DG's Strategic Vision - 2018-2021

Since late 2018, DG has been operating under a new strategy that has allowed us to focus more on our areas of success to better execute **our mission of supporting the use of data, technology, and evidence to create more effective and responsive institutions.** We developed our strategy to provide direction for the next three years, building on what we have learned from each successive wave of our evolution. We feel this vision is responsive to the evolving needs of the data revolution and the SDG agenda, positioning us to use our skills and experience to support key actors at the global, national, and local level.

Vision Statement

We envision a world where institutions listen and respond to the needs of their constituents; are accountable; and are efficient in targeting and delivering services that improve lives.

Mission Statement

We support the use of data, technology, and evidence to create more effective and responsive institutions.

How

We create tools that help institutions collect and analyze information; strengthen institutional capability to use data; and explore what incentives, structures, and processes are needed to enable evidence-based decisions.

DG's Evolution

Nearly 20 years ago, Development Gateway began as an idea within the World Bank: "How can we leverage the power of the internet to understand who is doing what where, and to what effect?" DG has pursued this mission in three distinct waves:

2000-2008: After a period of incubation within the World Bank, DG was spun off and created global public goods: AiDA, dgMarket, dg Communities, and Country Gateways. These resources aimed to make development information available to all, where before it had been costly or kept private. Additionally, in response to a series of international conferences on aid effectiveness, DG developed and piloted the Aid Management Platform in Ethiopia and 13 additional countries.

2009-2013: DG shifted focus toward country systems, and data visualization. AMP scaled from a few countries to nearly 25, and transitioned from an IT platform to a sustainable program. This helped us learn how to effectively engage with and provide support to governments. In addition, DG co-founded AidData by merging AiDA with PLAID – a project of the College of William & Mary and Brigham Young University, aimed at gathering project-level aid information.[1] This created a core competency of partnering with researchers to bridge academic-policy and global-local divides.

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[1] AidData is now independently operated by the College of William and Mary

2014-2017: One of the first ICT4D organizations to show dissatisfaction with the level of data and technology uptake, we sought to more deeply understand data use. Embedded in existing technology programming, and in stand-alone research initiatives, we began leveraging learnings to explore how and why data was – or was not – being used. We built on research methods from academic partners; combined them with practical experience implementing technical tools; and leveraged the deep trust gained by working with countries.

Each project and partnership was an opportunity to learn about, and try to remedy, barriers to data uptake. This iterative approach – continually incorporating new techniques to drive actual data use in each project – has set us apart from purely technical providers. It has allowed us to develop an applied research portfolio and prioritize bigger picture thinking, with the goal of translating on-the-ground learnings into policy-relevant messages on data use and strategies.

2018 - 2021: Our strategic direction builds on what we have learned from each successive wave of our evolution. We feel this vision is responsive to the evolving needs of the data revolution and the SDG agenda, positioning us to use our skills and experience to support key actors at the global, national, and local levels. Additionally, our work is evolving to better understand how to incorporate a gender lens into program design and implementation.

Four Organizational Priorities

To meet our mission, we have identified four key organizational objectives, supported by three programmatic pillars. As a small, but influential, actor in the data revolution, achieving each objective requires a combination of direct programming, together with close partnerships with -- and advisory influence on -- larger organizations, including development agencies, governments, and policy and advocacy NGOs.

01. **Increase the *use* of data and evidence by partner country governments and development agencies for policy and programming**.

Despite significant investments in data supply, the demand for and use of data in development decision-making has proven elusive. Demand-side investments have primarily targeted technical inputs – IT systems and training – ignoring political (dis)incentives, process misalignment, and decision space barriers to data use. **Without significant advancements in data use for decisions, data collection investments will continue to fail to generate value for development outcomes.**

02. **Increase investment in – and the effectiveness of – government administrative data systems**.

The post-2015 era has brought a welcome focus on development data, including support to country capacity. But overwhelmingly, the international community's emphasis has been on reporting on the SDGs. While we acknowledge the importance of official statistical systems, we believe that a concerted push for effective administrative data systems is crucial for *managing and achieving* the SDGs. A deeper understanding of the technical, political, institutional, and procedural mechanisms that result in healthy administrative data systems is needed to inform **more and better investments in country capacity** – and

links between administrative and budget data systems are crucial to ensure that **SDG results and value for money can be understood and improved.**

O3. **Increase the transparency, equity, and accountability of getting and using public financial resources.**

Recent years have seen growing momentum in open data communities around public financial resources, including IATI, EITI, Open Contracting, Beneficial Ownership, and Open Budgeting. These movements have resulted in significant international commitments, and often in the development of technical data standards for publication. However, these international undertakings often lack a solid understanding of country motivation and use cases for implementation, while governments often lack the capacity, awareness, or resources to implement these commitments and standards. The result is a growing **implementation gap**, with many commitments failing to reach completion.

O4. **Increase the responsiveness of international data communities to on-the-ground realities of government, civil society, and private sector actors**.

International data communities typically seek feedback or engagement from country governments, but often face a number of barriers. Costs of government participation (travel, staff time, and resources), inability to identify the right *working level* or *technical* government staff, capacity to engage in technical (IT and data) discussions, language barriers, and internet stability for videoconferencing each play a role in limiting government input. As a close partner to country governments – often working embedded in government institutions – DG can help amplify the policy, process, and practical priorities of governments, ensuring that the data revolution benefits from country-level learning, and that data interventions are relevant and sensitive to country contexts and constraints.

Delivery Model: Three Programmatic Pillars

To help address the four priorities, DG organizes its work around three main pillars: Effective Service Delivery, Financial Resource Governance, and Data Strategy and Policy. Across all of our work, we are more regularly applying a gender lens, ensuring that DG contributes to more effective collection and use of gender-disaggregated data, as well as gender-sensitive design and programing for development.

The three pillars work together to support DG's mission by providing a blend of expertise at the subnational, country, and global levels. Common to all is a decision-focused approach to the use of data and evidence. In each area, we combine our tested methods in (i) building digital technology tools, (ii) providing advisory services on data use, and (iii) applied research.

	Effective Service Delivery	Fiscal Governance	Data Strategy and Global Policy
Digital Technologies	M&E systems Sector data portals and dashboards	Data management tools Transparency portals Open data standards	Data management tools Transparency portals

Data Use and Advisory	Process design Data analysis Needs assessments Change management	Data standard mapping Data management plans Process design Needs and readiness assessments	Data strategy design Data standards feedback Global policy participation
Applied Research	Qualitative research on the role of data at local/national/global levels Findings contribute to the design of better technologies and advisory services		

Table 1: DG's Programmatic Pillars and Activities

1. Effective Service Delivery

DG has traditionally functioned as a generalist organization within the ICT4D space. However, recent years have seen an increase in the demand for sector-specific tools, approaches, and research. In addition to strategic work in other sectors, we see particular opportunities working in agriculture (nascent ICT and data use) and health (advanced ICT and data use). In both fields, DG will contribute to programming and policy-relevant learning on the role of data and evidence in decision-making. As co-founder and incubator of Feedback Labs, constituent feedback remains a key priority for us, and we will help organizations strategize, collect, and use feedback to improve service delivery. Gender-disaggregated data are also critical to this pillar, ensuring that our work contributes to more equitable programming and gender-sensitive decisions.

Agriculture DG has developed strong knowledge of agriculture data sources, challenges, and opportunities. We focus on improving the supply of agriculture data; building user-friendly tools; and supporting governments and private sector in using data to meet their strategic priorities.

Health DG plays a strong a complementary role, with many opportunities for partnership. Over the next months and years, we will continue to engage citizens – particularly youth, women, and other often-marginalized groups – to further health initiatives.

Data Management Systems and MEL DG has a strong reputation and track record within Data Management Systems and MEL; and we have continued demand from DFID, UN, and other partners.

2. Public Financial Management

DG has a strong historical footprint in public financial management, beginning with the aid effectiveness agenda (Aid Management Program) and continuing through open contracting and extractive resources data management. We serve a unique role in these communities[2] as country-level users of global data standards, providing critical feedback on what governments and civil society need in order to better use these data. Our practice of using hands-on work to inform and drive global conversations is perhaps strongest and best-proven in the total resource management space, and remains a top priority. We will

[2] For example, the International Consortium on Government Financial Management (ICGFM), OCP, IATI, and Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

also focus on data and projects that address gender inequality issues; for example in mining and extractives programs, or in supporting the participation of women-owned businesses in public procurement.

Open Contracting: We have been engaged in public procurement since our early days, with dgMarket serving as a global leader in providing procurement data for international development. Since the inception of the open contracting movement, we have led OC work in over a dozen countries and subnational locales; developed an open source suite of tools for OC analytics and corruption risk monitoring; and built a reputation among government and the global OC community as implementers. In the upcoming years, we will continue to build our OC program, focusing on end-to-end implementation of data publication, data use, and civil.

Aid Effectiveness: AMP remains a flagship DG offering, with a strong record of independent country ownership and sustainability. It is now poised to evolve into a more broadly applicable tool, as countries begin to use AMP to monitor results, and as International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) data are increasingly useful and used. We will continue to innovate in the AMP system, focusing on streamlining maintenance; empowering governments and partners to "localize" AMP; and phasing out DG support. We will also continue to contribute to the IATI community: ground-truthing the standard, building tools to improve data quality and usability, and supporting governments to use IATI in country systems. As countries reduce their dependence on external resources and develop locally funded public investment programs, AMP can be easily adapted to help them monitor execution and results.

Extractives Management: Country-level management of extractives resource and revenue data is not well-understood, and existing tools for managing these data often fail to meet country needs. Over the next three years, we will continue to perform country-level assessments and deploy fit-for-purpose tools for extractives data management when demand is established.

Organizational Data Strategy and Global Policy

Partner governments, development agencies, and international NGOs struggle to prioritize investments in data and information systems; incentivize and empower data users; and assess the impact of data in decision-making. These challenges cut across sectors, and require institutions to weigh strategic tradeoffs; understand the decision-making landscape; and synthesize evidence to determine where, how, and how much to invest in data. In particular, as development actors seek to leave no one behind, supporting strategic approaches to working with gender data and data on marginalized communities will be a key focus of our work.

Strategic Advisory Services: Through our work with the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and UNICEF, we have a growing reputation and skill set for helping institutions understand their decision-making processes; the role of data in those processes; and where investments in both internal (e.g., program funding and results) and external (e.g., demographic or SDG) data can help to achieve institutional goals and priorities.

Global Data Policy: As we continue to support institutions in their data strategy and policy formulation, the next step is to foster a more effective global conversation among development actors. Over the next

three years, we will work to facilitate and participate in these convenings. We will also continue to provide insights and contributions to GPSDD, OCP, IATI, and others, using our work and lessons learned to inform and drive the data revolution.