

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



Disclosure and Access to Information Policy Annual Report 2017

Developing Africa Openly and Transparently

Office of the Secretary General (PSEG)



PSEG

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AfDB	African Development Bank
DAI	Disclosure and Access to Information
DARMS	Document and Records Management System
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
IDC	Information Disclosure Committee
PCR	Project Completion Report
PSEG	Office of the Secretary General and General Secretariat
PSN	Project Summary Note

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The African Development Bank (AfDB) is committed to the highest level of transparency and openness concerning its institutional and operational activities. This commitment is manifested in the Bank's revised 2012 Disclosure and Access to Information Policy (DAI Policy) that ensures the timely release of institutional and operational information to the public.¹ The Bank's efforts towards transparency and openness was recognized in the 2016 Aid Transparency Index where it earned a "Very Good" rating, placing for the first time in the top tier with other multilateral development organizations, such as the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Bank.² With its progress in informing the public of its operations, the Bank also adheres to Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs), which is "social justice and access to information."

In compliance with paragraph 3.5.3 of the DAI Policy, this annual report has been prepared for the information of the Board of Directors with updates on the implementation of the policy, including the activities of the Information Disclosure Committee (IDC) and the Appeals Committee. It covers the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017 and presents in graphic and tabular forms a notable spike in requests for the Bank's documents. It also contains some lessons learned and short-term actions proposed to enhance the effectiveness of the policy as well as efficiency in its implementation.

The first report, covering the first 3 years of policy implementation from 2013 to 2016, was shared with the Board in November 2017.

Highlights of 2017

- In 2017, the AfDB achieved, to a large extent, the objectives of the DAI Policy.
- The policy requires simultaneous disclosure of specific types of records, including country strategy papers and project summary notes. This objective was not met in some cases. Accordingly, the DAI team commits to monitor the Board agenda and actively approach Task Managers and remind them to disclose documents on the Bank's website at the same time that such documents are distributed to the Board.
- In 2017, the DAI website gained a 24% increase in visits: from 12,828 users in 2016 to 15,908 users in 2017. Some 243 visitors requested a document compared to 212 in 2016. 5 requests for documents were denied on grounds of confidentiality. Two cases were elevated to the IDC for review. No cases were elevated to the Appeals Committee.
- There was one isolated case where the DAI team was not able to respond in a timely manner to a request for information due mainly to the fact that it concerned an AfDB-funded project implemented by third parties.
- Many requests received through the DAI microsite relate to documents already present on the AfDB website. This indicates that the general public is not able to easily find the information they seek.

¹ AfDB. 2012. *Disclosure and Access to Information Policy*. Tunis. Revised on May 2, 2012.

² Publish What You Fund. 2016 Aid Transparency Index. <http://ati.publishwhatyoufund.org/index-2016/results/>

- There is an increased demand to disclose full-text environmental and social impact assessments. Only summaries are currently posted on the website.
- There is a growing number of visitors to the documents section of the Bank's public website: The number of views or downloads increased by 3.9% (67,649) visitors from 1,715,343 (2016) to 1,782,992 (2017).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Over the past 20 years, the AfDB's information disclosure policy has been amended in line with its continued commitment to enhancing operational transparency and accountability, and the growing demand of shareholders and stakeholders for openness in its operations. The Bank's Board of Directors and Management have periodically reviewed the policy and expanded its scope with a view to achieving more openness.

1.2 In this context, the Board approved on May 2, 2012 a revised Disclosure and Access to Information Policy (DAI Policy), which became effective in February 2013. The policy is a centerpiece of one of the reform commitments undertaken in conjunction with the Sixth General Capital Increase (GCI-6): to raise the standards of transparency to the highest level of international practices to strengthen development effectiveness of AfDB-financed projects.

1.3 With the adoption of the policy, the AfDB committed itself to a set of higher disclosure standards. The policy reflects foremost a shift in approach from a list-based eligibility to one under which the presumption of disclosure applies to any information in the Bank Group's possession that is not on a list of exceptions. The policy also introduced a two-stage appeals process for the review of information requests from the public and the adjudication of denials of requests by the Bank.

1.4 Pursuant to section 3.5.3 of the DAI Policy, an annual report is required to be prepared for the Board. This second annual report on the implementation of the DAI Policy covers the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017.³ It highlights AfDB's progress in the implementation of the DAI Policy, together with some lessons learned and short-term actions proposed to enhance its effectiveness.

2. DISCLOSURE ACTIVITIES 2017

2.1 The AfDB proactively discloses a vast amount of information on its website. Among these are statutory documents, minutes of Board meetings, strategy and policy documents and documents on lending activities. The AfDB also discloses its knowledge products, including operational and institutional reports, statistical data through MapAfrica, which is an interactive platform that maps the locations of the Bank's investments, flagship knowledge products with embedded data and analyses such as the *African Development Outlook*; and the support and provision of data for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) to make financial flows on development interventions and mining operations transparent.

2.2 Openness and transparency is a hallmark of the AfDB's 10-year strategy in the belief that proactively publishing information enables the public to gain a better understanding of the Bank's activities and their impact on development. In line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 - Peace and Justice - access to information will enable the public to plan and participate in planned or proposed development interventions of the Bank, gain knowledge of how funds are expended, and determine whether or not a proposed program or project will or has had an impact on the lives of people.

³ The first DAI Annual Progress report 2013–2016 was shared with the Board in November 2017.

2.3 The AfDB welcomes proposals or suggestions on how to improve its proactive transparency practices. In 2017, one such suggestion concerned the disclosure of the full text of the environmental and social impact assessment (ESIA) reports. The Bank currently publishes only ESIA summaries because the full-text reports are quite voluminous and technical in nature. The Environmental and Social Impact Policy prescribes the disclosure of ESIA's and as such there is no restriction in disclosing this information. Therefore, the DAI team, in collaboration with Communications and External Relations Department (PCER) and Corporate Information Technology Services Department (CHIS), will take the necessary steps to ensure that full-text ESIA's are routinely published on the Bank's website the moment they become available internally.

2.4 To support the implementation of the DAI Policy, numerous information technology changes were designed and implemented. The DAI website was redesigned in 2017 and relaunched in February 2018 with improved navigation features. Work will continue in 2018 to add examples of non-related DAI questions to guide visitors on how to find information easier and faster to minimize the chances of such questions being sent to the DAI team.

2.5 Work commenced in 2017 to gradually improve functionalities of the Bank-wide Program Processing Schedule (BPPS) and Document and Records Management System (DARMS), and streamline the workflow process for Bank documents. It is expected that DAI principles will be incorporated in a new system that will guide and inform staff on the classification principles of documents.

3. DATA ON VISITS TO BANK WEBSITE

3.1 **Total website visits.** The following information is extracted from the AfDB's website and shows the number of visitors, downloads, and interest in Bank documents. The data in Figure 1 shows that the number of visitors increased with over 3 million to 16,255,663. In 2017, 1,966 documents were added to the website (2016: 1,962). The rise in visitors may be attributed to the increased number of people with internet access as well as postings of new AfDB contents on social media outlets like Twitter.

Figure 1: Total visits to the African Development Bank's website

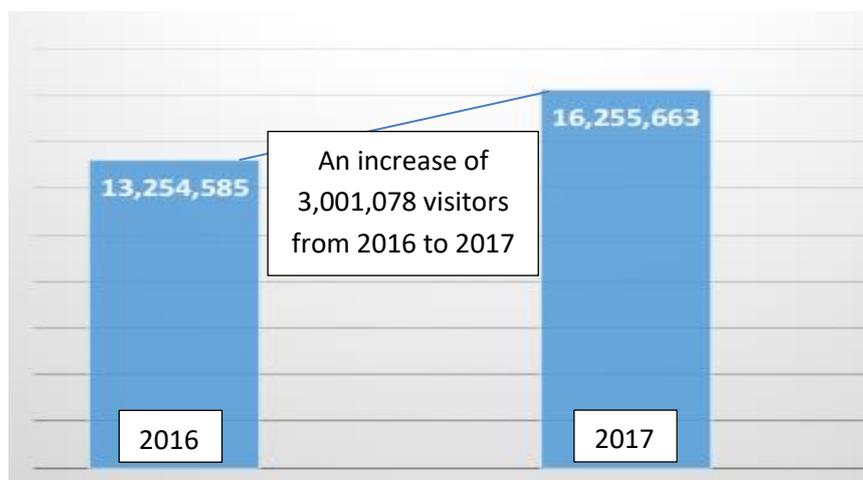
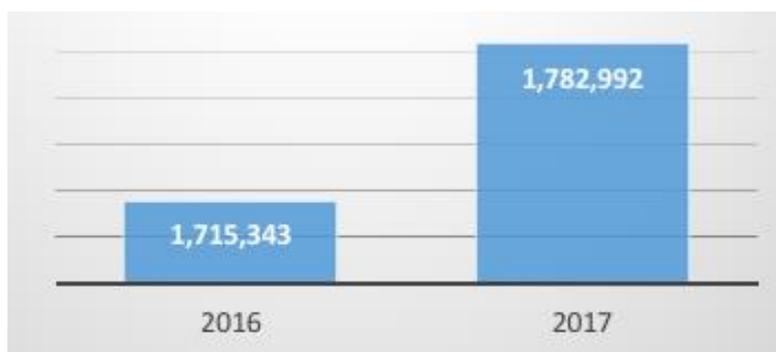


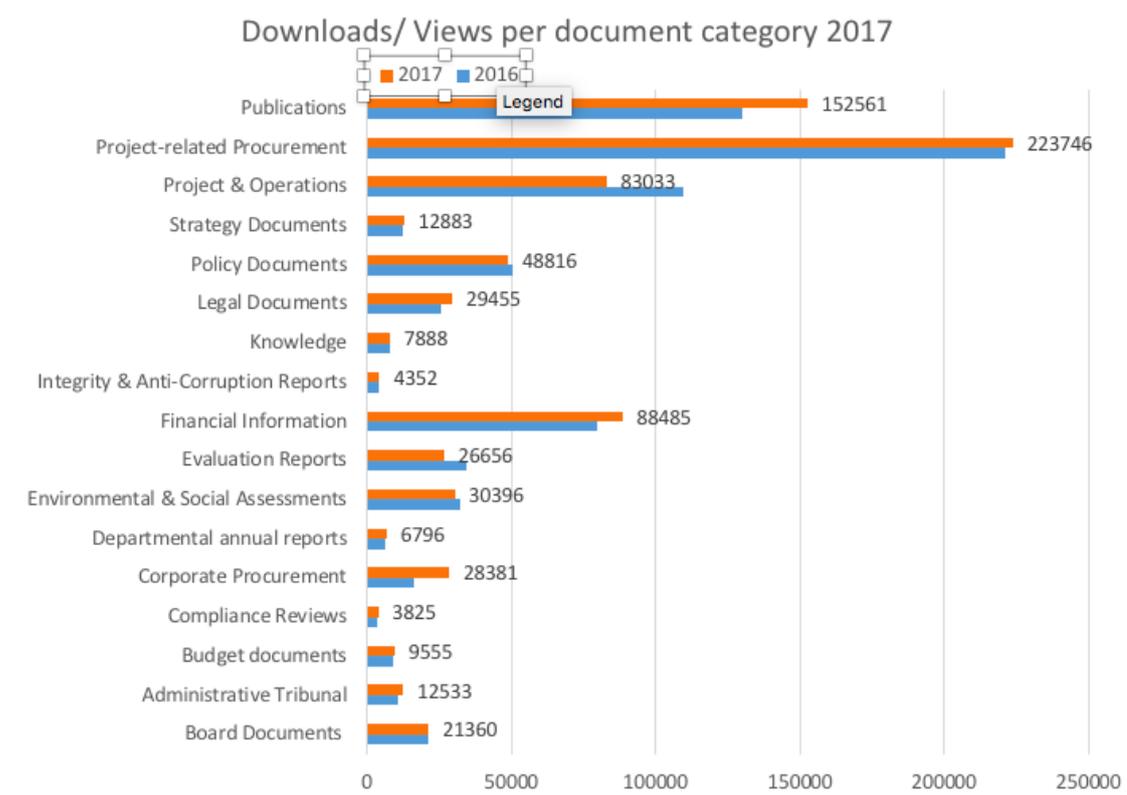
Figure 2 presents the total number of downloads or views of documents posted on the Bank's website. This number excludes news articles, presentations, and video messages. A total number of 1,782,992 documents were viewed or downloaded, an increase of 67,649 documents.

Figure 2: Total downloads or views of the African Development Bank’s document section



3.2 Key categories of disclosed Bank’s documents viewed or downloaded. In accordance with the DAI Policy, the AfDB pushes uploading of various document categories to its website. These pertain to routine workflow of project or program implementations, strategy and policy documents, guidelines, manuals, and knowledge products. AfDB-disclosed information includes document categories jointly prepared with member countries or commissioned as a condition for doing business with the Bank. Figure 3 shows the interest of the public in the various document categories:

Figure 3: Downloads/Views per document category



3.3 The breakdown of data in Table 3 shows that the public interest in documents ranks high for procurement-related project documents, bank publications, and projects and operational documents. The above categories of documents represent a total of 790,721 documents downloaded in 2017 (2016: 774,037). The document categories not covered in Table 3 are news items, press releases, blogs, the about section of the Bank with mission, strategy, corporate information, organizational structure, and frequently asked questions (FAQs).

3.4 **Board documents.** In 2017, the Board reviewed and approved 150 loan and project proposals, of which 33 covered private sector investments. They also reviewed and approved 79 policy papers, 21 country strategy papers or country briefs, and 43 project completion reports.

3.5 **The disclosure of Board-related documents** helps to enhance the level of transparency in the AfDB's decision-making process. The DAI Policy requires the work plan and agenda of the Board meetings to be disclosed. In addition, the following information can be disclosed: highlights of Board discussions or minutes of the Board, and final reports of the Board committees in which subsequent Board discussion is not expected; reports to the Board from its committees; summary proceedings of annual meetings of the Board of Governors; and resolutions adopted by the Board of Governors. The few exceptions from disclosure include confidential information or documents and deliberative information. Accordingly, since adopting the DAI Policy, the Bank has continued a process characterized by greater public disclosure of Board-related documents.

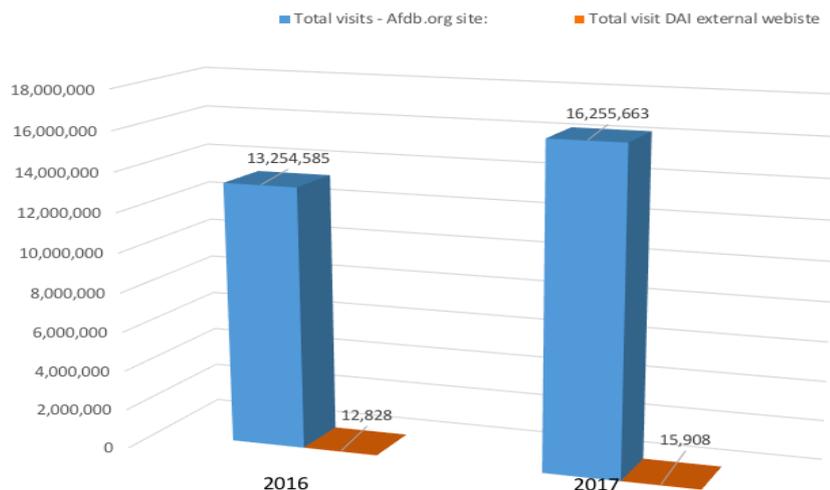
3.6 **Project completion reports (PCRs)** are key documents in AfDB's operations with borrowing countries and the public. These are useful to the public as they present the achievements of AfDB's investments in specific sectors and countries. The interest of media, academe, civil society organizations, and the public for PCRs is usually high as it provides an opportunity to engage with the AfDB or enhance media exposure in a country recipient of the Bank's projects. All PCRs circulated to the Board in 2017 were posted on the website, usually within 3 working days after circulation to the Board.

3.7 **Project summary notes (PSNs)** with key and non-sensitive information are required to be posted on the website for all non-sovereign investment projects. In 2017, 33 PSNs were added to the Bank's website. Due to the sensitivity of private sector information, it has become standard practice to post PSNs on the website only after Board approval. As a result, simultaneous disclosure of PSNs as required by the DAI Policy could not be achieved. Also, due to the repositioning of private sector operations in sectors in the context of the ongoing institutional reforms, there were delays in posting some PSNs on the website. Further, following the reposting of staff within the framework of the Bank's decentralization drive, new DAI focal points will be identified in each country office. Going forward, the Office of the Secretary General and the General Secretariat (PSEG plans to embark on awareness creation for the DAI focal points and Task Managers with a view to achieving timely disclosure of PSNs. . This effort will particularly be strengthened in 2018 with direct consultation rounds with private sector staff.

4. DATA ON DISCLOSURE AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

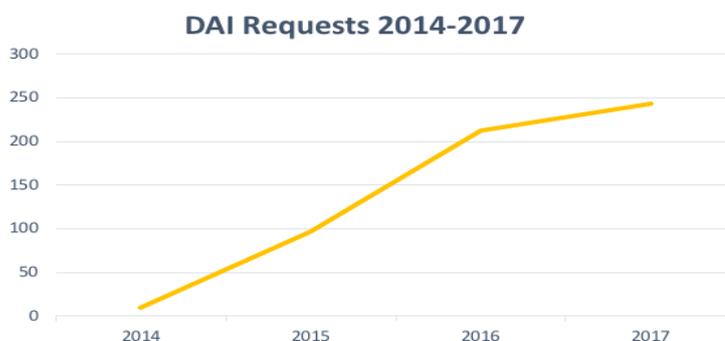
4.1 The AfDB's public website includes a dedicated Disclosure and Access to Information [micro-website](#). This micro-website provides an overview of the main provisions of the DAI Policy, information resources and two-stage appeal process with a link to the DAI information request form. Visitors can interact with the Bank's DAI team through an email interface and a pre-defined query template that allows the requestor to provide additional information on the request. Figure 4 gives the numbers of visitors to the Bank's website and to the DAI micro-website. Of the total number of visitors to the website in 2017, 15,508 visited the DAI micro-website compared to 12,828 in 2016, an increase of 3,080 visitors.

Figure 4: Visitors to the Bank’s website and visitors to the DAI website



4.2 Since the adoption of the DAI Policy, there has been an increase in the number of DAI inquiries. Of the 15,908 visitors to the DAI website in 2017, 243 visitors requested information from the Bank. In 2016, 213 visitors requested a document. There was also a rise in spam emails and junk queries. They are excluded from this number although the DAI team needs to review the mail received to determine relevance. Requests received by AfDB staff in headquarters and country offices are also excluded. Figure 5 provides, therefore, the number of information requests received by the Bank through the DAI micro-website. As a result, the actual number of requests received by the Bank and handled directly by staff may be higher than the number presented in figure below.

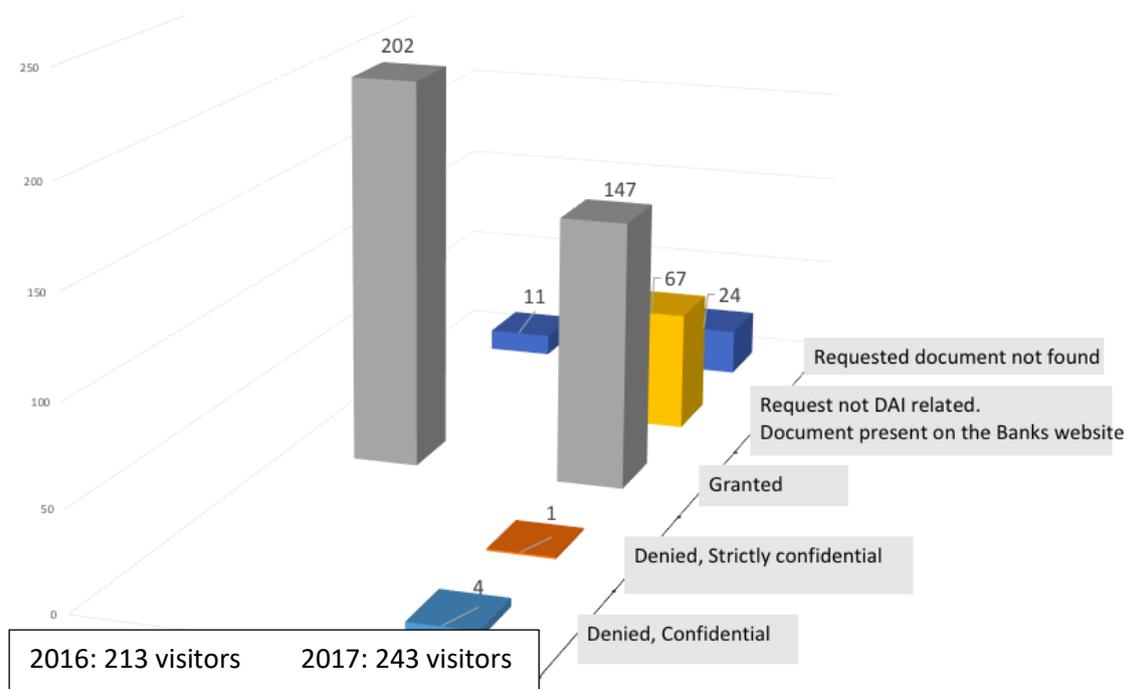
Figure 5: Number of DAI requests from 2014 to 2017



4.3 Figure 6 provides a breakdown of requests grouped by number of visitors and by classifying and disclosing information in accordance with the DAI Policy disclosure requirements if the information is classified as public, confidential, or strictly confidential.⁴

⁴ A different query on the database provides more details which was not yet available in the previous years.

Figure 6: DAI requests in 2016 and 2017



4.4 From all the requests collected, the DAI team found that 67 were not DAI related. In some cases, the requested information was already available on the Bank’s website. Other requests include assistance in the compilation of data or extracting data for (comparative) analyses of development interventions in a country or region. The DAI team usually referred them to the statistics section of the Bank’s website, African Development Outlook or other relevant sources. The inability of some users to find information by themselves may be related to the categorization and difficulty in navigating the Bank’s website.

4.5 A limited number of requested information was considered confidential and were related to the Bank’s private sector operations.

4.6 The country where the request originated can be identified from the DAI form. Figure 7 presents the country of origin of a requestor split in member countries and other countries. In total 243 request were received. Nigeria with 28 and South Africa with 20 requests top the chart. The DAI team noticed the apparent uneven representation of information requests from the Bank’s member countries. It is for instance noted that the public from Morocco, Angola, Sudan did not visit or request information. Communication efforts in those countries may yield in improved awareness, retrieval and requests for information.

Benin	1	Afghanistan	7
Botswana	1	Australia	2
Burkina Faso	4	Belgium	1
Cameroon	9	Bulgaria	3
Central African Republic	1	Canada	2
Chad	2	France	4
Congo	2	Germany	1
Côte d'Ivoire	10	India	13
Djibouti	1	Ireland	1
Egypt	4	Italy	3
Ethiopia	1	Nepal	1
Gabon	3	Netherlands	4
Gambia	6	Norway	1
Ghana	8	Philippines	2
Guinea	3	Portugal	10
Guinea-Bissau	2	South Korea	1
Kenya	5	Spain	2
Lesotho	3	Switzerland	1
Liberia	1	United Kingdom	2
Malawi	2	United States	9
Mali	1	Requests from Rest of world---	70
Mauritania	1	Request from unknown countries	15
Mauritius	1	Total number of requests	243
Mozambique	2		
Niger	4		
Nigeria	28		
Rwanda	1		
Senegal	4		
Sierra Leone	1		
Somalia	1		
South Africa	20		
Swaziland	1		
Tanzania	6		
Togo	5		
Tunisia	1		
Uganda	7		
Zambia	1		
Zambia	1		
Zimbabwe	3		
Request member countries ----	158		

Table 7. Request per country

4.7 The requestor can also indicate his or her affiliation in the DAI request form Figure 8 lists the affiliation number of the requestors. Most users are from the academe, education and research community (81) followed by those from the private sector (56), consultancy (28), and government (16). Notably, the low number of requests from NGOs and Media, important users and diffusers of the Bank's knowledge, may be

reviewed further. It could be that these types of organizations know the pathways to extract information from the Bank’s website and do not need to file a request for additional information.

Table 8: Requestors of information by affiliation:

Academics, Research and Education	81
Private Sector	56
Consultants	28
Government	16
Development Agencies	15
NGOs/ CSO	13
Associations	8
Media	2
Unknown/Not specified	24

4.8 Timeframe for response. The DAI Policy requires the Bank to acknowledge information requests within 5 working days and respond to inquiries within 20 calendar days. The web and email applications automatically send an acknowledgement message that complies with the 5 days requirement. In all but one instance, DAI team was able to respond to questions for documents within the 20 calendar days. However, there are instances where more time is needed to respond to inquiries for documents, including when requestors fail to provide enough details on what they are looking for and when the information requested is not present in DARMS. One request for information in 2017 exceeded significantly the deadline due to the complexity of the question (see Box 1).

Box 1: Example of a complex request

A request was received about the reports and financial data from an AfDB intervention program in various West African States. The Bank financed the program through local and regional implementers. The requestor’s email was directed to the Bank’s spam box and went unnoticed until the requestor filed a second request. When the request was recorded and monitored, the DAI team, in collaboration with the task manager, sought clearance from the local and regional implementers, as well as their constituents. The requestor was informed regularly on the status of his requests and was satisfactorily addressed. The request was accomplished in 8 months from the time of arrival of the first request to the final response.

4.9 Appeals. The DAI Policy has a provision for a two-stage appeal process for situations where requests for information are denied. In the event of a request being denied, the requestor is informed, with references to the appropriate sections in the DAI Policy. The requestor is also informed as to how the decision can be appealed. Before a request is denied, the Information Disclosure Committee (IDC) is consulted by the DAI team. In 2017, the IDC received two requests to review a case on its merits for disclosure. The IDC made the requested information available on a “need to know basis” for both requests.

Box 2: Example of a request IDC granted

The Information Disclosure Committee decided positively on a request put forward by a staff member of the Bank’s Private Sector Operations to authorize access to confidential information by a third party for the purpose of a due diligence insurance assessment. The information is not publicly disclosed and, in this particular case, it was made available on “a need to know basis.”

4.10 In 2017, the IDC did not deny any request for information and as a result no decisions were elevated for review by the external Appeals Committee.

5. DAI POLICY GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

5.1 The DAI Policy gives the Office of the Secretary General and General Secretariat (PSEG) the overall responsibility for implementing the policy. In particular, PSEG is responsible for

- (i) monitoring the disclosure of public documents as required by the policy,
- (ii) mainstreaming and raising awareness on the obligation to disclose information,
- (iii) ensuring compliance with the policy,
- (iv) reporting on implementation,
- (v) receiving and dealing with requests for disclosure of information,
- (vi) designating a special desk to be the public face of the Bank Group's work on disclosure and access to information,
- (vii) liaising with the Board members on issues concerning disclosure of Board documents, and
- (viii) serving as the Secretariat for the Information Disclosure Committee (IDC).

5.2 Pursuant to paragraph 4.3, the IDC oversees implementation of the policy and acts as in-house consultation platform for operational matters on requests for information and the DAI team. The IDC comprises the following members: the Secretary General as chair, the General Counsel, a Representative of the Vice-President (Chief Operating Officer, now Senior Vice President), the Director of the Research Department, the Head of the External Relations and Communication Unit, and the Head of the Security Unit. In 2017, the IDC members deliberated on cases through e-mail consultation.

6. NETWORKING

6.1 The Bank Group recognizes that networking is a key foundation for effective and sustainable implementation of the DAI Policy. Since the inception of the new policy, PSEG has been working with various government institutions responsible for Freedom of Information Acts and Good Governance mechanisms and similarly situated departments in multilateral development banks (MDBs).

6.2 In 2017, the Lead Advisor to the Secretary General participated in a MDB consultative meeting in Greece, to discuss progress and challenges on disclosure activities. It was the first time the Disclosure Officer of the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank (AIIB) attended the meeting. The AIIB plans to implement a disclosure policy in the first quarter of 2018. It is noteworthy that the AIIB used AfDB's experience in formulating its own policy.

6.3 AfDB's progressive DAI Policy is one of the avenues that demonstrate the Bank's commitment to transparency and accountability in the use of its resources. Some of the Bank Group's other transparency initiatives include the Bank's commitment to

- (i) the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)—a voluntary initiative that seeks to improve the transparency of aid to increase development effectiveness;
- (ii) the Africa Information Highway, which includes the Open Data Platform and Geocoding initiatives;

- (iii) the Open Government Partnership (OGP), in particular DAI exchanges information with the OGP on advocacy activities with regard to disclosure of information; and
- (iv) the Global Partnership for Effective Cooperation.

6.4 In October 2017, the DAI team participated in a public event organized by the government agency of Cote d'Ivoire responsible for communications and access to information. The event highlighted from different angles the necessity to disclose information to the public and the experiences in Cote d'Ivoire to date. The meeting resulted in a follow-up meeting with the national coordinator on Freedom of Information of Cote d'Ivoire to discuss operational matters of outreach activities. The dialogue will be continued in 2018 to discuss opportunities for collaboration on outreach activities.

7. LESSONS LEARNED AND PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

7.1 Implementing the DAI Policy in the last 5 years has brought about substantial changes in the Bank's approach to transparency in its operations and decision-making processes. PSEG identified some lessons based on the most significant implementation challenges and scheduled actions to address them.

7.2 Overall, it is found that the Bank's organizational units maintained a high-level of compliance in disclosing documents. A slippage occurred in documents eligible for simultaneous disclosure (country strategies) and project summary notes from private sector operations. The delayed disclosure can be attributed to cautiousness of the departments, unfamiliarity or lack of understanding of procedures and systems, lack of time, and delay in obtaining disclosure clearance.

7.3 Task managers are responsible for the simultaneous disclosure of documents. Through monitoring of the Board agenda, the DAI team often had to intervene with task managers to ensure that documents were disclosed to the public around the same time such documents were distributed for Board consideration. In some instances, the task managers needed to inform and seek clearance from member countries that the documents will be posted on the Bank's website prior to Board approval. Currently, the DAI team proactively monitors the Board agenda to identify documents eligible for simultaneous disclosure and engages with the relevant task managers to ensure this is accomplished.

7.4 **Project summary notes (PSNs).** The decentralization of private sector operations has contributed to delayed disclosure of PSNs. With the DAI focal points in Complexes and consultation with task managers, the process of timely disclosure will be improved. Efforts are underway to restore communications with the DAI focal points in the Bank operational departments. Going forward, the specific proactive disclosure requirements under the DAI Policy will form part of the core of the compliance activity of the DAI team with the focal points including those involved in private sector operations.

7.5 **Environmental and social impact assessments (ESIAs).** DAI received requests for full-text disclosure of environmental and social assessment studies in 2017. It is common practice in other MDBs to disclose full-text ESIAs and these are sometimes voluminous datasets, while the AfDB opted to post on its website summary ESIA notes. The ESIA and DAI Policy have no restrictions for disclosure and given the external demand for ESIAs, full-text EISA documents will be made available henceforth.

7.6 **Training and e-learning.** An online training module for managers, operational and administrative staff was completed in 2017 and an online training is in development. It is expected that the training module will be released in June 2018. The delay in making the e-module available was caused by a change in vendor crafting the e-module. The module will provide staff with an attractive platform to learn the implementation details of the policy at their own pace and time.

7.7 **External disclosure panel (Appeals Committee).** Similar to experiences in other MDBs, the number of consultations for second stage appeals by an external panel is non-existent or limited. Since the introduction of the DAI Policy, no request has been forwarded for review by the external Appeals Committee. Given the experience of other MDBs on this issue and the resource requirements to maintain an external Appeal Committee, it is proposed that the nomination of members for the external review committee be put on hold. The satisfactory operation of the IDC to respond to appeals by the public renders the external Appeal Committee redundant.

7.8 To provide the public with a last appeal possibility, it may be necessary to revise the policy on this aspect. As done in other MDBs, the Bank may consider designating a senior official (President or Vice President on his behalf) to make a final decision on an appeal, based on the recommendation by the IDC. Any appeal to the IDC and second appeals for review by the senior Bank official must then be recorded and reported in the DAI annual report for the Board's information. Based on actual cases and decisions made by the Bank, the Board can determine whether those decisions were made in accordance with the DAI Policy.

7.9 **Quality of information requests.** Many requests posted through the DAI system are not always related to DAI. The DAI micro-website will be further improved with sample questions and how they are handled and responded to.

7.10 **Outreach.** Outreach activities in member countries should be considered to improve public awareness on the Bank's information resources, in particular in the regional member countries with none or low numbers of requests for information.

Also, there is a need to strengthen outreach activities in the regions on disclosure and access to information and usage of the Bank's information. The DAI team proposes to seek collaboration with ongoing government initiatives in member countries with agencies responsible for freedom of information acts and the Open Government Partnership (OGP). The Bank is a member of the OGP and seeks support in outreach activities in line with the OGP awareness agenda. In Africa, 17 nations are currently members of the OGP, a network of nations and public institutes improving governance, transparency and accountability.