



Collaboration Case Note

Data Use for Accountability Colombia

March 2020

Transparency and Accountability Initiative (TAI) seeks to foster collaboration between two or more members around our shared strategic priorities. Collaboration case notes document and assess the utility of such initiatives from the funder perspective.

What Problem(s) Were We Addressing?

This process forms part of a learning agenda to help donors (particularly TAI members) fund more effective and coordinated civil society (CS) work on data use for accountability. Linked to an on-going [collaboration in Nigeria](#) focused on data use for anti-corruption, TAI members collaborated to understand why available data around the mining sector in Colombia is not being significantly used by CS or communities to inform advocacy or demand accountability. While some members were primarily interested in learning, others wanted to use the learning to inform their in-country grantmaking. For collaboration partner the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the purpose was to get an accurate depiction of revenue management related to mining in Colombia.

“I think I’m speaking for all the members when I say...how to enable NGOs to use publicly available data to improve accountability...is at the core of accountability work for foundations and bilaterals alike...”

-Funder stakeholder

Who Collaborated and How?

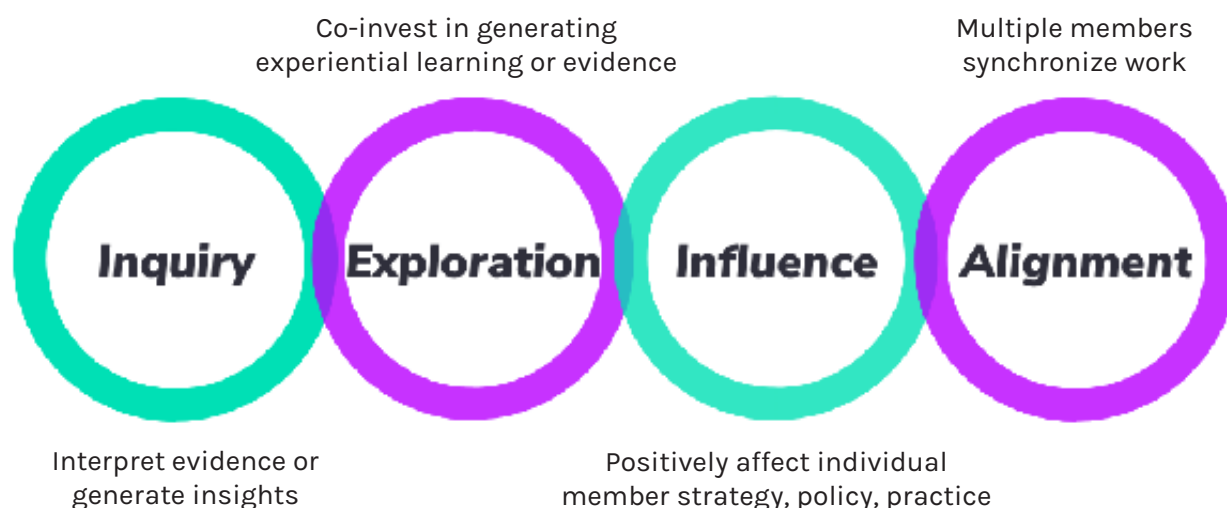
This collaboration primarily involved the TAI Secretariat staff and a consultant, and representatives of Global Integrity (GI, TAI’s learning partner in both Nigeria and Colombia), IFC, Ford Foundation (Ford), and Open Society Foundations (OSF). As Ford was already funding several groups working on extractives transparency and accountability in Colombia, their interest was in refining or redirecting their existing portfolio approach. OSF was open to guidance on new grants and opportunities in the country. Luminare expressed interest in new grant ideas, and participated in some initial calls. Hewlett Foundation (Hewlett) and MacArthur Foundation (MacArthur)’s interest was primarily focused on learning for their

broader portfolios, including additional Hewlett funding to support the emergent TAI learning agenda.

Coordination took the form of planning and update phone calls; workshops and focus groups in Colombia; face to face meetings in Washington, D.C.; document review and revision; and TAI blog posts.

What Type of Collaboration Was It?

This collaboration began as exploration, with the IFC-led scoping and assessment work, and developed into alignment, with complementary Ford and OSF grants issued for programming in Colombia.



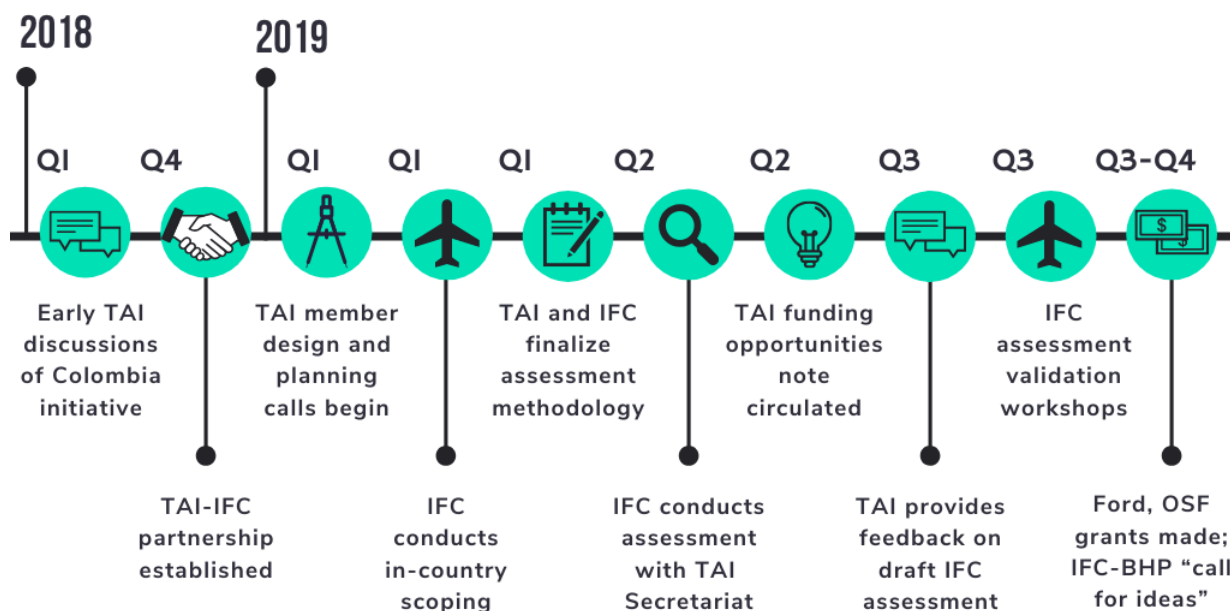
How Did the Collaboration Evolve?

Rather than conduct its own assessment, TAI partnered with IFC’s Disclosure to Development (D2D) Program on its open data assessment for the Colombian mining sector. IFC worked with an adapted World Bank Group [Open Data Readiness Assessment](#) methodology, which was the tool’s first application in the mining sector, and led much of the data collection and analysis.

The assessment took place in three stages: scoping, focus groups, and validation of findings. The TAI Secretariat provided input on IFC’s research agenda based on feedback from Ford, OSF, and Luminate, helped plan and participate in workshops, and provided consolidated member feedback on the draft assessment. A three-person team composed of a GI Colombia-based representative, a TAI consultant, and a Secretariat representative participated in three trips which involved discussions with a range of stakeholders at the regional and central level in Colombia. In coordination with IFC, the TAI-GI team gathered input from groups more critical of mining investments, some of whom are funded by TAI members. This TAI-GI team later returned to Colombia for two IFC-coordinated validation workshops to present initial assessment findings and gather feedback from the stakeholders previous-

ly consulted. The BHP Foundation – funder of the IFC Data to Development Program - also participated in this trip.

When the IFC assessment report took longer than anticipated, GI and the TAI consultant wrote an “opportunities note” for TAI members on the main challenges and key stakeholders identified through the assessment process. This note was presented in a call to Ford, OSF, Luminate, Hewlett, and MacArthur; Ford and OSF expressed interest in several of the ideas. GI worked with civil society organizations (CSOs) to develop concept notes and ultimately proposals, which resulted in several grants funded by two TAI members, including one regional office.



What Have We Achieved?

Two non-member respondents felt it was significant that TAI and IFC experimented with a **unique and innovative assessment model** that incorporated views from the mining industry, civil society, academia and media. They saw **combining TAI and IFC skills, networks and funding** as a positive impact.

A non-funder saw the **participation of multiple TAI members involved in shaping the learning agenda** through assessment planning, implementation, and follow-on as the most significant achievement of the collaboration.

Several respondents remarked that they were exposed to new perspectives and a different set of actors, which revealed evidence-based, **actionable ideas for work** that

“My initial expectation was to have a partner who would bring in a perspective we might not have otherwise had but it has surpassed that. [TAI] brought a refinement of the methodology, experience from other countries, and actionable items we have now.”

– Funder stakeholder

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might not have surfaced otherwise. As one funder member stated, “the fact that we at least know what the possibilities could be is a good outcome.”

Indeed, two TAI members **redirected their funding** to address gaps identified through the assessment, and continue to think through how to make their grants in this space complementary. At least one of these grants links work funded by two members through a joint grant budget and activity plan. BHP Foundation also earmarked funds for IFC to conduct follow-up work on data use in Colombia.

Several respondents noted the **intangible benefits from the relationships developed** through the process, for donors, grantees, and stakeholders who often do not sit at the same table. One non-funder respondent felt the assessment process sparked a much-needed dialogue around data use for accountability in Colombia’s mining sector.

Was the Collaboration Useful to Members?

All respondents found this collaboration useful in some way, including to raise awareness of specific grantmaking practices, like the cohort approach, and to pursue other efforts to coordinate grants.

Barriers to Collaboration Use	Enablers of Collaboration Use
TAI had little control over the assessment timeline or end product, and the Secretariat took unplanned, parallel steps to maintain progress.	Benefitting from IFC’s capacity and resources on the ground and relying on the Secretariat’s leadership eased the burden on TAI members and partners.
Time constraints of all collaboration participants complicated scheduling of calls and fieldwork, and slowed document review.	GI and TAI consultant expertise, particularly the opportunities note, gave funder members confidence in their insights and grant design decisions.
Shifting institutional priorities and bandwidth meant that TAI members’ levels of engagement varied.	Partnership with GI in Nigeria and Colombia helped keep the learning agenda consistent.
Engaging a wide network of stakeholders was time-consuming and at times delicate, although this diversity of perspectives was also noted as an enabler.	The involvement of regional TAI member staff allowed the collaboration to draw on their expertise as well as have a clearer line to field-based contacts and insight.
Differing institutional country profiles and priorities sometimes created an implementation timeline gap between IFC and TAI members.	Ford and OSF’s stated commitment to grantmaking and Hewlett’s to learning through this process made the end goals clear.
	The combination of GI, OSF, and Ford’s local CS networks facilitated meetings and trust. In-country visits helped deepen these relationships, aligned donor-grantee thinking and expectations, and created momentum.

Lessons Learned

Setting - and meeting - expectations on the amount of time required of collaboration

participants is key. All respondents involved with the Nigeria data use process commented that the TAI Secretariat clearly learned from that experience when it came to member involvement and adapted the Colombia process accordingly. Members were relieved that this process required significantly less of a time investment on their part. At the activity-level of this collaboration, however, several respondents noted the importance of *sharing plans and documents far enough in advance* to get meaningful feedback, particularly when dealing with field-based stakeholders.

“We started out smaller and clearer and as a result people held each other to account.”

– Funder stakeholder

Collaboration topics should be relevant to members’ grantmaking and strategic needs, which may follow different timelines. Several respondents saw this as a good example of the TAI Secretariat targeting initiatives to issues that are of interest to members. During 2019, this likely contributed to new grants issued and funder coordination on one grantee project. However, there may be unrealized future value for member strategic learning needs beyond this year. Convenings and assessments should not be seen as an end, but as a means to an end. One member underscored the importance of “catalyzing uptake [and action] on the knowledge TAI is developing.”

Clearly assess the interests of the stakeholders involved and manage expectations accordingly. Different from the Nigeria process, knowing each partners’ goal from the outset (i.e., grantmaking versus learning) helped minimize frustration in this collaboration. One non-member also highlighted the importance of being clear with focus group participants, as relationships can be damaged by false hopes of funding.

“Increasingly, I see the role and value of the TAI platform for the accountability field. [There are] lots of queries around tools like strategic litigation for example, questions that affect/cut across donors in the field and a TAI could play an important role in terms of advancing learning in these grey areas.”

– Funder stakeholder

Understand institutional differences and have a plan to work through them. Even if organizations use the same words, their definitions may not be the same, and their portfolios may not be aligned. Mitigating these differences from the outset could lead to more rapid mobilization, especially when the number of people and diversity of perspectives among collaboration stakeholders is high. Keeping abreast of changing priorities is also essential.

Funders (particularly funder collectives) should emphasize connections and incentives for collaboration among grantees to reduce their inclination to withhold information or not coordinate with each other for leverage. Funders should also invest more in feedback and data validation efforts with field-based actors.

Transparency and Accountability Initiative is a collaborative of leading funders of transparency, accountability and participation worldwide. It envisions a world where citizens are informed and empowered; governments are open and responsive; and collective action advances the public good. Toward this end, TAI aims to increase the collective impact of transparency and accountability interventions by strengthening grantmaking practice, learning and collaboration among its members. TAI focuses on the following thematic areas: data use for accountability, strengthening civic space, taxation and tax governance, learning for improved grantmaking.



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