

Not Available! Not Accessible!

Lack of Transparency of Aid Funds Opens Door to Corruption and Ineffectiveness

Madrid, 20 October 2009 — Donor governments are failing to make available the information needed to prevent corruption in international aid projects and to permit taxpayers to evaluate the effectiveness of aid spending, according to a new report launched today by transparency NGO Access Info Europe.

“Without donor transparency aid cannot be effective and will continue to be plagued by corruption. People from developing countries cannot take ownership of their futures while they are denied information,” said Helen Darbishire, Director of Access Info Europe.

Only half (52%) of the very basic information which should be published on aid agency websites is available according to the report **“Not Available! Not Accessible!”** The study evaluated information on the websites of five leading aid agencies: Canada, France, Norway, Spain, and the UK. Norway’s aid agency ranked lowest with just 30% and the UK’s Department for International Development provided most information, achieving a score of 68%.

The monitoring, which focused on tracing aid flows to five recipient countries (Afghanistan, Kosovo, Mozambique, Peru, and Sierra Leone) found a series of problems including:

- **Invisible decision-making:** it is not clear who takes decisions on aid spending and how; there is negligible evidence of consultations with stakeholders (Norway, Spain);
- **Current financial information is inaccessible:** for example, the UK’s current aid budget was buried in an annex of the previous year’s annual report;
- **Inconsistent financial reporting:** for example, a €430 million discrepancy between a press release claiming Norway gives 1% of GNI in aid and their overview budget;
- **Absence of Anti-Corruption Mechanisms:** the typical integrity mechanisms which donors promote in developing countries such as corruption risk assessments, gifts registers, assets declarations, and whistleblower protections were missing from the websites of the five agencies surveyed;
- **Aid spending cannot be traced:** poor information on contracts and silence on subcontracting (France, Norway, Spain).

“Aid agencies need to think accountability and traceability before window-dressing their websites. We need to move beyond tokenistic transparency to give the public access to significantly better and more detailed information about aid flows,” commented Lydia Medland, the study’s lead researcher.

Findings for Overall Transparency of Aid Agencies

Total Score	Canada	France	Norway	Spain	UK
132	77	62	40	59	90
	58%	54%	30%	52%	68%

The report calls on donors to take urgent steps to increase the quantity and quality of information made available about aid activities and funding in order to begin to meet commitments made in Accra, Ghana, in 2008, when donor governments pledged “*We will make aid more transparent.*”²

Access Info Europe calls on donors who are part of the [International Aid Transparency Initiative](#) to adopt strong transparency standards as set out in the [Aid Transparency Principles](#) which have been developed by Access Info in collaboration with aid and anti-corruption NGOs.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The report can be downloaded from: http://www.access-info.org/documents/files/20_10_09_Not_available_Not_accessible.pdf
2. The release of this report is embargoed to 00.01 CET on Tuesday 20 October 2009. There is no press conference. The report “**Not Available! Not Accessible! Aid Transparency Monitoring Report**” is launched as donors and recipient governments meet in the Hague for the first conference organised under the auspices of the International Aid Transparency Initiative meet to discuss the role of transparency in ensuring effective and accountable aid.
3. See the Accra Agenda for Action, point 24(a) to be found at: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/16/41202012.pdf>
4. **Access Info Europe** is an international human rights organisation, based in Madrid, which works to promote a strong and functioning right of access to information in Europe and globally. Access Info’s goal is for the right of access to information to serve as a tool for defending civil liberties and human rights, for facilitating public participation in decision-making, and for holding governments accountable.

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