information. Subsequently, all public enquiries for aid

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<sup>3</sup> <http://public.amp-mei.net/>

information are directed to the site in the first instance. In **Timor**, the public AMP, called the “Aid Transparency Portal”, is a part of the national Transparency Portal<sup>4</sup>, which also houses portals on budget transparency, e-procurement and government results.

If transparency and access to information are the first steps to citizens’ engagement, the next steps involve practical means of communication for citizens. ICT has been identified as the missing piece to fix the broken link of communication between governments, citizens and international organisations. Through greater participation from the end-users, citizens’ voices can be heard via SMS, mapping and social media. This is especially true in the case of populations in remote and underdeveloped areas. This way, the feed-back loop can be closed and the quality of service improved. The U-report<sup>5</sup> in Uganda is one example of how ICT opens up opportunities for citizens to have their voices heard. This free SMS-based system allows young Ugandans to speak out on what's happening in communities across the country, and work together with other community leaders for positive change. Weekly polls are sent via SMS covering a range of topics and request for reports on service delivery. U-Reporters can also report at any time on other issues in their community. To date, this SMS feedback system has nearly 200.000 volunteers.



*Elements of an open development approach*

As AMP implementations mature in several countries, the way the system is used also deepens and expands to cover other policy areas. In **DRC**, where AMP has been in use since 2008, the system is now in an important phase, with access being extended to the provincial level. This extension is undertaken in support of larger efforts to strengthen DRC’s work toward decentralization of core governance and decision making functions. Whereas AMP expands geographically in DRC, **Madagascar** uses the system to extract specific sector data. The MAFS (Mapping Actions for Food Security)<sup>6</sup> is a country owned

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.transparency.gov.tl/english.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://ureport.ug/>

<sup>6</sup> [www.mafsan.org](http://www.mafsan.org)

platform developed by FAO, mapping food security and nutrition actions in countries. The objective is to offer users a view of all actions that are related to FSN in a given country on a country map. Since the information required for the MAFS platform is already available in AMP, the relevant projects are extracted from AMP to FSN. Similarly, in **Malawi**, aid projections for the coming fiscal year are extracted from AMP and sent to donor partners for confirmation and final budgeting. Moreover, AMP serves as the source of information for the annual Aid Atlas. The Atlas details the donor partner activities across all sectors of the economy and provides a brief analysis of progress against aid effectiveness commitments.

### ***The Country Expo***

The **Expo** continues to be one of the highlights of the event, and a source of inspiration to DG and its partner countries. The Expo gives the country delegates a chance to showcase best practices linked to their AMP implementations. This year the time for the Expo was extended in order to give participants more time to discuss bilaterally and to share experiences. As is the case every year, several innovative practices were on display. These include: Kosovo's public AMP portal; Liberia's alignment of aid with budgets, as well as processes for more accurate forecasting and projection of aid flows; Haiti's inclusion of humanitarian activities in AMP; Senegal's linking of aid and national resources in AMP; activities related to the Open Aid Partnership and geocoding in Malawi; and ODA reports produced using AMP in Ethiopia, Nepal and Burkina Faso.

As in the past, workshop participants were asked to cast their votes for the best AMP practice of the year. This year, the votes resulted in a tie and the workshop attendees could congratulate two winners. The winning best practices came from:

- **The Democratic Republic of Congo** for the IATI pilot of information exchange
- **Tanzania** for their monthly "flash report" on development disbursements, which is disseminated online.



*Country Expo: delegates from Senegal and Togo sharing experiences of country best practices*