



Department for
International
Development

Leading the British Government's fight against world poverty



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Dear Helen

Thank you for your email of 20 October 2009 to the Secretary of State and Martin Dinhám enclosing the "Not Available! Not Accessible!" report. As Head of the Web Team, I've been asked to reply on how we are addressing your recommendations.

We welcome the findings from your survey and the contribution you are making to improve information on transparency and aid effectiveness on the websites of aid agencies. You make a number of interesting points.

You may be interested in the following initiatives and steps we have taken since your research was completed earlier this year:

Redevelopment of the DFID website

We have made incremental improvements to our website over the past 12 months including a redevelopment of the navigation in April and new multimedia features on how we are helping people out of poverty. We carried out extensive audience research and user-testing to guide us in building the new site.

Information on expenditure and future plans by country or region can be found in the new section 'Where We Work'. Each country page acts as a portal providing key facts, maps, case studies, country plans and other relevant documents, plus links to project information and other useful websites.

Publishing of project information on the DFID website

A link on the homepage takes website visitors to a new database of information on projects currently running or recently completed under a DFID-funded programme. The 'browse' and 'advanced search' options will display project descriptions, dates, purposes, locations, sectors, summary financial data and whether or not conditions are attached. We will soon be adding a variety of RSS and other xml feeds for individuals and other websites to use.



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IATI

DFID continues to lead the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), and is also the largest financial contributor. The IATI aims to make information about aid flows more available and accessible, globally. This will be done by agreeing common standards for sharing information about aid. DFID funds have been used to support partner country and civil society consultations to ensure that the information published through the initiative meets the needs of stakeholders.

We hope that our experiences in improving transparency will be useful in informing the development of the IATI standards. Once the standards are fully developed, we will be reviewing the information and documents we publish to ensure that they are consistent with the standards.

Publication of our new White Paper

In July we published “Eliminating World Poverty: Building Our Common Future”, the new White Paper outlining our strategy and promises to the world’s poorest people. We have made it as accessible as possible, using video, web, print and a leaflet explaining to the UK public and others what they can do to help:
<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/About-DFID/Quick-guide-to-DFID/How-we-do-it/Building-our-common-future/>.

Information on corruption

In addition to the information we provide on fraud in the ‘Contact us’ section of the website, we have also introduced a section of the website to show examples of how we are tackling corruption:

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Global-Issues/Working-to-make-Global-Aid-more-effective/Tackling-corruption/>.

Search and archiving

The redevelopment of our website enabled us to improve the quality of the search results using a Google custom search and mini-searches for news and publications. In addition, our entire website is archived regularly in the Europa Archive http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/*/http://www.dfid.gov.uk. We have implemented a tool on our web server so that if anyone is searching for a web page that no longer exists (eg via a web link in an old publication) instead of getting an error message, they are redirected to the relevant page in the archive.

I hope this reassures you that we are taking steps to make the information about UK aid expenditure more accessible and available on our website.

Yours sincerely

Frances Sibbet
Head of Web Team