

# Making DATA work for communities project

Case Study  
Making DATA  
work for  
communities



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## CONTEXT

**Citizens and communities in extractive areas have the right to know how their finite natural resources are governed. As more and more extractives data is opened to the public, the more challenging it becomes to make these disclosures relevant to local communities. On December 2014, the Philippines released its first Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) country report. A year later, the country published its second report, coincidentally at the same time as the European Union's mandatory disclosures policy was passed.**

As a result, an idea for a project called "Making Data Work for Communities" was initiated with the sole purpose of making sure that data from these reports has an impact at community level. This idea came from encounters with various stakeholders at local forums where they have been sharing their community-related issues. Disclosures should not be made for the sake of transparency alone but rather for the purpose of improving communities and policies and also resolving issues.

## ACTIVITY

The initial plan was to make a prototype data portal. In two days and with zero programming background, a simple data portal aimed at simplifying and presenting community-specific data involving extractive projects was created by Marco Zaplan, from Bantay Kita and a PWYP Data Extractor.

The portal came with data visualizations and tools that estimate, for example, subnational transfers and indigenous peoples' royalties using disclosed sales data from mining companies. This prototype went on to be developed and was named Demanding Action, Transparency, and Accountability Portal – or the DATA Portal.

By July 2016, the DATA Portal was soft-launched in Cebu City, Philippines, to a crowd of civil society organizations. An open data workshop was conducted which asked participants to design contextualized materials using the DATA Portal.

Using a tool called data user template which was translated into local languages, the portal was further modified to account for its audience and their specific advocacy asks. By gathering over 100 data user templates all over the Philippines in five open data workshops, Marco Zaplan realised that there are two kinds of data: specific data and relevant data. Data can be specific to certain communities but not all are relevant to them hence the need to distinguish the two.

## IMPACT

The DATA Portal currently hosts extractives data from 18 administrative regions, 70 provinces with significant extractives presence, 40 active extractive projects, and 360 extractive projects including mining, oil and gas.

The next step is to scale up the functions and use of the DATA Portal. New features such as interactive geo-hazard maps and more timely relevant data will be added. New users and new needs will also be targeted to reach not just affected communities but soon research institutions and academics. The policy reforms and change in mindsets it hopes to spark at the local level will have to be identified and evaluated soon as well. In other words, the DATA Portal is ever a work in progress.

## CONCLUSION

Globally making data available and open is often seen as the end in itself. Making data available, open, and relevant is different in that it makes the whole advocacy on data work for local communities as well. Prior to the increase of transparency in the extractives movement, many affected communities in the Philippines were deprived of their right to know about how their finite natural resources are extracted and governed. The DATA Portal is just one of the many interventions needed to make the extractive sector in the country more transparent and accountable. It also provides a precedent for future initiatives proving that when disclosures are made relevant, they make data work for communities.