

AiDA: Impact on development

Timely access to usable information is necessary for good decision making, planning and encouraging collaboration among stakeholders with common goals and objectives. This has a direct impact on how resources are allocated and used to influence the course of development.

The path of AiDA's impact on development is through reducing the time users spend to find and use information -- AiDA presents information in a consistent format which is then available within minutes any time and anywhere with an internet connection.

Information available through AiDA helps planners, decision-makers and service providers allocate and use resources more effectively -- through reducing duplication, partnerships with peers pursuing common goals to enhance results and targeting resources and interventions for areas that are not already addressed.

Information in AiDA helps development partners learn about what others are doing so they can find each other to collaborate and work together in order to increase the effectiveness of their contributions to development and poverty reduction.

Local Project Database (LPD)

The Local Projects Database (LPD) is a web-based resource to capture and share information about projects, programs and other development activities in a consistent structure and format that is compatible with AiDA standards. It includes a feature to export data in AiDA XML for sharing with AiDA.

The LPD was developed by the Romania Country Gateway/eRomania Gateway Association with guidance and support from the AiDA, Country Gateway and Systems Support teams of Development Gateway. It is designed for use by application service providers such as Country Gateways and development organizations that need a tool to manage information about their programs and projects.

Demand for LPD

The LPD responds to the needs of Country Gateways, first expressed by the Bulgaria and Romania Development Gateways and followed by confirmations from other Country Gateways and organizations interested in sharing information with AiDA.

Users of AiDA and the Country Gateways have pointed out gaps in information about local activities and expressed a need for a tool that will allow them to share information easily. Many small organizations do not have the capacity or resources to have their own project information systems. They are very interested in gaining visibility by publicizing their activities and see AiDA as a vehicle for this.

Pilots undertaken in 2002 and 2003 in Mali, Togo and Morocco also showed the need for such a data capture tool to help small and medium size NGOs share information with AiDA, and therefore, obtain a www presence.

The LPD fills the need for a ready-to-use resource that automatically produces data in the AiDA format. Some organizations that share information with AiDA have their own information systems; others use off-the-shelf products to capture, share and

present their information through the Internet. Before sharing data with AiDA, all current participants have to transform their data to AiDA XML – this requires resources and institutional support which can present a barrier to sharing information with AiDA.

What you can do with LPD

Civil society organizations, private sector entities, local donors, and government institutions are expected users of the LPD.

The LPD supports the following:

- Local donors agencies, government, civil society, and private sector organizations can post information online by through a web browser
- The information can be viewed online by all users – they can retrieve information through several options: browsing with pre-set links or search by their own criteria
- End users can select the preferred language of content and navigation supported by the LPD
- The LPD host can share data with AiDA -- the LPD stores data in a format that is compliant with the AiDA schema to ensure a seamless data exchange with AiDA.

Benefits

- The LPD is a catalyst for collaboration in several spheres: among information professionals who develop applications for development practitioners and among development partners who use information in the LPD to find partners to work together and learn from the experience of peers
- The LPD meet the needs of a wide range of users -- from information intermediaries and organization with projects to practitioners that use the internet to get information to help them network with others to share experience or find partners and to support efforts to use develop assistance more effectively
- LPD produces data that is compliant with the AiDA standard so there no need to retrofit and convert data before sharing it with AiDA and organizations that use AiDA standards
- LPD promotes transparency and increases the visibility of local activities
- LPD spreads the use of AiDA standards -- as users expand locally, it will create a critical mass across countries and facilitate country-to-country data sharing
- LPD will help to improve the quality of data in AiDA and enrich links to lessons learned, best practices, project deliverables, and other documents
- LPD strengthens local capacity to manage, share and use information for development
- LPD increases access to information in local languages.

Status of LPD

In fiscal year 2004, the LPD was tested by five Country Gateways (Romania, Colombia, Poland, Morocco, and Mongolia) and two NGOs (World Resource Institute (WRI) and World Faith Development Dialogue (WFDD)). Each Country Gateway conducted a needs assessment and defined a strategy to implement the LPD. This

included a clear definition of user requirements and engagement of information partners. This was followed by the installation of the software locally and commencement of data input by information partners.

The objective of the pilot was to test the entire cycle of application development and support the requirements gathering, incorporation and distribution of enhancements, use of data to create reports and harvesting by AiDA. The Country Gateways pilot also provided a real-life basis for the development of documentation and procedures to support future enhancements and establishment of a service support model for the expanding the distribution of the LPD to all Country Gateways and other organizations. Throughout the pilot, the technical systems enhancements and technical support for installation of the LPD in the Country Gateways was provided by the Romania Country Gateway.

The wide range of business needs addressed by the LPD include the following:

- In Romania, the Open Society Institute is engaging NGOs to use the LPD to share information about their activities
- Morocco Development Gateway is working with UNDP to customize the LPD so it can be used to gather information for the Development Cooperation Report (DCR)
- Poland Development Gateway will use the LPD for to capture information on projects implemented by Polish local administrations and European Union
- Colombia Development Gateway will focus on ICT for development projects in Colombia
- Civil society organizations in Mongolia will use the LPD to share information about their activities
- WRI is using the LPD to manage information available through the Digital Dividends Clearinghouse
- WFDD is using the LPD to compile an inventory of activities of Faith Based Organizations in Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda.

The LPD is now a fully documented application that is ready for broad distribution. Procedures for incorporating code contributions for enhancements and new features are also in place. The release of the LPD as an open source product is currently being reviewed by the Development Gateway Foundation.