



Aid Management Program: 2011 Best Practices Workshop

Introduction

Every year since 2008, Development Gateway has organized a global workshop designed around a series of thematic discussions and country presentations on key issues related to aid information, aid coordination, and the usage of the Aid Management Platform (AMP). The purpose of these workshops is **to promote the exchange of good practices and lessons learned on aid information management through the use of AMP**; to facilitate discussion on key issues and challenges in aid information management and aid coordination; to foster partnerships among AMP countries; and to capture user feedback to strengthen the AMP application and program.



Overview

While in previous years, the AMP workshop was taking place in December of each year, the 2011 “AMP Best Practices Workshop” was organized in Dakar between the 24th and the 26th of January 2012 in order to take full advantage of the conclusions of the 4th High-Level Forum (HLF4) on Aid Effectiveness that took place in Busan from November 29 to December 1, 2011.

Mr. Jean-Louis Sarbib, CEO of Development Gateway, first welcomed **the 24 participating countries (up from 14 in 2010)** – including 19 AMP countries (**Burkina Faso,**

Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Kosovo, Laos, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Nepal, Niger, Senegal, Southern Sudan, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Togo and Uganda) as well as 5 observer countries. In light of the HLF4, Mr. Sarbib acknowledged the progress that has been made in terms of aid effectiveness, development results and resource management, while highlighting major obstacles facing the development community. One of these challenges is **ensuring that the intended beneficiaries of aid have a voice in the development process** and are provided with the opportunity to express their feedback on development activities taking place within their communities.

The title of the workshop, “**Transparency, Accountability, and Results**”, aimed to demonstrate the commitment of Development Gateway (DG) to **moving from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness, as reflected in the conclusions of the HLF4**. DG has already begun this transition, including a revamp of the system’s interactive dashboards and maps. Several key Development Gateway partners attended the workshop including: **ESRI** (for visualization and geocoding initiatives), **CABRI and Mokoro** (for IATI and budget integration), **Aiddata¹/Brigham Young University** (for the geocoding of country-level projects), **UNDP**, and the **FAO** (tracking of investments related to food security).



¹ AidData is a joint initiative of Development Gateway, the College of William and Mary and Brigham Young University.

1. The "Market Place" - South-South exchange of best practices

The Market Place is one of the key sessions of the best practices workshop. The objective is to give participants an opportunity to share their best practices related to aid coordination, aid management and the use of AMP. Each country is provided an opportunity to discuss bilaterally with other countries and get hands-on responses to their questions.

Many good practices were identified during the workshop. These include: the AMP data entry and validation process in Madagascar; the implementation of an official ministerial decree signed by all donors to confirm data accuracy in DRC; the data entry seminars organized in Burkina Faso, during which donor focal points and aid coordination teams enter and validate information that will be later used to produce the development cooperation report; and the AMP « Help desk » in Ethiopia.

After the session, the workshop participants were asked to vote for the country with the greatest number of best practices in the past year and to identify the AMP best practice of the year. Results of the ballot showed two winners:



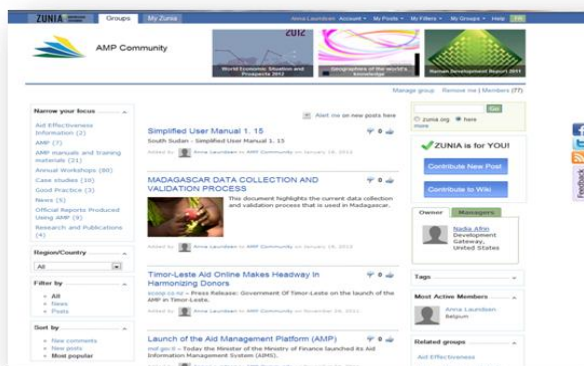
- **Tanzania was elected as the country with the highest number of best practices of the year.**
- **DRC won the « best practice of the year » with their ministerial decree.**

Both winners were awarded a certificate of recognition for their valuable work.

The AMP Community on Zunia

During the workshop, Development Gateway presented its Zunia platform and the benefits for the AMP Community.

The AMP Community is a private group created for AMP users, hosted on www.zunia.org where users can share experiences, post AMP-related materials, search documentation, access case studies, learn about new features of AMP or about IATI and other research on aid effectiveness. Resources in the AMP Community also include user manuals, training materials and AMP-generated reports or case studies. Users can search for documents of interest, including all relevant documentation on the annual AMP workshops.



The AMP Community currently has 77 members, including AMP users from more than 20 countries, partner organizations and Development Gateway staff. Members of the AMP Community can email other users, receive user activity alerts, post relevant documents and comments, and personalize their user profile. The AMP Community is an excellent tool for connecting and staying in touch with users around the globe, sharing knowledge, and learning from best practices.

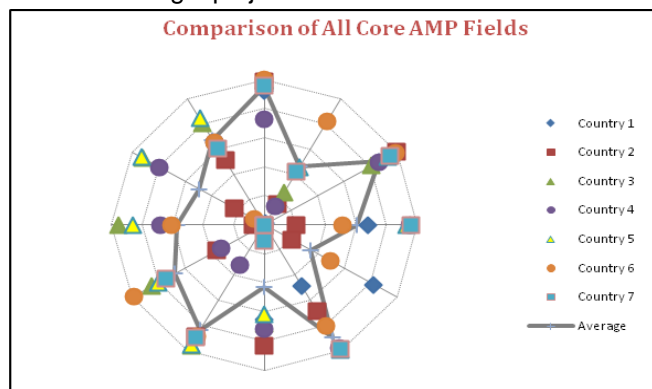
2. Data Quality

In order to monitor results and project impact, a lot of data is needed from many different sources, which sometimes lead stakeholders to question the quality and integrity of the data at hand.

“A system is only as good as the data it holds”. There should be a strong focus on the quality of data that is contained in any system. Accurate and exhaustive data is essential for better planning and coordination among all stakeholders, and ultimately to better decisions made by policy makers.

On the other hand, inaccurate data can lead to misinterpretation. These are some of the key issues that were discussed during this very lively session of the workshop.

To illustrate the fundamental issue of data quality, DG presented a study it conducted internally on seven countries. The study showed the level of use of certain key AMP fields for each country and examined the disbursement data to see if disbursements were missing or grouped into only one year for multi-year projects. The study also explored whether disbursement records were more accurate for on budget than for off-budget projects.



Questions that arose from the discussions then focused on other key challenges of data quality at the country level:

- How can we harmonize the definition of each term used in AMP?
- How do we ensure that Development Partners (DPs) actually enter exhaustive data in a timely manner?
- What data should be made public?

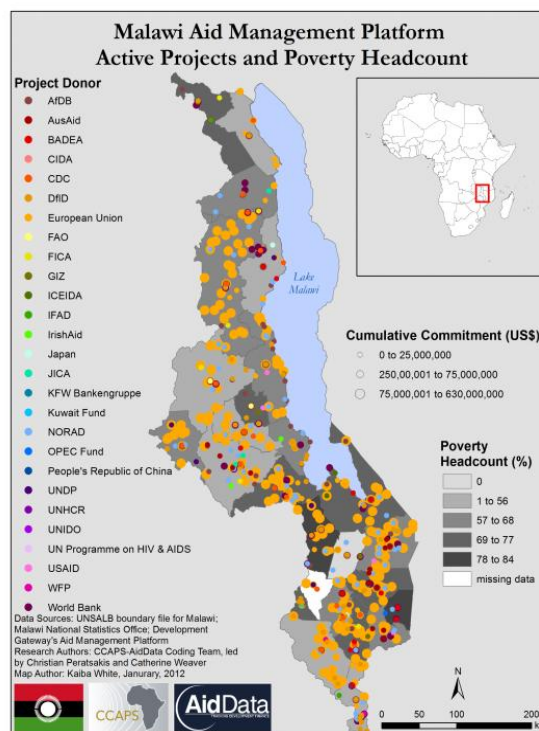
The importance of having a data management plan (DMP) with a regular schedule of data entry emerged as a key recommendation of the workshop. DG can support all partner countries to come up with the appropriate DMP at the time of implementation or at a later stage, as if needed.

3. Aid Effectiveness Maps

During this session, **ESRI**, a world leader in using maps and a geographic approach to problem solving, presented how maps can help development practitioners do their work better. ESRI and DG have been working closely together to develop an advanced mapping / GIS module in AMP to help governments map their development activities. This feature is now available as an option in the 2.0 version of AMP.

DG also presented its pilot work with Malawi where, with the help of AidData, it prepared country maps with specific donor actions at the country level. The map shows who is doing what, where. Each government, provided with such maps could instantly generate a conversation on better aid coordination. This work of DG on “geocoding” is based on a methodology created by AidData and Uppsala University in Sweden. It was adapted and improved to incorporate lessons learned from the work done by AidData on the World Bank “Mapping for Results” initiative and the AfDB project to map the organisation’s projects locations.

The map of Malawi below shows projects of various DPs, overlaid with sub-national poverty data. This type of map can trigger a dialogue between donors and partner countries, and support an informed decision making process on aid coordination and aid usage. The next generation of GIS dashboards will also be used as a transparency tool for the wider public.



4. What is next for AMP?

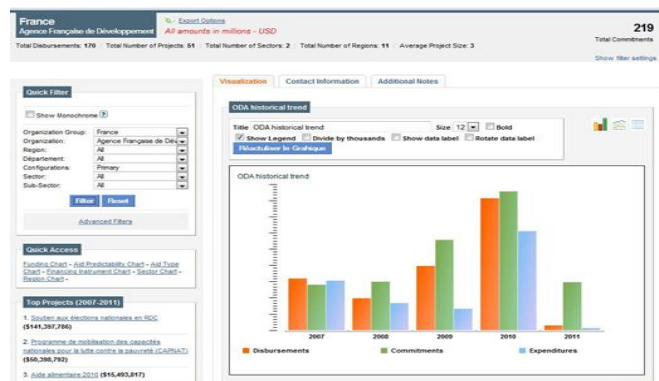
AMP Version 2.0

This session aimed to present the new AMP 2.0 version to the participants, which represents a significant improvement in the AMP software capabilities and functionality. With

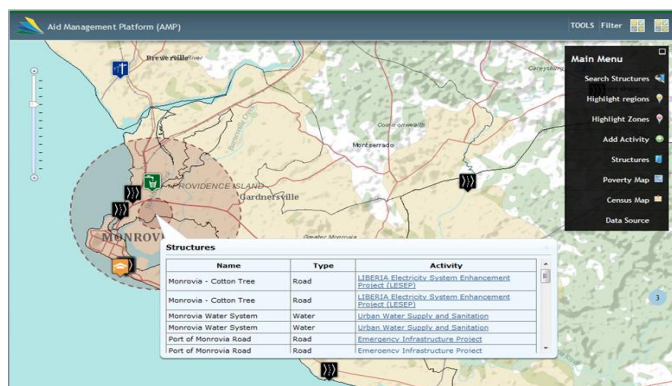
improved graphical and analytic tools, together with a new user-friendly interface, this new generation of AMP software is already available and is the ultimate product for the management of aid projects.

AMP 2.0 includes an **enhanced public view and desktop homepage**, both of which have been overhauled with a new design. The revamped layout of the desktop homepage makes text easier to read and the page easier to navigate.

AMP version 2.0 also includes new features like a **wide array of dashboards** for analytical reporting and graphical analysis. In the new version, users will find expanded Organization, Sector, and Region dashboards along with several improved preexisting dashboards.



A significant enhancement to the AMP visualization tools is the **integration of ESRI mapping technology with AMP**. AMP reports, activities, and structures can now be visualized using this map, with the option to overlay different thematic maps, such as poverty and census maps. This allows for greater analysis of the data from various user perspectives.



Another key improvement is the IATI import in AMP which is available from the Admin menu in AMP, permitting a semi-automatic process to import data using IATI standards.

AMP 2.0 is currently being rolled out to a number of AMP countries.

5. The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Pilot in DRC

IATI (www.aidtransparency.net) is an initiative that was launched at the HLF3 in Accra in 2008 and that aims to make information about aid spending easier to find, use and compare. Development Gateway has been actively involved in IATI since its inception and is a member of the IATI Steering Committee. Thanks to its 22 active local country platforms, DG helps by facilitating access to the right people in partner countries to analyze and validate its work directly in the field.

The objectives of the pilot mission in DRC were to:

- Test the automatic data exchange process between IATI information and AMP
- Check the quality of data
- Compare the data between IATI and AMP
- Collect some missing information.

The results of the pilot are as follows:

- The pilot successfully converted all donor data to the proposed IATI XML data format. This involved mapping the donor data to the IATI structure, changing the structure and name of some of the data, and in some cases translating the data itself so it is consistent with IATI and comparable with other donors' data. Overall, this was a relatively straightforward exercise, but it did highlight the need for a glossary to further clarify the definitions.
- The data from all donors was successfully imported into test versions of AMP to prove it is feasible. Using systems to deliver automatic data exchange would improve the regularity, timeliness and accuracy of data, thus providing significant time saving, quality data feeds, a wider range of data sources, in-depth information (e.g. Multi-funded sources of projects), and lead to reduced parallel reporting and greater consistency. The mission was clear however that although donor systems have lots of data at the country level, they do not have it all.
- The consensus amongst all stakeholders was that IATI has the potential to add significant value to existing aid information systems and processes using political pressure, greater breadth of information, consistency, and a clear implementation framework.

However, consideration needs to be given to whether and how data being imported directly from IATI data (e.g. donor systems) should be validated before it is published. Most

donors want the chance to validate the data before it is published. In some cases, manual updates will still be necessary depending on the scope of the finally agreed standards. Thus a mixture of manual and automated updates is likely to be necessary. Further technical and organizational work will still be required to allow AMP to import IATI data effectively.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

The session on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) aimed to determine the needs of countries in terms of an M&E tool. Countries gathered in 3 groups to respond to and discuss a set of questions related to M&E.

Questions:

- Does a single M&E strategy and system exist in your country?
- Is there an institutional framework for M&E in your country?
- Would an M&E tool be useful in the context of aid management?

Group 1: The majority of countries from Group 1 indicated that a single M&E system/strategy was not established within their respective countries. However, members from this group stated that policies are often reviewed within the framework of the country's PRSP and the long-term goal of achieving the MDGs.

Group 1 stated that an institutional framework for M&E exists within their countries. Answers revealed that M&E activities of projects and programs are carried out by internal departments within ministries, while in some cases such activities are performed by independent observers with the support of donors.

Group 1 acknowledged that an M&E tool would be useful for aid management particularly if it contains disaggregated data, and helps with measuring project impact and monitoring indicators. Three recommendations were derived from the responses of Group 1: (1) Provide AMP access to agencies that perform M&E activities; (2) Establish a system integrator; and (3) Allow for budget integration.

Group 2: Unlike Group 1, the majority of members in Group 2 indicated that their countries have a single M&E system/strategy; however, most acknowledged that they do not have manuals detailing the modalities and indicators to be employed. The majority of countries agreed that an M&E tool would be useful in terms of project evaluation. Group 2 highlighted that data disaggregation, territorial breakdown, and inaccurate information were the major challenges to M&E activities. The responses from Group 2 suggested that national statistical systems must be established or enhanced

to develop appropriate indicators and the need for donor alignment with the needs of recipient countries in terms of M&E.

Group 3: Most members from Group 3 stated that national M&E plans exist, the majority of which are led by the ministries of finance. Malawi has a National Planning Dashboard (NPD) in place, by sector, and located in the appropriate ministry. In Ethiopia, all line ministries have M&E agencies; monthly reports are generated by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and reviewed by the Parliament. Liberia is currently using its country Poverty Reduction Document for M&E while its NPD is in the planning phase. M&E activities in Nepal are charged by the National Planning Commission; activities are performed at the central and district levels, by sector, and financed by a donor. Timor-Leste does not have a national M&E system in place; however, it is in the planning phase and will be reviewed and approved by the National Parliament. Tanzania/Zanzibar currently uses the AMP system. The system is divided into two clusters in order to accommodate the varying needs between the island and the mainland. Uganda has an M&E system within the Budget Monitoring system in the MoF. M&E activities are divided by sector and reviewed annually by the National Planning Commission.

Some challenges in the implementation of M&E systems were also identified by participants. First, the information required for the implementation of such systems is typically not delivered in a timely manner, leading to the use of out-of-date information. Effective M&E, however, requires timely and accurate data. Second, countries do not possess the institutional capacity to always carry out their duties, as positions are understaffed and undercompensated. This challenge is only exacerbated by financial constraints, including meagre budgets for M&E activities. And third, political motivations can influence M&E exercises and dilute the accuracy of project/program reports and negotiations. While these three factors may present a serious impediment to the development of M&E systems, the importance of M&E in the field is such that DG will spare no effort to provide a valuable contribution to support country partner governments.

7. Roll out of AMP to DPs: Best Practices and challenges

Ethiopia, Nepal, and Kosovo gave presentations at the workshop on their experiences with donor rollout, the processes used to open access and the success and challenges that they face with the current situation.

One of the big advantages identified across the board by partner countries in opening access of AMP to donors is **to be able to include off-budget data in AMP**, and information that is typically not available to governments.

As far as challenges are concerned, most countries deal with the fact that **donors do not always enter information in time** when they do. Another challenge is the fact that **focal points change frequently** which forces the government to offer ad hoc training sessions to new staff as there seems to be a lack of communication in the handover of the portfolio.

Even if most users are currently satisfied with the roll out to donors, the focus of the work for the coming year should be put on the following items: how to make AMP the only source of aid information, how to make AMP part of the daily aid management routine for the government and for donors, and how to harmonize the reporting system for all stakeholders.

8. Experiences with budget integration

As the dialogue on aid effectiveness evolves, a major issue has surfaced: the challenge for most partner countries in having, at any point in time, a clear picture of the resources at their disposal to manage their development. The lack of integration and coordination between budget and aid processes is one of the key reasons for this challenge.

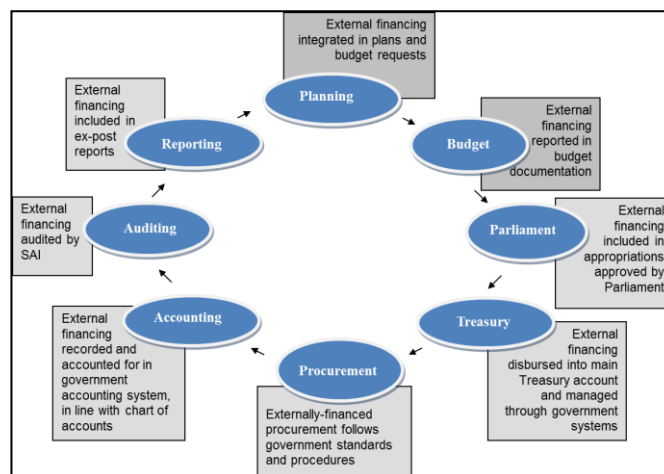
The aim of this session was to sensitize AMP aid practitioners and bring more clarity around this issue by bringing together budget and aid experts in the same room.

The presentation by CABRI (Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative) first focused on explaining the issue, highlighting that the lack of integration was not a minor issue for partner countries' governments, creating disruption in their work, additional costs, and an issue of accountability at many levels. This is confirmed by looking at the results of the PEFA (Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability) exercises in many African countries. According to a CABRI/OECD survey, only 8 of 26 African countries included 76% or more of aid on budget (...); 54% had no policy on aid information flows from donors; and 54% split aid management between 2 and more institutions.

CABRI then further explained that the issue is complex and varies depending on how aid is recorded. For the aid that is recorded in country systems, the problem is really about the availability and reliability of information on forward disbursements.

By contrast, for aid that flows outside of country systems (off-budget aid), the problem is wider, including the availability and use of information on forward commitments, disbursements, the use of aid resources to deliver services, and on the performance of this aid.

At each step of the budgeting process, as described in the image below, there is a need for governments to look at and organize the interface between the budget and aid processes.



The main recommendation from CABRI was that governments need to build an information and process interface between aid management and budget management, a shared responsibility between DPs and partner countries' governments. The discussion that followed showed the participants' interest in further deepening the work on these issues.

9. Feedback from Participants

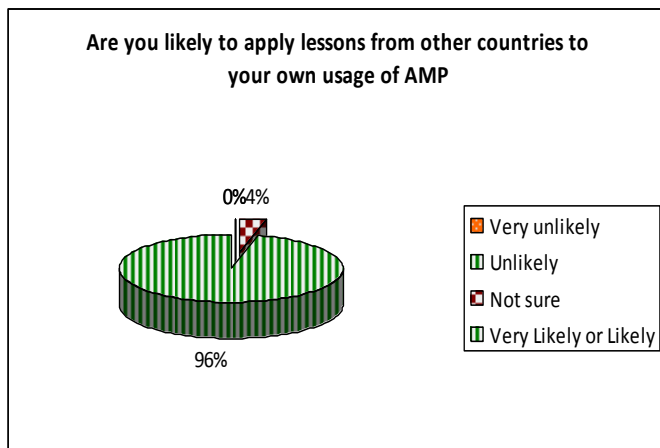
An evaluation survey was handed out to the participants in order to gather feedback on the workshop. This year, the annual workshop included a total number of 80 participants coming from AMP countries, observer countries and partners. Out of these, 60 participated in the survey.

With double the level of participation from the previous workshop, the survey results indicated the same very high level of satisfaction:

- **Overall, 96 % indicated they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the conference.**
- No session of the workshop was rated less than 90% useful.
- 100% of the respondents indicated that it was very useful or useful to hear from other countries'

experiences, validating the concept of best practices workshops as organized by DG.

- **Even more important, 96% of the respondents indicated that they will apply lessons learnt from other countries to their own country context.**



In addition, the vast majority of respondents indicated that the length of the workshop should be extended, confirming the usefulness of the workshop and the need for more bilateral and in-depth discussions on topics that appear indeed relevant to the participants' work.