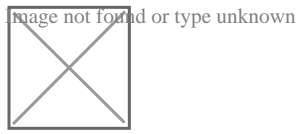# Global Fund's new Data Explorer aims to tell a story through data

With the April launch of the Data Explorer, the Global Fund has created a new portal weaving together data on its investments and the results of that funding, and offering users a variety of entry points to refine that information and to visualize the results. Global Fund staff said the Data Explorer will eventually grow to link the information that was already housed in the Grant Portfolio to data on donor investments in the Fund and the impact those investments are ultimately having.

This represents a shift from the Grant Portfolio, which embedded data within a format that emphasized documents and storytelling, but limited data interactivity. The Grant Portfolio is scheduled to go offline this month, though all of the information that it offered is now available in the Data Explorer.

"We wanted to focus purely on the data," John Busch, the Global Fund Secretariat's Senior Digital Manager, told the GFO. "Not just providing a dashboard, but the story of what the data is telling us. We wanted a data-driven communications experience."

The new portal allows users to quickly filter information by location, component, partner type and grant status. It also highlights pertinent results and identifies relevant documents. Where the entry points for the Grant Portfolio were lists of individual grants that linked to relevant documents and information on the grant's performance, the Data Explorer launches with a map that allows the user to drill down into specific grants. The Data Explorer also allows the user to see dynamic results that combine information from different grants, whereas the Grant Portfolio generated static results.

Figure 1: Screenshot taken from Data Explorer search on Uganda HIV/AIDS grants

The Data Explorer project began in 2017, Busch said. It had become increasingly clear that, as the Global Fund had continued to accumulate data, it had outgrown the Grant Portfolio interface. And the Secretariat had received feedback from people using the data that they wanted easier access to a broader range of information, he said.

"There are multiple facets we needed to be able to splice and dice," Murad Hirji, the Senior Digital Architect in the Global Fund Secretariat, told the GFO. "It was just not feasible in the structure that the website had." The team began by conducting interviews with more than 30 users and put together a development plan based on the most highly-rated needs of those users, with an eye toward expanding over time, to introduce more data and more ways to break down that information.

The Data Explorer will allow the team to layer in additional information that was not available on the old website, including donor investments in the Global Fund, even as the data on Global Fund grants and programmatic results continue to expand.

"Overall, I think one of the beautiful features is that it is scalable," Busch said. "We tried to think of what the story's supposed to be. To think of what data will be available. And then we can start adding components to it."

In its current iteration, the Data Explorer is focused on showcasing available grant and results information. A search for active HIV/AIDS grants in Uganda, for instance, returns one result, which a user can click on to look at investments over the grant life cycle and the performance rating. It also shows seven data indicators, including the number of people on antiretroviral therapy and the number of HIV tests. There are also four linked proposal documents.

One regular user of data through the Grant Portfolio told GFO she experienced some difficulty in accessing documents through the Data Explorer. Her experience was that relevant grant documents did not seem intuitively linked to the grant entry, itself, and she was ultimately unable to locate them.

The developers behind the Data Explorer said that it is still a work in progress and they continue to solicit feedback through the portal. They have already released   one round of updates   , which included multi-country grants and an improved filter search. A new section on pledges and contributions to the Global Fund should be available ahead of the October Replenishment Conference in Lyon, France. And Busch said they are also working to make the data on results more visually appealing and interactive than "just having tables of data."

Ultimately, Busch said, they want to develop a platform that clearly and easily links relevant data across four pillars: from donor investments in the Global Fund to programmatic investments to results and, eventually, to impact. There are also plans to make the platform open source, so that people outside the Global Fund might be able to help develop the Data Explorer further.

He can even envision a situation where the Data Explorer grows to include information from partnerorganizations, like the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, Busch said. That would allow them totell a data story, he said, "that is a little more complete," when it comes to detailing investments andresults. This would seem to dovetail with the Global Fund's new reporting methodology , in which national results feature more prominently than before. The previous methodology offered a mixture of individualprogram and national results.

Further reading:

- An article from GFO that includes information on the Data Explorer's launch
- The Global Fund's announcement of the Data Explorer's launch
- The Global Fund's announcement of enhancements to the Data Explorer

- An article from GFO on the Global Fund's new reporting methodology

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