

Case Study 5 – An international NGO – WaterAid

Background

Our case study examining the aid information needs of an international NGO, focused on WaterAid, an NGO that promotes universal access to safe water and sanitation. To inform their advocacy, WaterAid attempted to compare aid spending on sanitation with that on two infectious diseases associated with child mortality (Malaria and AIDS) in two African countries – Zambia and Madagascar – between 2004 and 2006. The purpose of this research was to test their hypothesis that while inadequate sanitation is the biggest killer of children under the age of five, it receives less attention from donors than other health interventions.

Summary of improvements they would like to see in the future

This case study highlighted the need for aid information that is:

- Disaggregated by country and sub-national level;
- Disaggregated by sector (with flexibility to amend purpose codes as necessary);
- Disaggregated by type of aid;
- Records the value of commitments and disbursements, with specific dates for each;
- Records start dates and completion dates for specific projects;
- Has more detailed long descriptions;
- Is available in a user-friendly format.

Background

What data sources do they currently use?

The first information source WaterAid examined was the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) database. They also accessed data from the project level aid database (PLAID), which is still under development, the Zambian Development Assistance Database (DAD) and statistics from the World Health Organisation (WHO). This was supplemented by interviews with donor and partner country representatives, examination of project documentation, data from national offices of statistics and other secondary sources.

What problems have they encountered with current data sources?

WaterAid encountered a number of challenges in using CRS data as the starting point for their study:

1) Sanitation spending could not be disaggregated from the CRS database

The CRS classifies expenditure on water and sanitation under two purpose codes – 14020 (water and sanitation) and 14030 (basic drinking water supply and basic sanitation). Because spending on water and sanitation are combined within these codes, this, plus inadequate long descriptions of individual projects, made it impossible to disaggregate sanitation spending from the CRS data base.

Water Aid worked with a consortium of interested parties that included UN Water, DFID, the International Water and Sanitation Centre, and representatives of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) the EC and OECD, to prepare and submit a proposal for amendments to the purpose codes at the DAC Working Party on

Statistics (WP-STAT) meeting in June 2008.¹ The proposal was not adopted at first, but revisions were made and WP-STAT has now agreed separate CRS codes for water supply and sanitation, which will be used for reporting from 2010 onwards.

2) It was difficult to identify spending by country

Within the CRS, some funds are allocated by region (eg sub-Saharan Africa) rather than by country, so for some projects it was difficult to identify spending in the two countries WaterAid wished to study, let alone spending at a sub-national or local community level.

3) Incomplete disbursement details, and gaps between disbursement and commitment figures made it difficult to confirm exactly how much was spent per year

While the CRS database records both commitments and disbursements, descriptive data on the latter is often incomplete which made it difficult for WaterAid to establish the amount of money actually *spent* on sanitation from 2004 to 2006. WaterAid risked not capturing commitments made in 2003, but disbursed over the study period, for example. Conversely, commitments made in 2006 might be reflected in the figures but not necessarily disbursed during the evaluation period, which would also be misleading.

When they turned to the Zambian DAD for information, they found:

4) The DAD was slow and cumbersome to use, and the data was incomplete

In particular, the DAD did not include significant data from NGOs and private donors.

When they interrogated the PLAID database for more detailed information they found that:

5) The PLAID database offered little additional information in this case

Although the PLAID database, with multiple CRS codes and more detailed longer descriptions, potentially allowed for a more detailed search on sanitation spending, it did not yield additional data for this study.

When they sought to reconcile information from these sources with data held by partner country ministries and donor institutions they found:

6) Using a variety of sources was time-consuming and yielded inconsistent results that could not be reconciled

The consequences of using multiple sources were that firstly, this was time-consuming and therefore costly, and secondly, different sources yielded different information, with discrepancies that were often difficult to reconcile.

Full details of this case study will be available shortly on the aidinfo website at: <http://www.aidinfo.org/case-studies>

WaterAid's research is published in a report, *Fatal Neglect*, which was published in May 2009. It can be found at: http://www.wateraid.org/documents/plugin_documents/wateraid_fatal_neglect.pdf

¹ See DCD/DAC/STAT(2008)19, 28 May 2008: Proposal to amend CRS purpose codes to disaggregate donor reporting on water and sanitation