



TRANSPARENCY &
ACCOUNTABILITY
INITIATIVE

Wisdom in the Collective

Navigating tricky terrain from authoritarian
tech to #shiftthepower in practice

2021 Semi-Annual Report

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nal format and with proper attribution is highly encouraged.

Report designed by TAI.

The image used on the front cover is one of those provided by
Damir Davletbaev, winner of TAI's photo contest, and depicts the
state of roads in a Russian community despite frequent local de-
mands for fixes. Inspired by his TAI assignment, Damir has gone
on to create a moving set of photo essays highlighting the need
for transparency and accountability in service delivery (available
at <https://damirph.exposure.co/>).

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Who We Are

OUR VISION

A more just, equitable, and inclusive world where people are informed and empowered, governments are open and responsive, and collective action advances the public good.

OUR MISSION

To strengthen the impact of TPA funding in support of inclusive and equitable development. We do that by developing learning infrastructure and facilitating collaboration to optimize funder practice and resources.

OUR VALUES DRIVE OUR WORK

- **We are committed** to acting with integrity, being transparent, and accountable.
- **We are curious and committed** to learning, experimentation, and evidence-based decision-making.
- **We recognize and respect power dynamics.** We always remember that it is grantees (civil society and government actors) who are doing the frontline work and we prioritize their voice, insights, and expertise to help guide our programming.
- **Collaboration is essential.** We want to be more than the sum of our parts.

Core Members



Associate Members



Adjusting to a fast moving context - the year so far

The first six months of 2021 did not have quite the same shock factor as 2020, but still saw significant shifts that impact prospects for furthering transparency, participation, and accountability (TPA) and our members' programming.

The pandemic continues to reveal TPA needs - be that demands for stronger transparency of vaccine deal making and distribution, or safeguards against fraud in pandemic recovery spending. Reliable data is vital to pandemic responses, but there are increased concerns for privacy in how health data is being shared and governed. Such developments reinforce a need to consider how to harness TPA in service of meeting pressing global challenges, instead of being a niche standalone field.

Continued government efforts to constrain civil society and media efforts to hold decision makers to account are worrying. Internet or social media shutdowns have become common from Myanmar to Ethiopia to Nigeria. Elections have too often been delayed or undermined.

A new US Administration brought **not just a change in tone, but in relevant policy** to TAI member goals. Fighting corruption is now a priority, not least for national security reasons. Rejoining the Paris Climate Agreement is yielding new attention to climate risk disclosures. Perhaps most notably, the U.S. reenergized negotiations on tax, leading to a deal on a global minimum tax and digital taxation. This global deal making took place against a backdrop of increased attention to tax justice and potential wealth taxes (and higher profiles for TAI member grantees).

A year of summitry is inspiring civil society coordination on messaging. While the G7 and UN General Assembly Special Session on corruption proved far from ground-breaking, there is the potential to build on the advocacy for the G20 and Open Government Partnership Summits and prospective US Summit of Democracy in the second half of 2021.

Against this backdrop, **TAI members have also been pursuing their own shifts** and managing pressures on budgets amid competing funding priorities. Hewlett Foundation continued development of its new strategy. Open Society Foundations (OSF) are undergoing a major restructuring and putting new program decisions on hold. The UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has been settling its new organization amid cuts in spending. Outside of TAI other major funders have also seen shifts, such as USAID setting new priorities, while the European Union works on a new seven-year budget framework.

Balancing the desire to meet the potential of the TAI 2020-24 strategy and constraints on member budgets, the Steering Committee unanimously agreed with the Secretariat on **adjustments to member contributions and spend**. The fee for Associate Members was raised to \$50,000 per year and Core Members reduced to \$100,000 per year for a minimum of two years. The Secretariat will use its cash reserves to allow for increased spending heading into 2022. Reduced contributions will necessitate an increase in membership for sustainability of operations long term.

The pandemic continues to necessitate remote working. We shifted our annual Member Week online and all member dialogues continue to be virtual. The timing of some deliverables has been affected. For example, delays in implementing data for accountability grant activities in Colombia (necessitated by the heavy COVID rates) has pushed back finalization of our learnings on that project until Q4.

The Secretariat is also in the midst of staffing changes. Our Head of Learning and Impact, Alison Miranda, moved on to an exciting new position at the end of the first quarter. Rather than rush into a direct replacement, the Executive Director agreed with the Steering Committee to take time to consider the right staffing mix going forward and to use more consultants in the interim.

Given pandemic limitations on travel and issuance of visas, TAI has not been able to recruit new Atlas Corps Fellows as in the past. Accordingly, our Communications Fellow continued to offer consulting support upon her return to Nigeria and our Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Fellow extended her stay for a final six months. However, we anticipate continued delays in being able to bring in Fellows from different geographies until year's end.

What progress are we seeing?

Per our [2020-2024 MEL Plan](#), these are our aligned reporting indicators for our Member funders.

Strategic pillar	Indicator	2020	Q1-2 2021
What We Fund	% of member {annual} survey respondents that report TAI participation informed their strategies or portfolio funding decisions	57% of respondents (or their program)	The member annual survey will be conducted at the end of 2021
How We Fund	# of financial and non-financial tools introduced or shared through TAI adopted by TAI members	Tools and practices shared during the grantmaker marketplace sessions; some evidence of practice being informed but not of wholesale adoption	Member quarterly survey introduced to collect data; at least 2 tools / resources used by TAI members (2 / 4 Steering Committee member respondents)
Funder Landscape / Cross-Cutting	# of unique funders (institutional program or other organizational unit) represented at Secretariat-facilitated initiatives	35 unique funder institutions (7 members; 28 non-members)	37 unique funder institutions (7 members; 30 non-members)
Cross-Cutting	# of documented instances of collaboration among two or more members	5 collaboration case notes developed for 2020 collaborative initiatives	2021 collaboration case notes TBD At least 4 instances of collaboration (Member quarterly survey, 3 / 4 Steering Committee member respondents)
TAI Collaborative	Net change in # of core institutional members from 2017-2019 strategy to 2020-2024 strategy	Steady core membership; 1 new associate member	Steady membership; 4 renewals in Q1-2
TAI Collaborative	Secretariat develops and implements MEL Plan for new strategy with members	MEL Plan based on new strategy published Oct 2020; implementation underway	Data collection tools developed and in use

*As we continue implementing and refining our MEL Plan, we have made an adjustment that would allow us to collect more consistent data. We decided to remove an indicator around member (co)commissioned or authored content that is disseminated beyond TAI membership. Instead, we introduced a member quarterly survey to track member collaboration and member use of tools and resources introduced by TAI.

TAI successfully ran its first Annual Member Engagement Survey at the end 2020 to assess individual member experiences with TAI work in 2020. This section draws on those findings, which were not yet available for our 2020 Annual Report. TAI will also use the 2020 data as a baseline for its MEL framework. We will track the progress we make in implementing our 2020-2024 strategy against this data.

FUNCTIONING AS A COLLABORATIVE:

In 2020, TAI strengthened mutually beneficial collaboration in diverse aspects among members. 94% of annual survey respondents reported benefiting from participation in TAI activities and reported undertaking a variety of forms of collaboration.

Annual member engagement survey n=18



Do TAI conversations have any ripple effects? Member self-reporting suggests, yes:

TAI helped me /my institution to:

- Influence grantees that work on relevant thematic issues 71%
- Increase our influence among funders that invest in relevant issues 57%
- Influence another funder's strategic priorities or practices 42%

Annual member engagement survey n=7 (Steering Committee members)

Four Steering Committee members reported that work done by TAI informed adjustments to the amount of funding allocated to portfolios or projects. Considering that in Q3 2020, members reported having a cumulative total of over \$500m in active and committed grants in 2020, this is significant.

In the first half of 2021, outside of TAI-facilitated events, it is encouraging to see evidence of member initiated collaboration. For example, members exchanged experience around COVID-19 related grants; discussed initiatives of mutual interest, such as Chandler's newly funded [Oxford executive sessions on corruption](#); and Nigeria-based member offices held joint meetings and initiated separate activities.

A strong "Member Week" and beyond. High levels of member engagement have continued into 2021. We had all seven members actively participate during the three-day Member Week in March. A total of 27 member representatives joined the Member Week sessions. Over the first half of the year, members reported at least four instances of collaboration within and outside the TAI organized activities. Overall, 48 member representatives joined the 16 TAI facilitated virtual events. All but one call saw three or more member funders in attendance.

PROGRESS FOR STRATEGIC OUTCOME AREAS

Funder Landscape

Deliberate efforts to engage funders beyond TAI's membership are starting to lead to both an increase in funders participating in TAI conversations and learning sessions, and more proactive asks of TAI.

One example is the inclusion of additional funders and stakeholders for discussion of anti-corruption opportunities during the new Biden Administration. This helped generate a clearer mapping of funders with overlapping interests (often from different starting motivations, e.g. preventing conflict or conservation) useful to funders and grantee partners alike. It also led to direct asks of TAI for inputs from the US Administration.

In another example, learning sessions on fostering accountability in the education sector organized together with the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and International Education Funders Group (IEFG) revealed sufficient interest to start an ongoing community of practice.

An ongoing scan of TPA intersections with the climate agenda is already revealing **potential areas for collaboration with established climate funders.**

On the funder practice side, proactive sharing of resources is sparking follow up interest from diverse sources, such as TAI supporting Philanthropy Australia to find experts on diversity, equity, and inclusion and participatory grantmaking for their keynote annual events.

How We Fund

TAI-delivered experiences or content informed member grantmaker approaches or practices. 83% of survey respondents reported that TAI participation had inspired them to strengthen their grantmaker practices while 54% stated that TAI initiatives had informed a new or adapted approach or practice (*Annual member survey n=18 (Strongly + Agree)*).

Tools and resources shared through TAI continue to support members in their work. The **climate governance mind map** came in handy during a member's strategy refresh. Another member relied on TAI funder exit resource round-ups to inform the development of their exit strategy approach. A distillation of good practice for exits, co-authored by the Secretariat and former MacArthur Foundation staff, was published by the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP) and has already been used as a resource by CEP staff for members.

The Secretariat authored an article on adapting grantmaking practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was published in the South Asia Disaster.net journal. The article drew on findings captured in the TAI COVID-19 Monitor.

What We Fund

TAI Secretariat oversaw the successful conclusion of the commissioned evaluation of funder contributions to beneficial ownership transparency - a source of learning to all members involved, and soon to be disseminated publicly.

Similarly, Secretariat facilitation support to the multi-member funded Open Government Partnership evaluation has aided smooth progress and affirmed member demand for learnings. Likewise, Secretariat support for implementation of the Open and Inclusive Governance funding window with Voice (supported by the Dutch Government and Hewlett Foundation) is yielding useful learnings. All projects in the design phase were approved for implementation funding.

The Secretariat commissioned evidence scan on Civil Society Roles in Tax Administration sparked strong funder interest with 35 participants from 22 different organizations and immediately led one funder to commission follow up work with the same consultant.

The Secretariat offer of bilateral member **“office hours” continued to be popular with members**. Through the end of June, we received 10 requests for bilateral support from five members.

What have we been doing?

FUNDER LANDSCAPE



The Secretariat is working with members on an opportunities scan for **TPA tools and approaches to help deliver climate solutions**. This involves interviews with climate funders, TAI members, and grantee partners actively working on climate and energy transition issues. Opportunities will be presented later in summer 2021.

A multilateral funder approached TAI to explore **potential joint funding on governance issues**. The Secretariat has coordinated a conversation with a subset of TAI members to clarify the opportunity. Similarly, the Secretariat has started exploratory conversations with several funders new to TPA issues, as well as actively participating in strategizing to leverage global summits.

TAI's Collective Voice Working Group reflected on a [collaboration case note specific to its collaboration](#) and mapped individual member advocacy priorities as a basis to rally fellow member support. The Secretariat continued to implement TAI's sign-on protocol in response to field requests.

HOW WE FUND



Earlier in the year, we hosted a convening aimed at understanding opportunities to engage the new Biden administration on international anti-corruption opportunities. As a result, the Secretariat made a new connection in the TPA field for one of the members and members reported using information received via this event to inform their planning and action.

We ran a grantmaker marketplace call on the Grantee Perception Report and equivalent findings to help flag approaches members could learn from. Another marketplace call in 2020 served as the base for an article in [Alliance Magazine](#) co-authored by the Secretariat, OSF, and Mama Cash that synthesized key practice areas for funders to support grantee safety and wellbeing.

We facilitated a call on Luminate's updated civic empowerment framework, stirring funder interest around civil movements and reform. We are now planning another call on the topic.

As the OGP evaluation is nearing completion, the evaluation steering committee members continue meeting quarterly. They have reflected on emerging evaluation themes, learning process, and evaluation use and dissemination.

WHAT WE FUND



TAI completed the commissioned evaluation on member contributions to advancing the global norm on beneficial ownership transparency. Together with the associated methodology note, it provides a **roadmap for funders looking to support work around global norms advancement**.

Our Data for Accountability project is entering its final phase. Our learning partner, Global Integrity, completed a landscape review of [data for accountability in Nigeria](#), a baseline analysis of data from Colombian grantees, and supported Nigerian grantees in designing and analyzing survey tools and data from their workshops. Additionally, we ran a successful call for ideas with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) in Colombia with finalists moving on to coaching and the chance to flesh out proposals for seed funding.

The Secretariat developed and published an online [grants database](#), showcasing all active TPA related grants from our members, highlighting funding figures and identifying shared grantees.

The Secretariat published 25 features in its popular [Full Disclosure series](#) alongside the TAI Weekly review of field and funder news, research, events and jobs.

What have we learned?

FUNDER LANDSCAPE



Explorations reveal that intersection points with other agendas, e.g. climate, have significant potential to leverage TPA learnings, and build constructive funder cross-sectoral dialogue.

The traction points for influencing the broader funder landscape span both the What We Fund and How We Fund work pillars.

Relationship building requires patience, but this can pay off and yield new demand for TAI support and for TPA insights from funder institutions.

HOW WE FUND

Funder's appetite for collective discussion around common grantmaking challenges is not fully satisfied by quarterly calls. The quarterly calls require intensive Secretariat preparation and tend to introduce new content/insights with less time for reflection. Accordingly, TAI experimented with creation of a new "**Funder Coffee Hour**" - an informal space for member-led sharing and discussion.

Existing data collection tools were not sufficient to track member-to-member collaboration, especially if it happens outside, or in addition to, the TAI facilitated activities. To address this challenge, the Secretariat introduced the Quarterly Member Survey where members are encouraged to provide their updates on any instances of collaboration they had with other members.

The OGP Evaluation is generating many insights, but it is hard to find time for collective member reflection to distill learnings with the evaluation team. It is important to manage evaluation steering committee time to allow time for learning, not just management of process.

WHAT WE FUND

The beneficial ownership transparency evaluation affirmed the utility of outcomes harvesting for this type of evaluative work, yielding specific suggestions on evaluating global advocacy programming.

Pinpointing funding amounts over the years, specific issues is very challenging given current TAI member grant data systems and the prevalence of funding via core grants for a variety of priorities.

The Call-for-Ideas revealed the breadth of demand to work more with data - with responses from government, industry, social enterprises, and NGOs. However, many remained more focused on provision of data (e.g. creating dedicated data platforms), suggesting more coaching/encouragement for creative focus on community data use.

Funders have valued having trusted, on call advisory support from the Secretariat via our 'Office Hours' function and the diversity of requests across our three strategic pillars affirms that.

The Open and Inclusive Governance funding window with Voice is confirming that groups representing disadvantaged communities are able to leverage TPA approaches, but the default starting point seems to be in securing access to information to reinforce their self-advocacy.

How are we doing it?

MEMBERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

The Steering Committee agreed to revisions in member contributions. These updates are reflected in our Terms of Reference. The Steering Committee has encouraged proactive engagement efforts within current members and with non-members.

FINANCES

The Secretariat's finances remain healthy, starting 2021 with cash reserves of close to \$1m. From a budget of \$939,343 for 2021, provisional figures suggest a spend of \$440,450 from January 1 - June 30, a 49% spend rate. Compared to the original budget, we anticipate an underspend in salaries due to the delay in hiring back to 3 full time staff complement, and a subsequent overspend in consultants (approved by the Steering Committee) to provide capacity in the meantime. Perhaps being overly hopeful, we planned to spend a small amount of funds on travel towards the end of 2021, which remains questionable given repeated pandemic waves.

COMMUNICATIONS

Pressing forward on wins achieved in 2020, we began the year with a review of our communications efforts and technical capabilities. With external technical support, we have enhanced current page designs, introduced a new protocol for images to upload to the homepage carousel, and improved the use of domains for common search results.

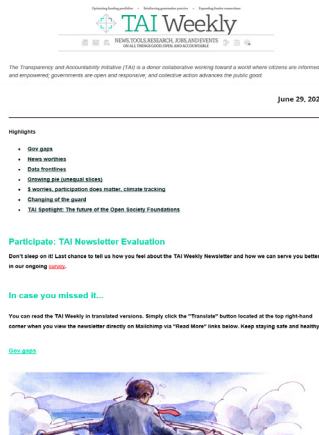
We saw a significant increase in our social media indicators. First, we attained the first 1,000 follower's mark on LinkedIn at the end of June – a 134% increase in 12 months. Our Facebook followers increased by 6%, and Twitter followers by 13% to reach 5,980 followers in the same period.

The TAI Weekly subscriber count grew by 24% from June 2020 to June 2021 and continues to generate positive feedback from readers. One reader told us how **the Weekly is "the only newsletters I actually read."** However, our website page views dipped by -29% compared to the same period last year. We hope to see progress in the second half of the year as we follow up on recommendations from enhanced monthly data reports and analysis. We also intend to use our TAI Weekly survey feedback to understand our readers' needs better and serve them better.

Meanwhile, the TPA Full Disclosure series is proving popular. We received testimonies from field partners on how much they enjoyed learning from others in the field.

The winner of TAI's TPA photo competition was inspired to create a full series of photo essays in addition to providing an impressive set of photos for TAI member use.

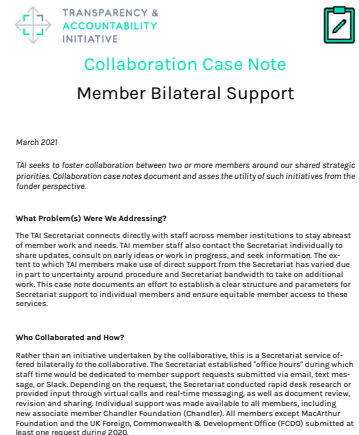
Publications in the first half of 2021



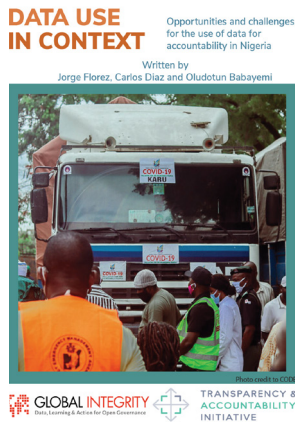
25 TAI Weeklys



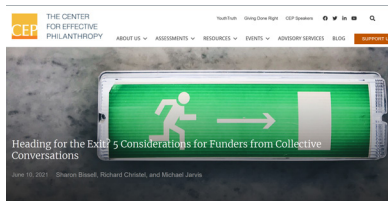
25 Full Disclosure Series Interviews



Four 2020 Collaboration Case Notes



5 Reports



9 Blogs



1 Brief

We also extended our influence beyond our immediate scope by publishing on leading international development websites – [The World Bank Blog](#), [Center for Effective Philanthropy](#), and [Alliance Magazine](#). Our member grant database was also picked up and independently analyzed by the [Eye on Global Transparency blog](#).

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice (DEIJ) were a focus of discussions during the annual Member Week. In particular, members emphasized that investment in DEIJ and gender is needed for TPA enhancement.

In Q2, the majority of members made program commitments to improving quality of grant-making. **Many had DEIJ dimensions.** For example, implementing DEIJ audit recommendations and creating DEIJ-related definitions.

TAI seeks to be an inclusive place for all members. In our annual Member Engagement Survey, we specifically included a DEI-related question. 50% of respondents reported they heard about concepts or practices that were new to them. 44% heard from people and perspectives different than their own. Finally, 56% felt they could contribute their voice to calls and / or written products. (*Annual member survey n=18 (Always + Often)*)

We continue working with Atlas Corps to bring Fellows and their diverse experiences to the TAI team and gain valuable professional experience in the US. We anticipate having new Communications and MEL Fellows join our team in the fall. During the pandemic, we extended the fellowships of our 2020 Fellows into 2021. 'Busayomi Sotunde, our former Communications Fellow, is currently supporting TAI as a consultant until a new Communications Fellow can join.

The Secretariat is also excited to be part of a DEI review with our fiscal sponsor, Proteus Fund, that yields the chance to learn from other collaboratives and nonprofit leaders, many explicitly focused on DEIJ goals.

What are we excited about for the rest of this year?



Busayomi: Utilizing the recommendations from our monthly website review and seeing them come to fruition.



Michael: Following on opportunities for transparency, participation, and accountability to contribute to climate solutions.



Richard: Disseminating and encouraging uptake of the funder contributions to beneficial ownership transparency evaluation.



Zoya: Tracking and assessing achievements against the indicators in our MEL plan.

Annex: Key Initiatives

Funder Landscape



- Opportunities for TPA in the Climate Agenda
- Collective Voice Working Group
- Voice / TAI Joint Call for Proposals
- Education Accountability

How We Fund



- Anti-Corruption Agenda with the Biden Administration
- Grantmaker Marketplace
- Funder Coffee Hour
- Member Learning Series
- OGP Evaluation
- COVID Learning Framework

What We Fund



- Beneficial Ownership
- Tax Capacity for CSOs

Organizational Health / Operations

- TAI Retreat / Learning Day
- TAI Steering Committee Calls

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.



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