A message from our Executive Director

2020 was a year like no other, spent largely in the grips of a deadly pandemic that swept across the globe, confining us all to our homes and challenging how we have always delivered on our work. The speed at which our staff, partners and funders adapted was immense and inspiring – with such an uncertain and worrying future ahead, there was always a strong sense that we would get through this together.

We are proud to be part of a powerful movement of people across the world that was determined to ensure the poorest people and those at most risk of being left behind were the focus of our efforts. We used our expertise in data to keep the focus on those most at risk, the potential impact of the crisis in different countries and contexts, and where and how international support would be needed most.

Public finance all over the world became an important tool for all nations to safeguard jobs and livelihoods in their countries. As a result, we brought renewed focus on aid to our work – demonstrating how it was changing in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, and providing the first ever comprehensive picture of aid allocations in near real-time using International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) data.
During a year when so much has been changing and fast, DI has used IATI data to provide near real-time analysis and insights of trends in development and humanitarian aid to help inform decision-making and focus efforts where aid is most needed and effective. At a time when progress against the SDGs is at risk, they continue to push the boundaries using their locally and internationally informed expertise in data analysis, visualisation and communication, which will help the global community to end poverty, reduce inequality and increase resilience.

Paul Stuart, Board Vice-Chair, Development Initiatives

We also turned our focus to the UK and its aid spending in 2020. With the UK being one of the largest donors in the world, we knew we needed to set out the implications of suspending its commitment to spend 0.7% of gross national income (GNI) on aid, and the decision to merge the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). At the same time, we remained focused on tracking what was happening with the health and welfare budgets of the Kenyan and Ugandan governments in response to the Covid pandemic.

Back in 2019, we were already looking beyond aid at how regional and global public finance systems need to reform for the future. The pandemic accelerated this debate, as the world grappled with how to build back fairer to address the inequalities starkly exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a result, I was asked to join the Expert Working Group on Global Public Investment (EWG-GPI) and sit on its steering committee to take this concept forward. The unique role of public finance is no longer disputed, but how it is channelled, governed and delivered all needs to be refreshed. Our EWG report, due in April 2021, will bring this issue to life.

2020 was also a year of reflection for us organisationally, as we embarked on the creation of a new 10-year strategy. Despite the challenge of developing a strategy while we were mostly at home during lockdown, we were able to undertake extensive consultation and research. This resulted in a clear vision for the role we want to play and the road map to get us there.

At the end of such a challenging year, we are looking forward to what is to come – working closely with partners to ensure data-driven evidence and analysis are used effectively in policy and practice to end poverty, reduce inequality and increase resilience.

Harpinder Collacott
Executive Director & Chair of the Board

Development Initiatives demonstrated its innovative approach to accessing data and delivering rigorous and unbiased narratives on poverty and financing for development. DI maintains its position as a leader in data driven analysis which is reflected in its diverse portfolio of partners. I am immensely proud to be a Vice-Chair of its board.

Diane Kingston OBE, Board Vice-Chair, Development Initiatives
The year at a glance

January

DI partners with Strathmore University, Kenya
DI’s partnership with Strathmore University includes jointly convening a forum of Kenyan civil society organisations (CSOs) in order to better understand their data and analysis needs, and collaborating on analysis.

March

WHO announces Covid-19
On 12 March, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the Covid-19 outbreak as a pandemic. DI supported the response to this crisis with better data and analysis on how the pandemic has affected resource flows and exacerbated poverty and inequality throughout the year.

April

DI provides first analysis of Covid-19’s impact on aid
In response to the pandemic, DI produced projections on how Covid-19 may affect aid flows to developing countries. This was followed by our first-ever podcast, discussing why Covid poverty projections vary so widely, and a study of the data needed to track the Covid-19 pandemic response.

May

DI joins Leave No One Behind Partnership
Led by the International Civil Society Centre, the Leave No One Behind Partnership is a coalition of 12 of the world’s largest international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). It aims to give voice to marginalised groups at risk of being overlooked in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

June

DI starts to track real-time changes in aid
Our unique aid tracker gives a real-time picture of aid commitments during the Covid-19 pandemic using data published to IATI. Updated monthly with the latest data, it received great feedback and made headlines across the world.

DI informs thinking on future of UK aid under the new FCDO
DfID merged with the FCO to create the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO). DI’s analysis, published the same week, compared aid spending by the two departments and made recommendations for the future of UK aid. This was widely used by UK NGOs, and led to DI contributing an essay to the Foreign Policy Centre on protecting and building the UK’s standing as a world-leading player in global development.

July

DI launches Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2020

August

DI makes the case for refocusing aid
We rounded off a year of intensive work to bring solid data and analysis to the pandemic response with a detailed briefing on how aid commitments are changing in the Covid-19 pandemic, and a report on adapting aid to end poverty in the context of Covid-19, which sets out how aid needs to change to deliver the commitments of the SDGs.

Photo: Denis Onyodi/URCS-DRK-Climate Centre

October

DI co-hosts session at UN World Data Forum
Due to Covid-19, the third UN World Data Forum was replaced with a virtual event in 2020. It was attended by more than 10,000 participants from 180 countries over three days. This year, we continued our close involvement with the forum, acting as a member of the Programme Committee, and co-hosting a session on Covid-19 and the leave no one behind agenda.

November

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Di leads discussion on leave no one behind with Wilton Park
DI jointly convened a high-level roundtable with Wilton Park – an executive agency of the FCO. The event addressed how to deliver the leave no one behind agenda in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Speakers included WHO Special Envoy Dr David Nabarro and Professor Martin Ravallion of Georgetown University.

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Building a real-time picture of global finance during Covid

Accurate, timely data on development and crisis interventions became vitally important during the Covid-19 pandemic. With our expertise in making sense of complex datasets on financing, DI has been in a unique position to start developing a near real-time picture of aid and how it is changing.

As technical lead for IATI, we provided development and humanitarian organisations with new guidance on publishing data on their activities to combat Covid-19 just two weeks after the WHO declared it a pandemic.

In combination with an interactive data visualisation, which we developed as part of our work on Grand Bargain commitments to help publishers see what the data they publish looks like to users, this guidance helped more than 50 publishers to start publishing data on their activities by the beginning of May.

This real-time IATI data fed into our initial analysis of how Covid-19 was impacting development finance as early as June 2020, as well as informing this year’s Global Humanitarian Assistance Report.

We followed this with the launch of a Covid-19 aid tracker, which provides near real-time insights into aid and how it is changing during the pandemic, with monthly updates. This has proven hugely valuable and our analysis has been used by media outlets including Devex, the Washington Post and The New York Times to inform the public about impacts on aid. It has been accessed over 5,000 times and has contributed to the work of other organisations such as Oxfam, whose CEO called its findings “shocking”.

The UN Foundation also shared it with the President of the UN General Assembly in advance of their special session on Covid-19/real-time trends in aid spending for least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS).

Solid data will continue to be crucial beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. Alongside these short-term insights, our long-term work to help development and humanitarian organisations publish more and better data to IATI continued. As well as Covid-19 guidance, we published new guidance on reporting humanitarian activities, the results of aid activities and conditions attached to funding.

We also launched a new Validator tool to quickly help publishers and the public check if data has been published according to IATI’s Standard. The tool was well received by publishers, with donor organisations in the US, Sweden and Italy, and international NGOs like Oxfam, telling us directly that it would feed into and support their work.

DI’s analysis and insights are proving extremely relevant to help us better understand the impact of Covid in people’s lives, particularly the most disadvantaged – and to better anticipate and prepare for changes in financing for development.

Rodrigo Salvado, Deputy Director of Development Policy and Finance, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Informing policy in East Africa

In 2020, we expanded our work in East Africa, widening our network of partners in the region and deepening our collaboration with local actors.

Our work analysing the budgets of Kenya and Uganda and their impact on the poorest people took on new significance. In June, we published two papers examining the socioeconomic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya and Uganda, and how budget allocations could be changed to support affected sectors. These papers came to be two of DI’s most widely accessed resources and, between them, were read more than 30,000 times.

We also expanded our budget work to focus more on spending to support persons with disabilities. We worked closely with organisations of persons with disabilities in Kenya and its counties to provide them with the evidence they needed to advocate for greater economic inclusion.

In particular, our analysis enabled the Bungoma Disability Empowerment Network to secure the promise from the County Governor, on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, that a disability directorate would be set up in Bungoma to handle issues relating to disability.

Beyond our budget work, we supported the SDGs Kenya Forum with Kenya’s civil society report on the country’s Voluntary National Review (VNR). This involved collating submissions from over 80 CSOs into one report presented to the Kenyan government.

This year, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) invited us to present the approach of undertaking a shadow VNR to a steering committee of academics, civil society leaders and government actors from across Africa. Our presentation was well received, and UNECA expressed an interest in supporting further events to share this work so others can learn from and replicate it.

We also continued our work in analysis on disaster risk reduction across Africa and launched collaborations to take this further in 2020. Following our analysis in 2019 on subnational budgeting for disaster risk reduction in Kenya and the national budget of Uganda, we were invited to share our work with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In early 2020, we supported the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) to analyse investments in Rwanda and Tanzania, and produced an overview of disaster risk reduction spending by synthesising 16 sub-Saharan African countries’ risk-sensitive budget review reports. This has supported their work in the region throughout 2020, and led to the inclusion of Ethiopia as another focus country to track its investments towards disaster risk reduction.

“Your data presentation was very inspiring and really showcased the power of IATI data. It will also enable the IATI tech team to link to certain key publishers and have a dialogue about data quality and use.”

Leo Stolk, Project Leader NOW, Oxfam Novib

“Your data on poverty offers an opportunity to make informed decisions especially when we make strategic plans to increase the incomes of small-scale farmers.”

Mount Elgon Coffee and Honey Co-operative
Ensuring everyone is counted and included

The poorest and most vulnerable people in society are the most likely to be missing from data, and so the most likely to be left behind. DI has tackled this issue head-on in 2020, fighting alongside our global and regional partners to develop stronger data ecosystems, and make progress on ensuring all people are counted and included.

We worked in Benin to present new information on the progress of the poorest 20% of their population, and achieve a consensus between civil society and government on how to support them better.

Our work is contributing to an increased culture of data transparency and data use – during 2020, Benin’s National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis published their first ever annual directory of statistics, providing development actors with local information for monitoring people’s progress.

The government of Benin also stressed the importance of the leave no one behind agenda in their role as co-facilitator of the 2020 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

In Kenya, our analysis of 2019 census data showed a significant undercount of persons with disabilities. We shared these findings in a series of meetings with organisations of persons with disabilities to empower their advocacy on ensuring persons with disabilities are counted and included in policy making.

Our work in Uganda to develop a comprehensive disability data landscape has resulted in the inception of a new disability data working group. The group includes government, organisations of persons with disabilities and NGOs, and works to identify and overcome challenges towards disability inclusion through better data.

We’ve also made official statistics on poverty and sustainable development in Kenya and Uganda more accessible with new online interactive data tools (Spotlight on Kenya and Spotlight on Uganda).

They equip users with granular data on a wide range of socioeconomic indicators and public spending. For example, they show how people in different locations are being most impacted by lack of access to clean water or high teacher-pupil ratios, and what level of government resources their district receives. These tools were shared with government, academics and NGOs with positive engagement in both countries.

At the global level, we’ve been a voice for change in data and convened international meetings with partners, including Wilton Park and the UN World Data Forum, to spur innovation and support for data.

The World Data Forum brought together more than 10,000 participants from 180 countries, with 500 of them attending our session – which shared highlights from our work in Benin and launched an interactive briefing showing the impact of Covid-19 on poverty in all countries.

Development Initiatives’ Spotlight on Uganda data tool is a very important effort towards improving access to data on the country’s socioeconomic indicators at both the national and sub-national levels.

Dr Peter Mwesige, Executive Director, African Centre for Media Excellence

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Improving crisis response

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the intersection between crisis and poverty, and the need for humanitarian and development actors to coordinate their efforts to ensure short and longer-term responses are effectively responding to people’s needs. These crucial issues were the focus of this year’s Global Humanitarian Assistance Report.

In 2020, we supported a range of donors and government organisations to improve the coordination, transparency and effectiveness of their humanitarian aid. We provided original research on policy and practice at the nexus between humanitarian, development and peace actors.

This research generated evidence on how DfID and Sweden’s government agency for development cooperation (Sida) were approaching the issue. Both organisations began implementing some of the recommendations from our studies early in 2020.

We also worked in partnership with DfID and Sida to promote, communicate and share learning with other governments and donor organisations. In particular, we co-hosted a webinar with DfID, Sida and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s International Network on Conflict and Fragility that was attended by around 100 representatives of other donor organisations. The session resulted in the US Agency for International Development (USAID) asking us to share our methodology to inform an internal review, and a request from Global Affairs Canada (GAC) to incorporate our studies into their staff training programme.

We supported Grand Bargain signatory organisations to meet a number of their commitments – for example, working to publish new analysis on multi-year humanitarian funding and how the quality of funding could be improved.

We provided direct support to the German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) on their Grand Bargain commitment to increase cash and voucher assistance. At their request, we carried out a mapping exercise to understand their data on this kind of finance, provided recommendations for improving it, and established a historic baseline of cash transfers to measure future performance.

We also empowered key actors to meet their Grand Bargain commitments on increasing aid transparency. Working on behalf of the World Bank and the Netherlands, we built a prototype Covid-19 data visualisation for Grand Bargain signatories in just five weeks. The visualisation showed how the data that they were publishing on pandemic support would look to external users and we worked with them to identify where they could be more transparent.

In the week preceding the visualisation beta launch, there was a significant increase in rapid data publication, with the number of publishers tripling and the number of activities reported rising more than sixfold. We are currently working with USAID and the Centre for Humanitarian Data to support them to build a full-scale version.

High-quality results, great cooperation – Development Initiatives’ efforts in improving our internal project management system and in establishing a baseline for 2016 on cash and voucher assistance are much appreciated.

GFFO client feedback

Photo: European Union/Pierre Prakash
Defining the future of aid

2020 marked the beginning of the ‘decade of delivery’ – the final 10 years in which the commitments enshrined in the SDGs must be met. We were already off track to meet these targets before the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has further set back progress, putting greater emphasis on the need to reform development finance and the way it’s delivered.

In 2020, we brought together key decision-makers to engage in high-level, strategic discussions on the future of development finance and aid – sharing data and evidence on what is working now, and exploring the new idea of Global Public Investment.

Working with Wilton Park, the Joep Lange Institute, Equal International and the UN University, we convened a series of invite-only round table events. These events enabled us to look at the challenges and practical steps needed to strengthen aid and change the governance and architecture of key institutions, and build a constituency for change among those with the power to act.

Recommendations from these discussions have been taken forward by a new expert working group. They have also been shared in a series of blogs with the OECD and the UN University to provide diverse insights and opinions from experts and thought leaders.

We worked directly with government actors like GAC to provide evidence on what works in development finance. At GAC’s request, we used our expertise in blended finance to consult with stakeholders, and provided analysis and recommendations for better transparency around blended finance in The Tri Hita Karana Roadmap for Blended Finance. This report gives a critical but objective assessment of the blended finance landscape, and has been shared widely as a key output from GAC’s Tri Hita Karana (THK) working group.

We also worked to make sure that development finance serves the most vulnerable people. We developed a new methodology to identify aid projects that support persons with disabilities, which has generated significant interest within the sector. Organisations like Validity and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) have invited us to provide them with methodological support.

Our methodology to identify disability-inclusive ODA (official development assistance) was applied by the UN special rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities in a report to advise the UN on international cooperation to disability. We also partnered with Inclusion International to adapt this methodology to analyse ODA to intellectual disabilities – providing new information to empower their advocacy.

I’m a big fan of evidence-based advocacy, and I think this report gives us an excellent tool to be using in those conversations that we need to have.

Dominic Haslam OBE, Deputy CEO, Sightsavers (on the Inclusion International report Excluded from the Excluded: People with Intellectual Disabilities in and out of Official Development Assistance, supported by DI analysis)

We are very happy with how the report turned out, and continue to refer colleagues to it.

Meghan Watkinson, Deputy Director at GAC, and co-chair of the THK Transparency Working Group
Eradicating poverty in all its forms

To get a complete picture of global poverty, it is essential to consider measures of multidimensional and nutrition poverty, as well as of economic poverty. This year, the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted how crisis can reduce people’s ability to meet their most basic needs. DI has been working with a range of partners to call attention to poverty in all its forms and where action must be focused to ensure we make the progress that people in poverty deserve.

In 2020, we produced a unique analysis of how the Covid-19 pandemic is impacting poverty and inequality. Presented at the UN World Data Forum, our interactive briefing allows users to compare poverty projections for every country and region – and has been explored by users from 67 countries. We also provided recommendations for how aid must adapt to ensure the poorest people are not left behind in the pandemic. This has been taken up and used by a range of CSOs and policy actors to inform and strengthen their work.

We launched the 2020 Global Nutrition Report, which led to media reports in over 60 countries and called for governments, businesses and CSOs to address malnutrition by tackling inequity in food and health systems. These messages were heard and echoed by powerful voices including the directors of United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Global Nutrition Report’s annual reports and online resources, including Country Nutrition Profiles for every region and country in the world, continue to be go-to resources for data and evidence on malnutrition. A recent Journal of Global Health study found that in the nutrition community, the Global Nutrition Report is the most accessed multi-country data source, used by around 75% of people surveyed.

We provided WaterAid with fresh evidence on the progress and challenges in meeting SDG 6 in Pakistan, the last in a series of country reports that have also covered Ethiopia and Nigeria. The analysis we provided has helped WaterAid to advocate from a position of strength at international forums, and to guide the work of their country teams.

We also worked with the International Women’s Development Agency (IWDA) to assess their Individual Deprivation Measure (IDM) – a new, gender-sensitive, multidimensional measure of poverty. We helped them understand the broader data landscape in which their measure would operate, and the costs associated with deploying surveys using it. The IWDA valued our support and we hope it will contribute to the wider use of this measure in future.

Your briefing on the impacts of Covid-19 on poverty and who is most vulnerable is very useful. It will be a really good resource for policymakers.

Leonie Willenbrink, Poverty and Inequality Advisor at GIZ

At the Institute for Development Studies, we’ve used the Country Nutrition Profiles extensively in our teaching and in our research and advocacy – they are an invaluable tool.

Dr Nicholas Noblett, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Development Studies
Our employees

As an ethical and responsible employer, staff welfare is high on our agenda.

This has never been more important than in 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic put unprecedented strain on our staff and their families. In these challenging times, we are proud of the support we have provided to our staff and the ways staff have supported each other.

The Black Lives Matter movement also sparked change for us in 2020. As an organisation we offered safe spaces for discussion on issues of race, and all line managers undertook unconscious bias training. These steps form part of an ongoing programme of work to develop our equality, diversity and inclusivity as an organisation.

Geographic spread

- 83 employees
- 21 nationalities
- 3 working across three continents
- 5 based in five countries
Fairness

This year, we started the first phase of our reward project, to make sure that we attract, retain and reward our staff fairly. Our focus in 2020 was to introduce an equitable and transparent framework for pay awards.

We have been a Living Wage Employer in the UK since 2013, and are committed to ensuring that the same principles apply to salaries across all our locations.

We also continue to monitor our gender pay gap and voluntarily publish the results. In 2020, the UK mean and median gaps stood at -5.53% and -12.28% respectively. This means that on average women earn more than men at DI, which is because more women occupy senior-level positions.

Gender pay gap (2020 mean gender pay gap of UK-based employees)

Supporting our staff

With the Covid-19 pandemic bringing challenges for staff in all our locations this year, we have focused on supporting our staff and ensuring our vital work can continue.

All staff have been encouraged to work from home, and we made sure our offices could remain open for staff who needed them – wherever possible – by completing rigorous Covid-19 safety assessments.

We introduced policies to support staff, including leave for child or elder care, and flexible working hours. We also provided office furniture for home working, and financial support for the staff that needed it most.

In October 2020, we signed the Time to Change Employer Pledge, and have a 12-month action plan to increase awareness and break down mental health stigma and discrimination in the workplace. As part of this commitment, we trained 11 Mental Health First Aiders across all of our locations.

These initiatives have been supported by our Staff Voice group – a new forum run by staff – who communicate regularly with the executive team. Representatives have been chosen by their teams to make sure that all our voices are heard.

Employee retention (length of service)

- a less than 1 year: 27%
- b 1 – 4 years: 49%
- c 5 – 9 years: 16%
- d 10+ years: 8%
Development Initiatives [DI] is a global organisation that applies the power of data and evidence to build sustainable solutions that create an equitable and resilient world.

We work closely with partners at global, regional, national and local levels to ensure data-driven evidence and analysis are used effectively in policy and practice to end poverty, reduce inequality and increase resilience.

**DI’s board members are:**
- Alex Ezeh
- Diane Kingston OBE
- Harpinder Collacott
- Libby Drew
- Paul Stuart
- Sue Wardell CBE
- Timothy Takona
- Tina Blazquez-Lopez

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