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The world continued to struggle with the significant health, social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic throughout 2021. We saw inequality rising and countries pushed further off track from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Global poverty and unemployment rose, and the unequal roll-out of vaccines across the world meant an imminent recovery remained out of reach for most countries. It was against this backdrop that the world also came together in Glasgow for the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26) to set new ambitions to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Our world today is ever more interconnected and faces challenges that only a truly global response can overcome. Global cooperation and strong international public finance are essential to foster an inclusive and sustainable recovery from Covid-19 and mobilise resources to achieve the SDGs and build back better. As the pandemic has underscored, national efforts alone will not suffice. Stronger and more ambitious international cooperation will remain critical to contain the pandemic, and accelerate a robust and inclusive global recovery.

2021 was also the year Development Initiatives (DI) launched its new strategy, setting out the mission we want to achieve over the next 10 years and a roadmap for how we will get there. We began our transition towards an organisation that is situated closer to the partners it seeks to serve and inform, to ensure data-driven evidence and analysis are used effectively in policy and practice to end poverty, reduce inequality and increase resilience.
DI’s analysis of official development assistance (ODA) continued to inform our partners’ advocacy and campaigns to increase volumes and improve targeting of people living in extreme poverty. Our close tracking of humanitarian and nutrition financing provided vital information for specific sector experts and government officials to inform their financing commitments. The launch of the Nutrition Accountability Framework by the Global Nutrition Report (GNR), hosted by DI, supported the 2021 Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit to mobilise SMART and ambitious financial and policy commitments to tackle malnutrition.

At the same time, we went deeper in certain countries with analysis of their domestic budgets during the pandemic, as well as exploring the impacts of loans from international financing institutions for countries like Uganda and Kenya at a time of rising debt levels. A summary of our findings from our data landscaping work assessing countries’ efforts to improve data systems that support leaving no one behind highlighted the scale of the challenge, informing discussions at the 2021 World Data Forum held in Bern, Switzerland.

Our experts continue to serve on multiple external advisory boards and committees, including the Expert Working Group and Steering Committee of a new concept for international public financing, Global Public Investment (GPI), the organising committee of the UN World Data Forum, the technical working group of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, and Bond’s Future Dialogues group on an international development system for a post-2030 world.

We also brought four new members onto our Board in 2021, who are experts from around the world on data, policy and supporting marginalised communities. Their experience and expertise will continue to enrich our Board and inform our strategic direction as we look to 2022 to implement our new strategy.

The CEO and Board are grateful to the DI staff for their passion, motivation and resilience in continuing to deliver to a high standard during these challenging times.
Aligning to a new mission and purpose

At the beginning of 2021, DI launched its new strategy with a new mission and purpose and setting out how we will ensure we are making the best contribution possible towards overcoming the challenges that are holding back progress poverty and inequality reduction and resilience building. We began some important organisational shifts to pivot to a new focus and the ways of working that will best enable us to deliver the strategy and drive the impact we want to see. One key aspect of this is how we are organised and operate and so work began in 2021 to move to a new operating model in 2022 that will support our ambitions to work more closely with partners, ensure our work is locally grounded, and create space for innovation.
Refining our focus and putting partners at the centre

In order to achieve our new mission, we set out three drivers of change that are critical for us to achieve change and against which we will measure our impact:

1) strong data ecosystems,
2) a culture of data use and
3) uptake of data-driven evidence.

We have positioned partners at the centre of these three drivers of change. Collaboration has always been fundamental in our work, but the new strategy places those we work with and work for at the very heart of everything we do because we cannot fulfil our purpose any other way. Through 2021, we began the shift to ensure we are systematically working with and for those who can play a part in bringing about an equitable and resilient world.
Building our regional approach

DI has always been committed to localisation and has had regional offices employing exclusively local staff. In 2021, through the new strategy, we began the conscious process of expanding our network of hubs across the world. This will allow DI to truly support sustainable, inclusive progress that equips and empowers partners to maximise impact in their communities, countries and regions. At the end of 2021, we appointed a new East Africa Director based in Nairobi, Kenya to lead the creation of a fully established hub in the Africa region in 2022 – the first of more to come. An international hub will remain to contribute to global efforts towards delivering our mission.
Advancing the leave no one behind agenda through partnerships

One of the cornerstones of DI’s commitment to the leave no one behind agenda is that in order for people to count, you need to count people. Improving data on people is essential for inclusion. The fact that the poorest and most marginalised people are often missing in data is creating a significant challenge to delivering the SDG promise to leave no one behind. DI forged ahead with a range of partnerships throughout 2021 to improve inclusion in the way data is designed, collected, analysed and used so that the invisible become visible to decision-makers.

We are proud to be the co-lead on the Data Values project for the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data and through this work we are promoting and supporting data as a route to inclusion and equity. Throughout 2021, we listened to a range of voices as part of an open dialogue phase, hearing perspectives on what genuine inclusion looks like across the data value chain and how we can make this standard practice. This will culminate in the launch of a manifesto for action in 2022 – charting a practical path forward on what should be the global norms around data access and use. Beyond 2022 we will put recommendations into action, enabling society to leverage data for a more sustainable, equitable and inclusive world.
We joined the Civil Society Collaborative on Inclusive Covid-19 Data, working alongside marginalised communities and activists to increase understanding of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on groups at greatest risk of being left behind, elevate their needs and voices in national and global dialogue, and strengthen recognition of the value of community-generated data. We are excited to be playing a role in this collaborative that is led by a range of civil society organisations and comprises a growing number of high profile and important partners including Africa’s Voices Foundation, International Rescue Committee, World Vision and many more. A key contribution in 2021 was the creation of a data-driven report *An Unequal Pandemic: Insights and Evidence from Communities and Civil Society Organisations* developed in conjunction with communities and activists and launched at the UN’s High Level Political Forum. It uncovered the effects of the pandemic and the critical role communities who have been marginalised have played in the response, highlighted lessons on how to achieve inclusive and participatory data collection methods, and offered recommendations for improving collaboration and coordination between official data producers, civil society, and citizens to equip actors with vital evidence for ensuring people are not left behind.

With thanks to the Civil Society Collaborative on Inclusive Covid-19 Data
And it was at the UN World Data Forum where all actors that share our goals came together to spur innovation, mobilise high-level political and financial support for data, and build a pathway to better data for sustainable development. In addition to contributing on a range of expert panels, we co-hosted an event with the Uganda Bureau of Statistics on practical lessons to build inclusive data systems that give voice to communities. We also organised a successful local meet-up in Uganda that enabled a live link to the global event in Bern and enabled strong and engaging dialogue in Kampala between government officials and civil society in the margins. **We continued our work on the Inclusive Data Charter (IDC) of which we were a founding member.** We worked directly with the Government of Kenya to support the development of their IDC Action Plan, and will support their delivery in 2022 and beyond. We contributed a series of products on intersectional approaches to data, setting out approaches DI has developed to ensure efforts are inclusive and leave no one behind. This was provided to practitioners to help them understand how to practically apply this approach to capture the ways in which everyone’s unique identity and background impacts their needs and how best to respond, particularly when these factors put them at greatest risk of being left behind. In Kenya we also worked through our role in a multi-country Leave No One Behind Partnership to train a range of organisations working nationally and locally on how to benefit from community-generated data and various data collection methodologies so that all people are counted and included.
DI continued its important work of ensuring that international public finance is working as effectively as possible to ensure inclusive global progress. We provided thought leadership and facilitated dialogue on Global Public Investment – a concept for transforming international cooperation – led by a multistakeholder initiative where DI played a key role on its official expert working group and steering committee throughout 2021. We led the first ever consultation on Global Public Investment across East Africa, convening stakeholders from Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania with representation from government, civil society and think tanks to discuss its viability. A core group is now forming in Africa to take GPI forward and ensure co-creation of a model that works for and is truly co-owned by Africa.

We produced new and unique insights into the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on official development assistance (ODA) and the actions needed to ensure sustained and appropriate support to the poorest people and countries. We set out the evidence on the role ODA must play if we are to meaningfully tackle the growing divergence between the least developed countries and the rest of the world. We also collaborated with the United Nations Foundation and Oxfam International at the 2021 ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development to contribute analysis of real-time data on what has changed as a result of Covid-19 and set out what this means for official development assistance (ODA) spending if we are serious about building back better and fairer by promoting and ensuring an equitable response and recovery for all. We were also able to provide and unpack finance projections through to 2025, setting out where efforts need to be focused to meet the needs of the poorest people and countries.
Our assessments on aid using IATI (International Transparency Initiative) data during the unfolding of the pandemic have been pioneering, and crucially, using a full year of data from 2020, we were able to set out clearly the extent to which this real-time data can be used to understand what is happening to aid spending. For the first time, actors who need data on ODA can now fully understand the value that is possible from the data that is currently published to IATI while understanding the limitations of what it can currently tell us. Regionally, our Africa Hub contributed a range of novel analyses using near real-time IATI data on how international public financing appears to be shifting following the onset of the pandemic, highlighting implications for those countries and key considerations for donors if we are to get poverty reduction back on track. We have also been able to shed light on the impact of changes by key aid donors, in particular the UK government’s aid cuts, that were in the spotlight in 2021. We enriched the knowledge of our partners in the sector, contributed to the media narrative on the issue and provided evidence that was used in the UK Foreign Affairs Committee report on the UK’s role in multilateral diplomacy. An exciting new area of work that commenced in 2021 looked at how donors can maximise the impact of their ODA on poverty reduction through how they balance their aid portfolios, kicking off with series of seminars and consultations that will feed substantive work in this area in 2022.
Supporting local partners to harness the power of data for impact

Beyond the significant work we have done in multi-stakeholder partnerships, we also worked with a range of partners, particularly at the national level, to improve data collection, quality and use to drive stronger data ecosystems that support all aspects of development, from global to local levels.

We conducted a data landscaping assessment for UNDP in South Sudan to provide essential information about the data that is available to measure poverty and inequality and the ecosystem that underpins the collection and management of this data. This assessment enabled a national action plan to be proposed and made clear where investment should be prioritised to improve SDG monitoring. The lessons learned from this assessment alongside others conducted in previous years were consolidated into a paper setting out ‘the data side of leave no one behind’, highlighting hard truths about long-standing problems that mean people are not being counted and included in data, nor are decisions being adequately guided by data. It received support from a breadth of stakeholders across governments, international institutions, civil society and academia.

In Nepal, Development Initiatives has been continuing its work with the Asia Foundation on a Data for Development project. In 2021 we conducted national data landscaping as part of this work and produced a toolkit of guidance and resources for local municipalities to understand and strengthen their own data ecosystems. This was created from DI’s uniquely developed data landscaping methodology that has proven helped improve data for a range of partners we have supported and is now accessible and implementable by other people in any context.
We continued our longstanding support to the Benin Government to harness their national data to implement a leave no one behind approach right down to subnational levels. A representative from the Benin National Statistics Office shared their lessons on working with disaggregated data in Benin at the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation Learning Accelerator Programme sessions, which included speakers from Uganda and was facilitated by Development Initiatives. This brought together government ministry and statistics office representatives to facilitate learning and dialogue between two groups that can often be siloed within government.

In Kenya and Uganda we worked closely with partners as part of the Inclusion Works programme that aims to ensure persons with disabilities have access to employment. Focusing on data in this endeavour, in 2021 we trained staff in government departments and civil society organisations on how to access and improve data that ensures persons with disabilities are counted and included. We helped partners understand the power of data in support of advocacy efforts to secure the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities. We also produced a series of data-driven briefings to support both local government actors and disabled persons’ organisations to improve and use data to support disability inclusion.
Informing and strengthening crisis response and mitigation

DI produced a varied and impactful portfolio of work to inform and strengthen humanitarian and crisis response in 2021. We contributed a range of robust and comprehensive analyses to support decision-makers and those who influence them to understand the latest data on humanitarian financing. Our flagship Global Humanitarian Assistance (GHA) report was launched at the UN’s Economic and Social Council Humanitarian Affairs’s segment - unique platform that brings together UN Member States, UN organizations, humanitarian and development partners, the private sector and affected communities. Alongside UN OCHA’s Global Humanitarian Overview, we brought together an important discussion with high-level representatives from Global Affairs Canada, NRC, the Start Network and Kenya Red Cross on opportunities, challenges and lessons for the humanitarian system from the Covid-19 response. The GHA report has continued to be an important resource for governments, civil society, multilateral institutions, think tanks and academia to inform their work, particularly against a backdrop of spiralling humanitarian needs. This was heavily complemented by a piece of joint research we produced and provided a well-attended webinar on with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) that demonstrated how the humanitarian response has failed to keep pace with the Covid-19 pandemic and setting out recommendations on how this could and must be improved.

We made a significant contribution on humanitarian transparency through our support to the co-conveners of the Grand Bargain transparency workstream. As the original Grand Bargain agreement came to an end, it was uncertain whether transparency would be taken...
forward as a key priority, despite its vital role in improving quality funding and localisation. Through DI’s efforts convening a wide range of humanitarian actors, including donors, INGOs and national and local organisations, we orchestrated a written submission strongly setting out the importance of maintaining efforts and commitments on transparency in the humanitarian system and ensuring continued improvements in humanitarian response. As a result, transparency now remains at the heart of the Grand Bargain agenda and the transparency commitments from the first agreement remain in place.

A third key focus was on advancing work at the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. We know that we cannot achieve the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals to leave no one behind unless there is coordinated action that addresses the root causes of crisis and ensures sustainable solutions are in place alongside emergency assistance when a crisis hits. Our work at the country level in 2020 was synthesised in 2021 to produce five key areas for action if coordination at the nexus is to be operationalised and successful. This work has garnered interest at global and national levels across actors committed to achieving sustainable solutions to some of the world’s most complex challenges.

We also undertook a range of varied and successful projects to support the work of others. Of particular note, we undertook an evaluation of how partnership models between INGOs and local actors were responding to humanitarian needs. This has led to greater localisation efforts from the INGOs. We also supported the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) of the government of Ethiopia to track and promote investments that contribute to reduction of disaster risk in Ethiopia. This provided the NDRMC with a baseline on investments for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and set of evidence that is feeding into NDRMC reforms.
Driving nutrition action and accountability

The Nutrition Year of Action made 2021 an important year for DI as the host of the Global Nutrition Report – the world’s leading assessment of the state of global nutrition and provider of the official global accountability mechanism for nutrition action. Under the direction and leadership of the GNR’s Stakeholder Group and Independent Expert Group, DI was instrumental in delivering the world’s first Nutrition Accountability Framework (NAF); an independent and comprehensive platform for registering SMART nutrition commitments and monitoring nutrition action. The NAF was endorsed by the government of Japan, the SUN Movement, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, USAID and many others. It holds all data on commitments made as part of the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit 2021 and will be the platform that monitors how action translates into impact, through transparent and accessible data, evidence, and best practice.

Facilitating accountability was widely recognised as a key priority for driving nutrition action and the NAF has been received as a vital part of delivering that moving forwards. We were central to mobilising and strengthening accountability ahead of and during the summit, and creating an enabling environment for stakeholders to make meaningful commitments and ensure the Nutrition Year of Action leads to a step change in efforts to end malnutrition in all its forms. These efforts were supported by the successful launch of 2021 Global Nutrition Report, led by DI, setting out the latest evidence on the state of global nutrition, the impact of diets on people and the planet, and making clear where urgent action is needed. This analysis was drawn on throughout the Summit to facilitate dialogue about future efforts on nutrition and will continue to provide an important tool and resource in the year ahead.
Looking after our wellbeing

Wellbeing was challenged for everyone everywhere by the pandemic throughout 2021 and our locations worked under varying and ever-changing Covid-19 rules.

As a result, wellness was a top priority and our investment in 2020 in a team of mental health first aiders from among our staff allowed us to continue to provide an important touchpoint that meant all staff were able to find out about and access support whenever they needed. We conducted workshops for ‘Strategies for Personal Resilience’ and closed our offices for 3 days in August in addition to annual leave so that all staff were given a much-needed moment for rest and recuperation.

Where possible, we enabled social events to help staff reconnect and rebuild interpersonal relationships that had been more challenging whilst working remotely full time. Our Bristol office also moved premises in early 2021 to enable more creative and collaborative workspaces alongside a comfortable and inviting environment that supports staff wellbeing at work, including on-site exercise facilities.
Investing in systems and security

Staying safe and secure as a globally-distributed organisation become even more important in 2021. Strong IT infrastructure is particularly key to helping our staff work effectively and enable relationships to thrive even when remote. In 2021 our main physical location in the UK had a full data and telecoms refresh, and we made significant improvements in our East Africa Hub, commissioning a local IT company to provide tailored and ongoing support. We also achieved Cyber Essentials accreditation through our investment in increasing our cyber security and continue to ensure staff are trained and protected against cyber crime.

Promoting a person-centred inclusive culture

Our new 10-year strategy established new values conceived by our staff to reflect the organisation we are and the values that matter most to us: person-centred, purpose-driven and transparent. We also set out our six foundational principles upon which the culture of DI is built. The principles embody what we see as most important to us in how we work; they are reflected in the work we do and keep us focused on why we do what we do: people, simplicity, partnerships, perseverance, transformation and high performance.
Our new principles and values

Foundational principles

In line with our new values and principles, we built on our efforts towards Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to establish strong foundations that will underpin a positive staff culture and supportive work environment. We commissioned an EDI audit and survey, using its results and recommendations to celebrate progress and create a plan that will ensure we excel as an inclusive employer. We continue to monitor and voluntarily publish our gender pay gap. While this has increased since 2020 when our gap was -5.53%, we remain below the UK’s national average pay gap and we are committed to closing it.

Core values

We are supportive, friendly and considerate, with mutual respect for how people think, work, live and identify so that together we thrive. Everything we do is motivated by our shared desire to contribute to positive change in the world. Openness and honesty are at the heart of how we work, driving high levels of trust, as well as fair and ethical practice.
How we work

It was also vital that we took efforts to ensure our pay and benefits reflect the fairness with which we want to treat every member of staff and the value they bring to the organisation. We carried out a comprehensive pay and benefits benchmarking exercise, developed a framework for our reward and remuneration strategy and agreed remuneration principles with the board. We developed a new set of pay ranges based on new career levels and positioned all our staff correctly within our new pay structure. The next phase in 2022 will see us establish criteria to support personal and professional development and a shift to agile performance management.

Our gender pay gap

DI’s mean gender pay gap

3.2%

UK average gender pay gap

7.9%
A range of key appointments were made in 2021 including a new role to lead our work on poverty and inequality, as well as a Chief Operating Officer and a new Director for our East Africa offices. The recruitment market remains competitive and so our reward and remuneration approach enables us to have competitive salaries and an attractive offer that will stand us in good stead moving forwards.

Stephen Chacha, Director of East Africa

Anthony Boateng, Chief Operating Officer
Development Initiatives (DI) is a global organisation that applies the power of data and evidence to build sustainable solutions that create an equitable and resilient world.

We work closely with partners at global, regional, national and local levels to ensure data-driven evidence and analysis are used effectively in policy and practice to end poverty, reduce inequality and increase resilience.

**DI’s board members are:**
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David Wu
Harpinder Collacott
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Libby Drew
Mary Waithiegeni Chege
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