



Aid to Georgia: Empowering Georgians via the World Wide Web

Background

38 countries and 15 international institutions pledged approximately USD 4.55 billion in aid to Georgia following the August war in 2008 – roughly USD 1,000 for every inhabitant of Georgia. 95 percent of the aid was pledged by only 12 donors. TI Georgia seeks to ensure that this aid is provided transparently and that the donors themselves are accountable so that the intended beneficiaries, the Georgian people, do indeed benefit from it.

There are not many Internet users in Georgia, however donors which provide Georgia-specific information via the World Wide Web are providing local NGOs, journalists and even government officials a valuable tool, allowing them to disseminate and explain how donor assistance intends to improve the lives of beneficiaries.

Donor	Pledged (million USD)
United States	1,000
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	927
European Commission	637
World Bank	530
International Finance Corporation	350
European Investment Bank	329
Asian Development Bank	300
Japan	200
Sweden (Sida)	53
Germany (GTZ)	44
Norway	40
Ukraine	24
Switzerland	19

This report examines the websites of the largest 13 donors contributing aid to Georgia at the 2008 Brussels Donor Conference, including the United States, EBRD, European Community, World Bank, IFC, EIB, ADB, Japan, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Ukraine and Switzerland.

TI Georgia obtained the data by conducting Internet searches, as well by using web addresses provided by donors via electronic mail. By using uniform criteria, we were able to compare the various ways these donors provide information to the public via the World Wide Web. The criteria and data are listed in Appendix I and II of this report. This report does not seek to hold the web pages to absolute standards, but by

what better practices are currently employed.

Ranking the Donors

While a listing of the countries according to total score is not as effective as singling out the specific positive and negative aspects of each, it does put the donors' web pages into perspective relative to each other. One caveat is that scores that are close together may not reflect a true ranking order due to problems arising from the weighting of each criteria.

However, the overall rank closer to the extremes does more accurately reflect the information of donors' websites. For example, out of a total 75 points, the United States (USAID) received the most, while Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) received the least. These adequately reflect the overall usefulness of the two sites to Georgians who seek information about the donors' activities in Georgia. However, if we compare Ukraine

Donor	Ranking
United States	65
International Finance Corporation	63
World Bank	60
European Commission	56
Switzerland	50
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	48
Asian Development Bank	45
Sweden (Sida)	42
Germany (GTZ)	41
European Investment Bank	32
Norway	28
Ukraine	20
Japan	10



and Norway, while Ukraine may contain some relevant information, the sites language features don't work properly and its projects are not current (they do not contain the budget support provided by the Government of Ukraine after the Brussels Conference). Norway's site has more useful information on current projects, but it is not provided in Georgian, creating a barrier for most Georgians. Ultimately, due to the weighting, Norway's page is better, but still ranks closely to Ukraine.

Web Pages Dedicated to Georgian Aid

To a certain extent the content on donor websites is a give-and-take based on what is desired information by the public, what the donor believes is adequate information and what is logistically feasible.

Where to Start Looking

Since these conventions are merely at the whim of the individual donor country or institution, the question of where to start looking is not always obvious. In many cases, searching donor information directly by a search engine, such as Google, Yahoo or MSN will lead the interested party to the right place. In many cases, however, the results are not so clear and a lot of filtering and trial-and-error is necessary to find the right web page. Thus, a certain degree of Internet knowledge and familiarity is necessary, alongside the ability to sift through information that is in English. The easiest approach does seem to be to directly search for the aid agencies themselves or the foreign ministries and go from there.

Country Specific Data

Of the thirteen donors included in this report, only two do not have an independent web page dedicated to Georgia, that of Norway and the EIB. This shows that by-and-large, donors do see the value in providing interested parties a central portal by which to better understand the mission, goal and activities within the Georgian context. There are two caveats, however, that complicate this rather simplistic view: 1) a web page dedicated to Georgia may exist, but only provide little to no information that is useful; 2) just because a Georgian web page does not exist does not mean that the donor's site does not provide project specific information that targets Georgia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan does indeed have a Georgian page, but outside a few press releases, provides the public with little useful information about past and ongoing activities in Georgia. Likewise, the Ukraine embassy in Georgia has a web page, but it works very poorly and the information is not current. Contrarily, while Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs may not have a Georgian specific web page, its Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a page grouping all CIS countries together and then lists country specific projects in detail.

First and foremost, a central location for country specific information is vital in this process. The countries and institutions provide assistance to Georgia in a myriad of forms and generally conduct many projects on an ongoing basis. Therefore, it is reasonable that a comprehensive page dedicated solely to their activities in Georgia be available.

Centralized Presentation of Data

One problem that arises often among bilateral donors (as opposed to international financial institutions) is the large number of agencies providing aid to Georgia. As Easterly and Pfuz suggest in their 2008



article “Where does the money go? Best and worst practices in foreign aid”¹ the large number of agencies and departments in a single donor country means that coordination by one donor agency is essential. The United States, for example, delivers aid via more than 50 different agencies², including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the Department of Defense inter alia.

USAID has linked other U.S. agencies on their Georgian web page, thereby providing a portal for the entire U.S. Government³ for aid to Georgia.

Germany, who delivers aid through its Foreign Office, German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the KfW all have different websites, but there is not central location where interested parties are able to follow the aid from all these different organizations, making it a rather messy search leaves the searcher wondering whether there might be yet another agency who is providing aid.

As a whole, all donors should strive to provide the public a centralized portal by which their mission statements, goals and project information be readily available.

Project Specific Data

More substantively important is the donors' specific project information that is available on donor websites. Not all donors have project information, and, of those which do, not all have project information presented in a way that is effective.

Japan has the least (none) project information, followed by Ukraine. If we compare international financial institutions, then all of them have detailed project information. USAID does have quite a lot of information, but it is more general and definitely not uniform in nature.

Each donor website should not only have a country specific page, but also a page dedicated to country specific projects that details them in a uniform manner.

Narrative formats tend to obscure the details with prose, while making it difficult to compare purpose, aid amount and type, implementation partners, project duration and conditionalities, if any. It should be apparent to interested parties what the core components of each project are, lest the information be obscured or even omitted.

Many of the websites are not current. The Georgian Ministry of Finance has posted a Donor Mapping page⁴ listing aid given to Georgia by country and institution, making it possible to assess whether the donors' sites themselves reflect this information. In many instances, they do not. The Ukraine embassy in Georgia does not list the direct budget support in the amount of USD 24 million. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan does not list the USD 200 million in aid pledges, nor the USD 8 million the Georgian Ministry of Finance has listed.

¹ Easterly and Pftuz. “Where Does the Money Go? Best and Worst Practices in Foreign Aid.” Journal of Economic Perspectives 22.2 (2008): 000-000

² *Ibid.*

³ See <http://georgia.usaid.gov/index.php?m=57>.

⁴ See http://www.mof.ge/default.aspx?sec_id=3211&lang=1.



Often, this information is time-sensitive. Some donors have mentioned that they cannot list project information that is in the pipeline or yet to be officially signed into existence. A counter argument to that would be to present project information as it stands, updating the details as possible. About USD 1 billion dollars of the aid targets infrastructure, largely road construction water rehabilitation projects in the regions and others. These projects largely go unnoticed in the Georgian media, yet are of interest to the population as a whole. What are these projects and when will they be completed is a common question that can be answered when the information is available on donor websites. The duration of these projects and the date of their ultimate completion would empower Georgians to know what to expect and hold donors accountable to their promises.

Lost in Translation

The biggest limitation to donor transparency identified in this study was a lack of local language sources. USAID, the European Commission, the IFC and Ukraine have information on their site in the Georgian language. Oftentimes, as in the case of Ukraine's website, this information is incomplete, or is selective, providing some information in Georgian with no context to situate the information. The IFC has narrative information in Georgian, but the project list is in English only. Likewise, the European Commission has their web page in Georgian and English, but the project list is only in English.

While the Russian language is considered a suitable substitute by some donors, including the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, it does not do what it should, which is to make information about aid activities in Georgia available to the Georgian language population. As a whole, the majority of donors do not make their information available online in a way that local Georgians and Georgian speaking journalists could use it effectively.

Local journalists predominately speak Georgian, while some do speak English. Many who work in the media in Georgia have stated that most Georgian journalists only speak Georgian and look for information in Georgian language media. Due to the fact that the majority of donors' web pages about Georgia do not have a Georgian language version, this poses a problem.

They also state that most Georgian journalists do not dare to call large organizations because they think they only speak English ... even Transparency International Georgia. Local journalists must overcome these self-imposed barriers to effectively understand the aid process in Georgia and to convey it to the public. More information on donors' websites in the Georgian language would help this process.

Who can you call?

Many donors do not just provide direct budget support, but also implement their own projects in Georgia, or use local implementers. Georgians who are directly affected by these projects suffer from a lack of knowledge or access to knowledge about which donor countries, institutions, NGOs or contracted companies are doing what in their country and/or village. If a project has detrimental effects, such as harm to the population or environment, or is simply ineffectively carrying out its intended goals, donors should provide a mechanism by which those affected are able to approach them to convey this information. In addition, some beneficiaries or affected persons simply want to inquire about certain projects and there needs to exist a mechanism to contact the donors. This is paramount to the idea that donors be accountable for their actions.



In 2005, donors met in Paris and signed the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness⁵, a document affirming donors “resolve to take far-reaching and monitorable actions to reform the ways we deliver and manage aid.”⁶ One specific goal that applies to this report states as a goal: “Enhancing donors' and partner countries' respective accountability to their citizens and parliaments for their development policies, strategies and performance.”⁷ Of the signatories relevant to this report, all but the IFC and Ukraine signed the Declaration. However, despite the large number of signatories, those with clearly accessible contact points in Georgia are few. The United States, European Commission, World Bank and IFC, Germany and Switzerland have local phone numbers or email addresses. While email addresses are good, local phone numbers are necessary if the majority of Georgians are to have access to these mechanisms of communication. Unless recourse for local Georgians is provided, then the beneficiaries are left as merely passive recipients in the aid process.

What Can We Rightfully Expect From Donors?

Donors and organizations explicitly state their aims, methods and partners in agreements with their implementing partners. Generally these agreements indicate with whom they are working, how much aid they should provide and what type of aid (money, services or goods), the procedural expectations on both sides of the agreement and also any conditionalities imposed on the recipient of that aid, while also indicating the methods the donors intend to make sure these procedures and conditionalities are fulfilled. What does this mean for the ultimate beneficiaries of this aid? By making these agreements public, donors are providing Georgians with the tools to measure that donors and their partners are effectively and properly using this aid. In addition, by looking at the nature of these agreements, Georgians can also interpolate whether the projects themselves will lead to an improvement in their lives.

The Asian Development Bank has on its website the agreements of its projects for all to see. USAID has made its agreement for the USD 250 million dollar direct budget transfer to the Georgian budget available online, too. However, the agreements between USAID and its implementing partners outside the Georgian government are missing. Other donors simply do not have this information available to the public. By using Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, it is possible to obtain bilateral agreements that are not considered secret and the Georgian Ministry of Finance has cooperated with TI Georgia on this issue, but donors should also be transparent in this manner and not depend on the Georgian government to do this for them. Donors can do more by providing its agreements online to the public to empower them to monitor the aid coming into Georgia and know when it is and is not being used properly and effectively.

Conclusions

Websites are simply one medium by which donors are able to provide information. Often donors respond to requests for project information by deflecting interested parties to their websites. Often the website is the only source of information outside of a petition using a Freedom of Information request⁸. Some respond to phone and email requests by providing all the information that was requested. Some do not respond at all. While not the only source of information, a web page dedicated to Georgia by the

⁵ See the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ OPIC, the U.S. Overseas investment agency, states on their website that information not provided on their website can only be obtained by a FOI request.



donors is a good first start to understanding what their mission in Georgia is, what their activities are and how they are trying to reduce poverty in Georgia. TI Georgia recommends each donor website contain:

- a page dedicated to Georgia with a Georgian language version;
- an explanation of what the donor hopes to achieve as a whole by their activities in Georgia;
- a list of projects and activities presented in a uniform way that is current and contains:
 - a description of the project;
 - implementation partners;
 - the amount and type of aid;
 - the duration of the project;
 - any agreements and the conditionalities of the project;
 - implementation and financial reports submitted by spending/implementing agencies;
 - donors' own audit and assessment reports; and
- a local and public contact phone number and email address for comments and criticisms.

By implementing these criteria into their websites, donors are making good on their commitments to transparency and accountability.

**In order to automatically receive future TI Georgia reports, please join the TI Georgia emailing list by sending a short message to:
info@transparency.ge**

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Appendix I

Donor Website Transparency - Criteria (Maximum 75 points)

1. Does the donor have a country-specific page? (10 points)
2. Does the page have a general summary/mission/FAQ? (5 points)
3. Does the page have a local contact point for comments/complaints?
 - Phone number? (5 points)
 - Email? (5 points)
4. Is the page available in a locally spoken language (Georgian)? (10 points)
5. Does the page have the donor's projects within the country? (10 points)
6. Are the projects listed or in narrative form? (5 points)
7. Is the project list up-to-date? (10 points)

Is there project specific information:

8. Is there a description of the project? (2 points)
9. Is the target agency/organization/company listed? (2 points)
10. Is the amount of aid given by the donor listed? (2 points)
11. Is the type of aid listed? (2 points)
12. Is the project duration listed? (2 points)
13. Is the agreement available/are the oversight mechanisms listed? (5 points)



Appendix II

Donor Website Transparency - Data

Donor	# 1	# 2	# 3	# 4	# 5	# 6	# 7	# 8	# 9	# 10	# 11	# 12	# 13	Total
United States	10	5	10	10	10	0	10	2	2	1	1	1	2.5	64.5
International Finance Corporation	10	5	10	10	10	5	5	2	2	2	2	0	0	63
World Bank	10	5	10	0	10	5	10	2	2	2	2	2	0	60
European Commission	10	5		10	10	5	5	2	2	2	0	2	2.5	55.5
Switzerland	10	5	10	0	10	0	5	2	2	2	2	2	0	50
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	10	5	5	0	10	5	5	2	2	2	2	0	0	48
Asian Development Bank	10	5	0	0	10	5		2	2	2	2	2	5	45
Sweden (Sida)	10	5	0	0	10	5	2	2	2	2	2	2	0	42
Germany (GTZ)	10	5	10	0	10	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	0	41
European Investment Bank	0	5	0	0	10	5	4	2	2	2	2	0	0	32
Norway	0	0	0	0	10	5	5	2	2	2	2	0	0	28
Ukraine	10	5	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
Japan	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10



Appendix III

Useful Donor Information

Donor	Ranking	Pledged (million USD)	Website Address	Email	Phone #
United States	65	1,000	http://georgia.usaid.gov/	mjaparidze@usaid.gov	54-40-00, ext. 4168
International Finance Corporation	63	350	http://www.ifc.org/ifcext/georgia.nsf/Content/Home_IFC_Georgia	trazmadze@ifc.org	995 32 912689
World Bank	60	530	http://www.worldbank.org.ge	ipaichadze@worldbank.org	(995 32) 91-30-96 or 91-26-89
European Commission	56	637	http://www.delgeo.ec.europa.eu/en/index.html	Delegation-Georgia@ec.europa.eu	(995 32) 94 37 63/ 94 37 69
Switzerland	50	19	http://www.swisscoop.ge/en/Home/Activities_in_Georgia	tbilisi@sdc.net	N/A
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	48	927	http://www.ebrd.com/country/country/georgia/index.htm	N/A	+995 32 44 74 00
Asian Development Bank	45	300	http://www.adb.org/Georgia/default.asp	N/A	N/A
Sweden (Sida)	42	53	http://www.sida.se/sida/jsp/sida.jsp?d=1319&a=21892&language=en_US	N/A	N/A
Germany (GTZ)	41	44	http://www.gtz.de/en/weltweit/europa-kaukasus-zentralasien/653.htm http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/diplo/en/Laenderinformationen/01-Laender/Georgien.html	gabriele.boehringer@gtz.de	+995 32 201800
European Investment Bank	32	329	N/A	N/A	N/A
Norway	28	40	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ukraine	20	24	http://www.mfa.gov.ua/georgia/en/news/top.htm		N/A
Japan	10	200	http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/georgia/index.html	N/A	N/A