

Publish What You Fund

Strategy 2025 – 2030

OUR VISION:

We envisage a world where aid and development information is **transparent, available** and **used** for effective and inclusive decision-making, public accountability and lasting change for all citizens.

OUR MISSION:

To promote aid and development finance information that is transparent, available and usable.

Introduction

Today, the world feels fraught with challenges. The effects of climate change, conflicts in Sudan, the Middle East, and Ukraine, and the growing strain on national and aid budgets are daunting. While donor countries continue to make commitments to address these challenges, these promises must be matched with robust monitoring, scrutiny, and transparency to ensure just and equitable delivery. Yet, the external environment—marked by mistrust, misinformation, and declining internationalism—poses significant obstacles.

In such a climate, promoting transparency and accountability can be an uphill battle. However, these principles are more essential than ever. At the same time, the development finance landscape is undergoing profound changes. Private capital now plays an integral role in supporting international donors and development banks to achieve their goals. Concepts like impact investing, domestic resource mobilisation, philanthropy, and even military spending are converging, complicating the traditional aid and development finance narrative. Efforts to localise and shift power within the sector are making progress, but not at the pace needed. It is now 2025, and the urgency for meaningful change is greater than ever.

We recognize that the success of the aid transparency movement will ultimately be measured not by the proportion of aid and development funding disclosed, but by the extent to which this funding is delivered equitably, efficiently, and with meaningful impact. Emerging mechanisms for distributing aid and development finance often lack transparency, raising critical questions about how impact is measured, learning is facilitated, and coordination is achieved. Safeguarding these essential resources from diversion or ineffective use is paramount; it underpins the principles of the development effectiveness movement and reinforces the importance of our efforts to drive improvement.

Against this backdrop, we are proud to present our 2025–2030 strategy. This strategy builds on the strengths that have defined us: a nimble and focused organisation known for impactful advocacy and research. We have consistently influenced debates on key issues such as mobilisation, localisation, gender, climate, and women's economic empowerment. Our flagship tools—the Aid Transparency Index and the DFI Transparency Index—continue to set global benchmarks. Over the past decade, we have placed aid transparency firmly on the global agenda, advocating for the publication of robust and accessible data to empower stakeholders and hold institutions accountable. This work remains vital in a world where resources are constrained, and trust is paramount.

We also acknowledge that change takes time. It has taken more than a decade for the Aid Transparency Index to encourage major donors to publish high-quality, timely aid data, and we now see growing use of this data in practice. Recognising this, our new strategy spans five years, allowing flexibility to adapt to a shifting landscape while maintaining focus and building on our momentum.

While our strategy reflects continuity, it incorporates important lessons learned. Through extensive consultation and the insights of a long-standing team who are deeply embedded in the sector, we believe this is a realistic yet ambitious plan. By fostering collaboration across our advocacy and research efforts, we remain committed to achieving meaningful and lasting change.

Reflections on our 2021 – 2024 strategy

Over the past three years, we have continued to make a significant and measurable impact on the policies and practices of major aid and development organisations. Our Aid Transparency Index and DFI Transparency Index have established themselves as the global benchmarks for information disclosure, covering more than 70 organisations. These indexes are frequently referenced in the policy and strategy documents of aid agencies worldwide. As a result, we have observed notable improvements in the timeliness, volume, and quality of aid data being shared, which in turn has led to a growing number of data-driven insights utilised by journalists, think tanks, civil society organisations, and accountability groups. We actively document and track these examples.

Our work on tracking funding flows, particularly related to Women's Economic Empowerment, climate finance, and localisation, has been instrumental in grounding debates on these critical issues in robust data. This effort has also demonstrated the potential of large aid datasets (such as those from the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) and Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)) to generate actionable insights and policy recommendations.

Additionally, our expertise has been increasingly sought to address complex and technically challenging issues where stakeholder consensus is lacking. A notable example is our work on improving the measurement and disclosure of Private Capital Mobilisation data. By collaborating with Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), thoroughly analysing the challenges, and developing tailored recommendations and guidance, we successfully resolved longstanding barriers and proposed a clear path forward.

While our impact is clear, it's important that we reflect back on the goals we set three years ago. Our 2021–2024 strategy was built around three core pillars:

- 1. Engagement:** Collaborating to ensure that actors engage with development data to improve outcomes and advance local, national, and global development goals.
- 2. Full Transparency:** Making all aid and development finance data transparent, available, and usable.
- 3. More Quality Data:** Strengthening and extending our research, advocacy, and technical expertise to improve the quality and usability of aid and development finance information.

KEY LESSONS ON ENGAGEMENT

The most significant reflections from this period centre on engagement. While our team remains deeply committed to fostering meaningful connections between global donors and local accountability organisations, we encountered challenges in effectively advancing this objective. The reality is that our relationships with international donors are significantly more numerous and in-depth than those with local organisations, particularly those with expertise in utilising aid data. This disparity made it difficult to bridge the gap and connect these groups effectively.

Our standard programming allowed limited scope for this work, and efforts to secure funding for targeted engagement initiatives were unsuccessful. This highlighted a key lesson: a compelling idea does not always align with the priorities or vision of others. While we remain passionate about ensuring our work reflects the needs of all stakeholders—particularly southern organisations—we have become more realistic about our ability to directly influence relationships between data publishers and users.

We are also more conscious of the power dynamics inherent in our role. Over this period, we made deliberate efforts to reflect on and adjust our language and approaches, ensuring we do not misrepresent the perspectives and desires of southern organisations. These reflections continue to inform how we design and deliver our work.

SUCCESS IN TRANSPARENCY AND DATA QUALITY

We are far more confident in our progress under Pillar 2 (Full Transparency) and Pillar 3 (More Quality Data). Our efforts have driven meaningful change, influencing debates, drawing political attention, and improving the breadth and quality of data available on development finance. Our research methodologies, including the Aid and DFI Transparency Indexes, have been refined through extensive consultation with diverse stakeholders, ensuring their relevance and impact.

By achieving tangible advancements in data quality and availability, we have strengthened the foundation for greater accountability and evidence-based decision-making across the sector. These successes affirm our ongoing focus on transparency and data quality as critical enablers of improved development outcomes.

What we've heard:

insights from our strategy consultations

In preparing this strategy, we engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, including partners, civil society organisations (CSOs), governments, accountability groups, and, crucially, the users and targets of our research and advocacy work. These conversations provided valuable insights that have helped shape our direction for the future.

A recurring theme was the increasing relative scarcity of official development assistance (ODA) and other development resources, emphasising the growing importance of transparency and development effectiveness. Stakeholders highlighted that DFIs and private finance will play an even larger role in the future, demanding greater focus on their accountability, and justifying our increased focus on these flows. An area of growing focus for us will be issues of accountability to communities and adherence to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards. Our findings indicate that private finance often overlooks these critical dimensions, resulting in a significant gap between policy commitments and implementation. This disconnect contributes to a trust deficit and an accountability gap that must be addressed.

We were praised for our focus, technical depth, and clarity of outputs, with comments such as, “You’re the only people getting into the weeds on some of this stuff,” and, “We trust your numbers and don’t need to double-check them.” Stakeholders noted that our time-series data and ability to maintain high standards are particularly valuable. Our research was described as rigorous, credible, and well-messaged, and our work was acknowledged for bringing political attention to aid transparency and supporting solutions to complex transparency issues.

Our advocacy approach also received strong support. Stakeholders appreciated our balance of insider and outsider tactics, collaborative methodology development, and acknowledgment that change takes time. Many endorsed our focus on key issues such as DFIs, gender, and keeping pressure on donors generally to ensure continued publication of high quality and timely information. They also commended our collaborative approach, not just with advocacy targets but across the sector. The Aid Transparency Index, in particular, was recognised for its impact in helping governments set targets, drive internal momentum, and gain senior buy-in, with one stakeholder noting, “Governments run on metrics, and your Index provides an off-the-shelf solution they can pick up and use—it’s a real incentive.”

However, several challenges and areas for improvement were flagged. There was concern about the risk of backsliding in aid transparency, with stakeholders describing our work as an “insurance policy” that changes the political economy of bad decisions by aid agencies, even if the ripple effects are hard to measure. Others encouraged us to expand our focus to areas such as climate funds, domestic resource mobilisation (DRM), debt, and impact data, while being careful not to lose the sharp focus that distinguishes us. There was also feedback that the Index can unintentionally encourage siloed approaches among publishers and that more effort is needed to engage underperforming donors and understand their barriers.

Gaps in humanitarian transparency and adapting to the evolving development finance landscape were also raised as critical areas for attention. Stakeholders encouraged us to consider how multilateral development bank (MDB) reform might influence our work and cautioned that global public goods remain difficult to fund, requiring realism about funder priorities.

Finally, while our training was described as invaluable (“This is the data. These are the use cases. These are the problems it can solve”), some noted that we are often either too quiet or loud only within familiar circles. As one stakeholder remarked, “I didn’t realise you do more than the Index.” This highlights the need to amplify our broader contributions and reflect on opportunities to innovate, such as exploring certification models.

These insights underscore the importance of our work while offering clear guidance on how we can enhance our impact and remain relevant in a rapidly changing landscape.

Our 2025 – 2030 strategy

We believe that we are largely on the right track. Over the past few years, we've learned a great deal about both our strengths and areas where we can improve. A key area of reflection has been the challenge of engagement, particularly the gap between publishers of data and its potential users. While we still see fostering this engagement as important, we have consistently heard that awareness of the existence of IATI data—and understanding of how to access and use it—remains low. This presents a significant opportunity for us to address and integrate more directly into our work.

This strategy builds on the solid foundations established by our 2018–2021 and 2021–2024 strategies. Our vision, mission, and the three-pillar structure of our objectives remain unchanged, as they continue to offer clear direction and the agility needed to address emerging challenges. This approach has allowed us to achieve significant progress in advancing aid transparency while also strengthening Publish What You Fund's internal effectiveness through targeted investments in our own impact management, performance tracking, and other key areas.

While the overall structure remains familiar, it is important to highlight how our thinking has evolved. We have reflected deeply on the issue of engagement and are taking a step back to better understand why more users are not engaging with data. We have noted that there is, frankly, a shortage of users currently. We are committed to addressing this challenge, and our strategic pillars reflect this shift in emphasis.

Our experiences over the past three years have reinforced our belief in the importance of connecting publishers and users, but they have also highlighted the broader need to improve awareness and accessibility. By building on the successes of our previous strategies and adapting to these lessons, we aim to continue driving progress toward greater aid transparency and ensuring that the data we advocate for is effectively utilised.

Over the past 15 years, we have championed the establishment and growth of the IATI initiative. As a result, our trajectory has become closely intertwined with the Initiative's health and impact. Historically, our ability to secure funding and work effectively on IATI-related issues has been influenced by how the Initiative is perceived, particularly among philanthropic funders. We remain steadfast in our belief that the IATI Standard continues to represent the most effective path to advancing global aid transparency and as set out below, we will continue to work for a strong and impactful IATI initiative and promote its data standard.

While IATI has decided not to fund the next Aid Transparency Index, we remain passionately committed to the Index as the best means of providing political attention and incentives to publish aid and development data. There is likely to be backsliding without it. Without this biennial assessment of quality, comprehensiveness, and timeliness, the overall standard and usefulness of data are likely to decline, undermining the significant investments that Members and publishers have made in IATI. We believe that funders still care about development finance and transparency, and the commercial viability of this strategy is largely dependent on our ability to work on issues and objectives that fit with funder priorities. We also recognise that while our work is held in high regard, not many people are aware of everything we do. Our goal, therefore, is to do a better job of demonstrating our capacity and impact and enhance our efforts and systems to communicate with new and existing networks.

We have structured our strategic pillars around three key themes: **bigger, better, and louder**. These themes apply not only to the global aid data landscape but also to the growth and development of Publish What You Fund itself. Under each pillar, we reflect this dual focus, outlining how we aim to amplify our voice, expand our impact, and enhance both the quality of aid data and the effectiveness of our organisation.



1. Bigger

THE CHALLENGE:

The global IATI aid dataset is larger and more diverse than ever, encompassing publishers such as philanthropies, donor agencies, UN bodies, and bilateral and multilateral development finance institutions. Aid transparency spans more than the resource currently captured in the IATI data set, but today the IATI dataset is the largest and most complete source of up to date and good quality data across the majority of aid actors. While that remains the situation, we will continue to champion IATI.

However, the IATI dataset remains incomplete. Significant contributors, including China, major climate funds, and some of the world's largest aid implementers, are notably absent. Thematically, critical gaps persist in areas such as climate finance and localisation, particularly in tracking funding directed to local organisations.

Simultaneously, the donor landscape is undergoing rapid evolution, necessitating adaptation to these shifts. The modern aid and development finance ecosystem encompasses an expanding array of funding mechanisms, including DFIs, private finance, cross-departmental initiatives, pooled or trust funds, and growing allocations of ODA through non-traditional aid-spending entities. Adding to this complexity are emerging issues such as debt, the increasing use of Private Sector Instruments (PSIs) like guarantees, and intensified efforts toward localisation. These dynamics underscore the critical need for enhanced transparency to support informed understanding and decision-making.

These diverse funding flows offer new opportunities to address resource gaps in aid and development. However, they also introduce varied priorities, methodologies, and challenges. Many rely on commercial confidentiality or security concerns to justify withholding significant portions of their data. While these exclusions may sometimes be necessary, the rationale is not always transparent.

The rise of alternative funding mechanisms heightens the risk of large portions of aid and development data remaining inaccessible. This lack of transparency undermines efforts to coordinate and leverage different funding flows, reducing the effectiveness of collective aid and development efforts. Addressing these challenges is critical to fostering greater cooperation, accountability, and impact in the increasingly complex development finance landscape.

THE GOAL:

By the end of 2030, beyond traditional IATI publishers, we will have worked with and encouraged donors in at least three new areas/aid and development funding vehicles to make their aid and development information more transparent.

We will:

- Continue to provide strong incentives for existing and new publishers to increase the volume and quality of published information.
- Maintain a focus on drawing political attention to aid transparency and IATI.
- Intensify efforts with DFIs to advance disclosure practices, building on opportunities identified in the 2023 DFI Transparency Index findings.
- Explore opportunities to engage non-publishing actors, such as Climate Funds, philanthropic organisations, and significant non-publishing entities (e.g., China), to encourage the initiation of data publication.
- Monitor initiatives, for example 2X Global, and impact investing frameworks to assess the feasibility of and advocate for enhanced disclosure aligned with global standards such as IATI.
- Focus on specific aspects of development finance, such as mobilisation and PSIs, to support the development of technical reporting solutions and improve the breadth and quality of shared data.

2. Better

THE CHALLENGE:

Improving the quality and accessibility of aid and development data is fundamental to advancing transparency and ensuring more effective and accountable use of resources. These improvements are critical to unlocking the full potential of aid information, broadening its application, and fostering greater transparency across an increasingly complex array of aid and development funding mechanisms.

However, the current state of data quality reveals significant inconsistencies, both between publishers and across different types of information. Analysis underpinning our Aid and DFI Indexes highlights persistent gaps, particularly in data on impact and private capital mobilisation. These deficiencies are especially concerning as they address two critical needs: understanding the outcomes and impact of development finance, and mobilising external resources to meet the ambitious targets set by recent global commitments. Addressing these gaps is essential to driving progress and ensuring development finance delivers on its promise.

We have begun integrating AI tools to enhance the efficiency and capacity of our research. While initial trials have shown promising potential, they have also highlighted challenges related to quality and accuracy. Through our strategic consultations, we reaffirmed that core competencies—such as identifying key issues, designing robust research protocols, and delivering effective messaging and advocacy—are, at least in the short term, less likely to benefit significantly from AI advancements. Consequently, while we remain committed to exploring how AI can support our work and contribute to the broader aid transparency agenda, we do not anticipate relying heavily on these tools in the near future.

THE GOAL:

By the end of 2030, we will have measurably driven improvements in the quality and usability of aid and development information provided by donors and other financing vehicles.

We will:

- Continue advocacy efforts through our Transparency Indexes and targeted research on specific themes.
- Conduct supplementary research, such as our recent studies on redactions and our work on “who should publish aid data”.
- Provide support to IATI, including participation in working groups, strategy consultations, and contributing research (e.g., on integrating Index testing into the IATI dashboard).
- Share expertise with other networks and organisations on data quality issues in specific areas such as recent work on tracking climate finance and exploring redactions in the harm reduction sector.

3. Louder

THE CHALLENGE:

Realising the vision for transparency depends on translating data into actionable insights that improve the effectiveness of aid delivery. Awareness of IATI data remains limited, even among groups that should be natural users, such as donor agency staff, national statistical offices, journalists, academics, and accountability organisations.

Despite being the leading global advocate for aid and development transparency, our recent efforts have primarily focused on working with a small, familiar circle of stakeholders to enhance data quality. This has led to fewer initiatives aimed at raising awareness and building the capacity of broader audiences to engage with and utilise the data.

However, we have recently delivered tailored training sessions to select organisations, which have significantly improved their understanding and use of IATI data. These successes highlight the transformative potential of targeted capacity-building efforts.

We benefit from a robust network of partners, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders that we can engage with for capacity-building initiatives. Yet, we recognise the critical need to expand beyond this established group to raise awareness about the value and utility of the global aid dataset among new and diverse audiences. Additionally, a recurring theme from our recent strategy consultations was the need to better promote the breadth of our work. Strengthening the communication of our research and its practical applications will be essential to increasing its impact and broadening engagement.

We have strengthened our commitment to monitoring and learning by increasing the frequency of mid-term and end-term reviews, conducting cross-project reflection and learning sessions, and continuously refining our tools and approaches. By combining our first-hand experience of using aid data with input from other stakeholders, we enhance our advocacy messages to drive change in priority areas. This ensures our efforts have a meaningful impact on stakeholders' ability to effectively use data and hold relevant actors accountable.

THE GOAL:

By the end of 2030, we will have raised awareness of the presence of the IATI data set and its potential, demonstrating use cases and highlighting how our own work contributes.

We will:

- Deliver regular training and familiarisation courses for target audiences, including fellow advocates, national statistical offices, aid management teams, and transparency and accountability groups in the Global South.
- Further invest in our own impact measurement and tracking systems to better capture and evidence our impact through both qualitative and quantitative metrics.
- Enhance our communications function to expand our reach and effectively convey key messages about our work and its impact to broader audiences.
- Strengthen our customer relationship management (CRM) systems to improve consistency in demonstrating and communicating our activities and achievements.

GET IN TOUCH

If you would like to discuss any aspect of our strategy, or the work of Publish What You Fund, please get in touch with us:

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