



Accessible Information on Development Activities (AiDA)

<http://aida.developmentgateway.org>

What is AiDA?

The Accessible Information on Development Activities (AiDA) initiative is a component of the Development Gateway (DG). The Development Gateway facilitates information exchange and dialogue to support the following objectives:

- Improve governance – public sector (donor and government) transparency and effectiveness
- Improve donor coordination and collaboration
- Share knowledge and establish contacts to encourage collaboration
- Empower local communities

A key focus of AiDA is to facilitate knowledge sharing to support donor coordination and collaboration through the application of common standards for information sharing among development agencies and the creation of an online directory of development activities so everyone can benefit from each other's knowledge. AiDA is a multilingual platform with information from more than 100 multilateral, bilateral and smaller organizations, on 33 sectors in over 200 locations, including countries and regions. Today, AiDA is the largest single source of integrated information on development activities.

Why is AiDA needed?

In order for the international development community to foster partnerships and leverage their collective development experience, open access to timely and reliable information on who is doing what and with what results is critical. The Internet enables the international development community to exchange vital project and program information and best practices at an unprecedented rate.

In March 2000, the Development Gateway conducted a review of available information activities and found that while a lot of information is available, it is difficult to locate and use, particularly when a user needs a consolidated view of the activities of development partners in a country or sector. The INDIX Development Activity Information (DAI) database and OECD's Creditor Reporting System were the key sources for global information available to the public but they only covered information on donor activities.

Bellonet also conducted a user demand survey to test Development Gateway assumptions of the business case for a source of consolidated information about development activities and to elicit suggestions and guidance for the development of a pilot. Fifty organizations responded to the Bellonet survey. The majority (87%) of respondents reported having difficulty in obtaining information and expressed strong support for strengthening information sharing and working towards standards and adequate infrastructure to support this.

Building on the work started by the International Network for Development Information Exchange and the International Development Mark-up Language (IDML) Initiative, the Development Gateway carried out a pilot to test the application of XML to consolidate information and to scale up the use of IDML for information sharing. From May to September 2000, a multi-agency team with staff from the World Bank, OECD-DAC, Bellonet and UNDP worked together to develop a prototype database and site which included information from donors as well as non-government organizations. The prototype was presented to participants at a joint World Bank/OECD-DAC meeting in Paris in November 2000 on the use of information technologies to increase aid effectiveness. The participants supported further development of the pilot and broadening support and participation.

In 2001, INDIX was dissolved and the Development Gateway continued to promote the work started by INDIX. From December 2001, the AiDA team has organized four AiDA Open Meetings to bring current and potential participants together to learn about the initiative and participate in shaping the initiative and processes for information sharing. Recommendations from the open meetings are used to set directions for the AiDA work program.

How does AiDA work?

Funding and management

Funding is provided by the Development Gateway. The initiative is managed jointly by a team which draws on staff from the World Bank, Development Assistance Committee of OECD, Bellanet International Secretariat, Development Gateway Foundation and UNDP with guidance from the AiDA Steering Committee which was formed in October 2003. Members of the AiDA Steering Committee are: Brian Hammond (chair), OECD-DAC; Christopher Hall, World Bank; Terence Jones, UNDP; Ricardo Gomez, Bellanet; Jorge Aravena Gonzalez, Development Gateway Foundation; and Michael Taylor, World Faiths Development Dialogue.

Participation in AiDA

Participation in AiDA is voluntary. There is a growing network of AiDA participants and collective ownership of the initiative.

The AiDA site serves as a directory for information on development activities that often reside on web sites of participating organizations. Participating organizations share a standardized set of metadata which serve as the foundation for the AiDA directory. The metadata include an element for the URL that will refer the user back to the original source for details on the activity when available.

Role of AiDA Management Team

Day to day management of the AiDA services is coordinated by the team at the World Bank. OECD-DAC and Bellanet provide additional support for outreach and technical support to engage new participants, participate in events to build the AiDA network and contribute to shaping the AiDA strategy and work program. Jointly this team carries out the following tasks:

- Create and maintain a comprehensive directory of development activities and make this available to the public at no cost
- Identify relevant sources of information and engage potential participants to share information through AiDA
- Provide technical support to participants interested in sharing information through AiDA
- Promote the development and use of standards and tools to achieve information harmonization where they are essential for knowledge sharing
- Bring the AiDA community together through annual open meetings and other opportunities to create collective ownership and provide a forum for learning, collaboration and consensus on the definition and application of standards for information sharing
- Establish working relationships with the community responsible for policy harmonization and aid coordination to ensure that AiDA meets their needs
- Promote partnerships with thematic and geographic networks to leverage AiDA information (repackage and add value) to meet needs of their stakeholders
- Promote use of AiDA information and explore practical ways to ensure access for areas with low connectivity
- Support Country Gateways to apply AiDA standards for information sharing (provide tools and guidance) and collaborate with them to develop tools for information sharing.