

U4 Expert Answer



Donors' Contributions to Anti-Corruption in the Education Sector

Query:

"How much are donor countries spending on anti corruption issues in education in their development cooperation?"

Purpose:

As part of our project "Education and Conflict Transformation", we are currently undertaking some research on "Education and Good Governance" for our Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. For this we are trying to find out how much donor countries are spending on anti-corruption issues in education in their development cooperation. Do you know any report (global or regional) which provides this information?

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Summary:

This query was treated as an urgent query and confirms that there is no quick way to get accurate estimates of donors' spending on anti-corruption in the education sector based on available data. In the absence of reliable figures, the answer suggests possible alternatives to collect the required data, which would involve allocating more time and resources to the research process.

Given the current existing aid data reporting systems (such as the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS) or Aid Information Management Systems) as well as major methodological challenges involved in tracking aid spending, it is almost impossible to clearly identify donor funding for anti-corruption in general and for a specific sector in particular. As a result, there is no reliable way to provide an accurate estimate of donors' contribution to anti-corruption in the education sector based on available data. Technically challenging, coming up with robust figures in this area would also require in-depth, time and resource intensive research that can not be conducted within the framework of a U4 helpdesk query.

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Part 1: Challenges Involved in Collecting Accurate Data on Anti-Corruption

In principle, it should be possible to extract data on anti-corruption in the education sector by looking at aid flows for education and extracting the proportion of these flows that go to anti-corruption interventions – or look at the proportion of anti-corruption aid that flows to the education sector directly.

In practice, all experts consulted within the framework of this query agree that it is not possible to get an exact figure on donors' spending on anti-corruption interventions within a specific sector using the existing information aid data management systems, given the way the data is currently organised as well as due to the major methodological challenges involved in capturing anti-corruption aid flows more generally.

Some of the major methodological challenges involved in collecting accurate data on anti-corruption aid flows include:

Cross-Cutting Nature of Anti-Corruption Interventions

Irrespective of the specific sectors, capturing aid flows allocated to anti-corruption alone is already considered as one of the most challenging tasks, given the cross-cutting nature of anti-corruption interventions. By nature, anti-corruption cuts across many sectors and activities and there are ongoing discussions on how to best capture anti-corruption aid flows, as many other activities such as financial management, judicial development, access to information, strengthening civil society are also implicitly related to anti-corruption interventions. This situation is compounded by the fact that donors increasingly move away from stand-alone anti-corruption interventions to mainstream anti-corruption efforts as part of broader public policy and public sector governance reforms. This approach makes the tracking of anti-corruption aid data especially challenging as many anti-corruption components are implicitly embedded in other sectoral programmes and projects and likely to go unreported in official statistics.

Limits of the Existing Reporting Systems

While donors have established common standards and systems for making information available in a

comparable format, existing reporting systems as well as governance codes currently in use for reporting do not allow for collecting such specific data.

Technically, there are many coding issues involved in designing such reporting system that entail a risk of data distortion in the way donors report on their contributions. Other technical issues to consider relate to the volume, coverage, accuracy, timeliness, periodicity, comparability, traceability and accessibility of the reported data.

Aid data is scattered across donors, sectors and reporting systems and the fragmentation of the published information imposes large costs on potential users of the information, as it is very time consuming to assemble published data from different sources and often technically challenging to assemble this information into a common data set. (Please see: [AITI scoping paper](#)).

The most comprehensive source of information in this regard is the OECD CRS (Please see below), but it only covers donors of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and some key multilaterals.

Use of the Reporting Systems by Donors

Another related major difficulty is the way in which programme information is recorded and made available by donors. Sectoral programmes can be relatively easy to identify, but it is very challenging to isolate which parts of the programmes and proportion of the funding specifically relate to anti-corruption or good governance.

For example, in the education sector, it may be very difficult to assess how much of the aid flows to the education sector are simple sectoral support and how much go to anti-corruption activities in the sector. Training in basic financial literacy for School Management Committees might appear under "Aid to basic education" for some donors or under "Technical assistance – Education sector" for others. Similarly, training or capacity building for school managers, ministry of education civil servants or inspectors might be financed by either of these two categories or even by general technical support to the country. Each donor might categorise these types of interventions differently and not all might see it as anti-corruption, but simply as general capacity support or "public sector reform". It is

therefore very challenging to collect and gather comprehensive accurate data in a reliable manner.

Part 2: Sources of Data on Donors' Contributions to Anti-Corruption in Education

The following section suggests possible avenues for data collection which should be explored further to get a reliable estimate of donors spending on anti-corruption in the education sector.

OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS)

The main and most comprehensive publicly accessible source of data on aid flows, where specific information on aid activities is recorded, remains the OECD Creditor reporting System (CRS). This database of financial flows aims at providing a set of readily available basic data that enables analysis on where aid goes, what purposes it serves and what policy aims it pursues, on a comparable basis for all DAC members. It mainly focuses on financial data but some descriptive information is also made available. According to OECD DAC, the CRS has been capturing over 90% of member's bilateral Official Development Assistance disbursement since 2000 and 100% since 2003. The CRS data base is publicly available and reflects official data provided and validated by OECD DAC members. (Please see:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/27/43908328.pdf>)

However, the CRS allows collecting anti-corruption data only to a limited extent. A few years ago, a specific code for anti-corruption institutions and organisations was introduced but this code is not suitable to capture activities that go beyond specialised, stand-alone anti-corruption interventions. Other aid interventions supporting anti-corruption measures are meant to be recorded under sector code 15120 (Public Sector Financial Management), but this code also includes actions that don't deal with anti-corruption per se, such as improving public expenditure management, financial management systems, tax assessment procedures, budget drafting, field auditing, etc.

In addition, as the CRS is not a multi-purpose coding system, projects can only be recorded under one single code, in this case education or governance related indicators (Please see **OECD classification by sector destination**). If a donor does fund a sector-specific

anti-corruption project, it may either code it with sector code 15120 (which would obscure the fact that it is for education), or they will apply an education-related sector code (which would make it hard to identify it as anti-corruption).

The OECD has introduced a system of policy markers in an attempt to overcome these challenges and the web-based data query system allows searching for the participatory development/good governance (PDGG) marker¹ for the education sector that could be theoretically used as a proxy of anti-corruption. However, using the PDGG marker as a proxy is not robust either as this coding includes a number of activities that are not necessarily directly corruption-related (e.g. activities to strengthen local decision-making, etc.).

In addition, as donors do not systematically use these policy markers and the quality of the data depends on the accuracy, comprehensiveness and the contextual perspective of the person entering the project in the database, the data is unlikely to reflect actual spending in a reliable manner. For example, the CRS statistics indicates a massive drop in donors' spending on participatory development and good governance projects in the education sector between 2006 and 2008, which is more likely to reflect data distortions than actual shift in aid priorities. (Please see: <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspxv>).

Experts consulted within the framework of this query mentioned that the most reliable, but time-consuming and cumbersome way to use CRS data to find more reliable figures on donor's contributions to anti-corruption would be to disaggregate the data and look for individual programmes and projects that address corruption within specific sectors. One could potentially search for corruption related data in the long descriptions of all the CRS records under relevant sector codes, and those education projects with the PDGG marker set. However, this approach also has limitations as donors may use different terminology (and different languages) in filling in these descriptive

¹ The OECD introduced several such markers for cross-cutting issues. Thus the marker for participatory development and good governance is attached by donor organisations to each project which has some component of this sort.

fields, and some donors are better than others at describing their projects.

Aid Information Management System (AIMS)

In addition of the OECD CRS, a number of countries have begun to implement their own domestic aid tracking systems - generically referred to as Aid Information Management Systems (AIMS) - that could potentially provide valuable information on aid flows to specific sectors, including governance and anti-corruption. AIMS consists of country level databases of aid commitments, disbursements and activities, together with a mechanism for updating the information on a regular basis and may also include information on aid-financed expenditures, activities and results. This information can be aggregated to generate overall figures on aid flows, or broken down by sector or geographic area. They are usually web-based systems that rely on development partners to enter data on their assistance. Currently, at least 50 countries worldwide are using such systems to a certain degree. (Please see: <http://www.aideffectiveness.org/aims>)

However, the Helpdesk could not find specific information on donors' contribution to anti-corruption in the education system through AIMS within the short time frame of the query. Similarly to the CRS system, no specific code seems to exist to specifically identify anti-corruption measures.² These databases have a number of codes for 'governance' or 'public administration' but none specifically for corruption. (Please see: <http://www.aidinfo.org/aid-information/information-resources>).

The other major limit of this type of information management system is that, as a country level data management system, there is no centralised data base for regional or global information and it would be a time consuming process to collect the data from the 50 countries that sustain such management system. Countries also tend to define less stringent reporting requirements than the CRS statistical information, with implications on the accuracy and comparability of data. Also, in many countries this locally based data base of

aid flows is not open to the public. In addition, as AIMS has been developed in recent years, it captures limited time series data.

Project-Level Aid (PLAID)

Project-Level Aid (PLAID) could also become a valuable source of specific information on aid flows in the future. PLAID is another information management system currently being developed by the 'Institute for the Theory and Practice of International Relations' to capture development finance, increase the value of data by providing more descriptive information, and strengthen efforts to improve donor and recipient strategic planning and coordination. It aims at providing easy-to-use, comprehensive, and timely resource, capturing development aid project-by-project, including all grants and loans committed by all major bilateral and multilateral aid donors. PLAID is currently developing a publicly-accessible interface that would enable researchers, field workers, and policy makers interested in development finance to access detailed information on development activities beyond the existing data on donor commitments and disbursements. (Please see: <http://irtheoryandpractice.wm.edu/projects/plaid/about.php>).

It will contain information from traditional aid sources such as the OECD CRS, as well as donors not captured by the CRS and activities that do not fit the OECD definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA). In cooperation with the OECD CRS, PLAID aims at publishing more complete project descriptions and more detailed aid project purpose codes, health codes, and environment codes. This allows those interested in development finance to gain a more detailed understanding of past and present trends in aid.

The new database, PLAID 2.0, is expected to become publicly available in 2010. It is already possible to access beta versions of the PLAID database prior to its public release under certain conditions, by contacting the PLAID team (please see previous link).

Specific Data on Education Aid Flows

Another source of information on aid flows to the education sector is the [2009 Education for All – Global Monitoring Report](#), published by UNESCO. However, the report does not provide any specific figures on anti-corruption or governance interventions.

² Data was checked for Iraq, Rwanda, Pakistan and Mozambique.

Experts consulted at UNESCO confirmed that such data was not available.

Individual Donors

The most promising approach recommended by the experts consulted for this query to gather accurate and reliable data on anti-corruption aid flows in specific sectors would be to collect data directly from the bilateral and multi-lateral donors involved in anti-corruption work. Donors publish information on their activities on their own websites and annual reports and specialised anti-corruption staff may be in a better position to disaggregate aid flows by sectors. Members of the OECD GOVNET task team on anti-corruption for example could be informed sources of information on the nature and volume of their anti-corruption contribution to the various sectors. Previous experience of similar research conducted by the U4 for the energy sector suggests that this is a time consuming process, requiring both extensive desk research, in-depth interviews with relevant programme teams and sufficient time to collect the responses and validate the information.

The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)

The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) is partly a response to all the above mentioned challenges. Launched at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra in September 2008, it aims at supporting the publication of comprehensive, timely and detailed information about aid in an accessible manner. It does not envisage the development of a new data base but the adoption by donors of ways of recording and reporting information that will enable existing data bases to provide more detailed, timely and accessible information. (Please see: [IATI scoping paper](#)).

Part 3: Further Reading

International Aid Transparency Initiative (2009)

This scoping paper for IATI provides an overview of the issues and challenges involved in publishing comprehensive, timely and detailed information about aid in an easily accessible way to promote aid transparency.

<http://www.aidinfo.org/files/iati-scoping-paper.pdf>

Comparative Study of data Reported to the OECD Reporting System and to the Aid Management Platform (2009)

This paper analyses the difference in ODA data recorded in the OECD's CRS versus aid data captured at the country level in Burkina Faso and Malawi.

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/0/27/43908328.pdfv>