

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on pre-release access to statistics are covered in the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

Statistics on International Development

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/statistics-on-international-development-2014>

Name of Producer Organisation

Department for International Development (DfID)

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

Sian Rasdale, Senior Statistician, Finance Performance and Impact Department, DFID.

Date of report: 30 October 2014

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Protocol 2, Release practice 4.

Issue statistical releases at the standard time of 09:30 on a weekday, to maintain consistency and to permit time for users to understand and respond to the information during normal work hours.

Date of occurrence

30 October 2014

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

On 31 October 2014, 'Statistics on International Development 2014' first release was

published 36 minutes late at 10:06. This was due to problems with the DFID Network.

Reasons for breach

The DFID network was slow and unresponsive when the publication was supposed to be published. The publication was queued up and ready to be published at 9:30 – but DFID wide network problems with the gateway caused all content being published on the DFID website at that time to be delayed.

3 Reactions and Impact

At 9:30 DFID Statisticians spoke with the DFID web-team and were informed that there would be a delay in publishing due to network issues. At the time it was thought this would be a matter of minutes. DFID statisticians checked on the progress of the publication being published on the DFID website, every 5-10 minutes, until we were informed it was published at 10:05. DFID Statisticians first saw the document at 10:06. At 9:30 (when DFID Statisticians knew the publication was going to be delayed) we sent out a PDF copy of the final publication to members on the pre-release access list and a contact at HM Treasury (the latter since they had called to request the information).

4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

As mentioned above – we kept in contact with the DFID web-team and got the publication online as soon as was possible.
We have held a meeting with the DFID web team who are undertaking further investigation, we have yet to hear the results of this.
The web-team have highlighted that the problem was worsened due to the fact that late minor changes were made to the additional tables (approximately 8:30 on day of release). We have updated our desk instructions to highlight the need for all aspects of the release to be finalised by 17:00 the day before release and that when making late changes consider whether or not they can wait until after 09:30 on release day until the web version is updated (for example minor spelling or grammar errors, formatting of tables, etc). We have also included notes in the desk instructions that someone should contact the web team at 09:00 on release day to confirm whether or not the system is working correctly and to discuss and explore contingency options if the system is not working.