The benefits of sharing project information online

There is a powerful global push for better availability, quality, and timeliness of data in the development sector – particularly around results and budgets. New networked technologies mean this is now possible and practical and there are many compelling advantages for NGOs, as well as for funders, beneficiaries and citizens.

“Transparency has a significant role to play in ending global poverty. Information is power, and greater openness can transform the relationship between citizens and governments. Financial resources, including aid, other types of development finance (from NGOs, foundations and private actors) and domestic resources in developing countries can be more effectively targeted at poverty eradication if data on them is made available in an open and timely way.”

Joni Hillman, Development Initiatives

www.interaction.org/blog/why-transparency-matters

More and more donor and implementing organisations are becoming aware of the advantages of openly sharing information about their work and committing to becoming fully transparent in the ways they work. Transparency and openness are the new norms of the international development sector and organisations are increasingly expected by funders, governments, partners and citizens to share the stories of their projects openly and fully as they unfold. Organisations that are not able to do this, may struggle to get support from funders in future.

About Akvo RSR

Akvo RSR (Really Simple Reporting) is designed to help organisations achieve their transparency commitments simply by publishing on the web the work that they’re doing, with paperless reporting directly from the field.

It makes it easy for teams working in development aid to bring complex networks of projects and programmes online and instantly share progress with everyone involved and interested. It lets funders see what’s being achieved on the ground so they can observe the impact of their investments. Implementing partners can easily post progress updates from field or regional offices using computers or mobile devices, even in remote areas with no connectivity.

Each project has its own mini website, featuring information, photos and videos, funding status and a project map (see image). Team members can add project updates to report on progress.

“(Using Akvo RSR) there is a lot of scope to share our information with a wide range of audiences and tell them about our activities. Staff motivation is important to do the activities. This platform helps frontline staff to feel ownership. It also helps mid level management to understand the pathway of each project. Sharing progress with donors on a daily basis is another significant aim of using Akvo RSR. We can measure the success and progress of our activities, as we can get regular information from the platform easily.”

Zobair Hasan, DORP (Bangladesh)

www.washalliance.nl

“The beauty of the update functionality (...) is that anyone can do it, it is simple. It gives a voice to the community workers, the implementing partners and the project officers working on a project.”

Roderick Besseling, Cordaid

www.cordaid.org/en/blogs/open-data/project-updates/
Cordaid's story

Cordaid is a large NGO (also active in Nigeria) that decided to openly share its work. To date it has published 900 projects on Akvo RSR. This hasn’t happened without considerable effort and overcoming certain challenges. The process of becoming more transparent also means changing the way you work, and not everyone understands the need for these changes from the outset. Cordaid experienced a skeptical attitude from some employees and partners towards bringing information online and the associated change in workflows. This attitude has dissolved as more projects and project updates became visible online and the benefits become apparent. You can now view Cordaid’s full portfolio at Cordaid.org.

“Let’s give a voice to our partners in the field and let them decide what they want to tell… Let them be the story tellers, let them tell us how Cordaid’s projects have affected their communities and their lives.”

Roderick Besseling, Cordaid
www.cordaid.org/en/blogs/open-data/project-updates/

Benefits of RSR

- Makes timely information and knowledge widely accessible online, not in an out-of-date report on a shelf.
- Gives a voice to those directly involved in implementing projects.
- Facilitates transparency and accountability towards donors and citizens.
- Governments and multilaterals are pushing towards transparency.
- Creates understanding – what is (not) happening and why – and increases engagement and participation.
- Short, concise and simple format. Real-time narrative reporting.
- Spreads best practice and learning.
- You do good work – make sure people know about it!

“Electricity and internet service is not smooth in rural areas of Bangladesh so using mobiles to make updates is helpful to share things instantly. Regular updates help us to know whether we are on track or not to meet project objectives. It brings success to our projects thanks to the sharing of best practices across all areas. As field staff can see the updates from other regions they can do activities at the same pace and overcome similar challenges. Experience from one area can be an example for other areas so coordination improves. Akvo RSR is online so all staff can get information easily and share it with relevant community people.”

Zobair Hasan, DORP (Bangladesh)
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