IATI Members' Assembly 2024

Wednesday April 24th (09:15-17:15 CET)
Bogotá, Colombia & online (Zoom Events Space)

MA Paper 2: Secretariat Implementation Update (2023)

In 2023, new hosting arrangements approved by members during the 2023 Members' Assembly were implemented. Since July 2023, UNDP formally hosts the Secretariat and is responsible for IATI's policy and technology services. UNOPS is the Secretariat's service provider for the initiative's legal and operational functions, and Open Data Services is the Secretariat's new technology delivery partner, under contract with UNDP. During the period of transition, concerted measures were put in place to ensure the continuity and effectiveness of the initiative's operations while maintaining high-quality services. Despite the primary focus on transition, 2023 marked a year of high of delivery and achievement across approved work plans.

This paper shares an update from the IATI Secretariat on the implementation of activities in 2023 to meet the objectives of the IATI Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (ES / FR) and to effect the transition to new hosting arrangements.

Objective 1: Promote the systematic use of IATI data by development and humanitarian actors

Strengthening the use of data by civil society

IATI developed its first online training course: IATI's Virtual Training for Civil Society, to support civil society organisations (CSOs) to use IATI data to strengthen decision-making and accountability. The course was designed in consultation with a range of civil society stakeholders and provides insights on how IATI data can inform specific areas of their work. The following are some examples highlighted through the training:

- *Coordination*: non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can learn how to search IATI data to identify other organisations working in the same (or similar) locations or sectors. This information can be used to strengthen collaboration, reduce gaps and overlap across the development and humanitarian sectors.
- *Accountability*: Journalists and CSOs can learn how to use IATI data to investigate the delivery of development and humanitarian funding and activities, to understand if resources are delivered as planned.
- *Evidence to inform policy and advocacy*: The course explains how IATI data can be used to inform the policy of CSOs and their advocacy efforts. For example, they can find evidence of where funding is being allocated and spent and advocate for a different allocation of resources (e.g. more funding for health or education, or more funding for a particular region/country).

- *Identifying funding*: The course also explains that IATI data can be used to understand when and where donors plan to deliver resources. This makes it possible for CSOs to use IATI data to discover funding opportunities or trends.

IATI's Virtual Training for Civil Society is a free online resource. It is available in English, French and Spanish and promotes IATI data to a global audience. While initially developed for use by CSOs, much of the course is applicable for a far wider audience and serves as a good resource for anybody looking to learn about IATI.

Ongoing data use training and support

IATI's Secretariat continued to provide virtual Data Use Drop-In Sessions for data users to bring their questions and receive on-the-spot support from the IATI Secretariat and other data users. Virtual support and presentations were provided throughout the year upon request. Examples included data use support to UNDP Country Offices in Nepal, Ukraine, Cameroon and the Arab States Regional Bureau to enhance aid coordination and monitoring of external Official Development Assistance flows in-country.

The initiative also sought to raise awareness about the value of IATI data by undertaking analysis at the start of 2023 on the availability of budget data. This showed how IATI budget data can be leveraged to assess the future development and humanitarian aid landscape.

Awareness raising and in-person training

The initiative also promoted the value of IATI data through dedicated in-country events in addition to sessions provided during the March Community Exchange. In July, IATI held a workshop in Cameroon to train government staff on how to access IATI data on external resource flows to support their work, including for the creation of national budgets and putting together annual development cooperation reports.

In November, IATI attended Festival de Datos, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data's (GPSSD) Data for Development Festival in Punta del Este, Uruguay, where IATI Secretariat representatives introduced participants to IATI's data access tools in a session entitled: How to Unlock Timely, Transparent Development and Humanitarian data. The use of recent analysis on development and humanitarian financing within Latin America helped to contextualise the data for the session.

As more evidence of the wide ranging sectors and groups of stakeholders finding value in using IATI data, IATI was invited to participate in a workshop in Paris (6-7 November 2023) on improving the tracking of development funds to Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). Organised by the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities and Charapa, the workshop focused on overcoming data gaps on the pledging and implementation of funds to IPLCs, and the results achieved. IATI was invited to present its role on capturing data on international development and humanitarian funding. Many representatives from IPLCs, donors and international NGOs learned about IATI for the first

time, and the workshop was a valuable opportunity to raise awareness about IATI data available on IPLCs.

Providing a clear picture of funding for food and nutrition security crises

During 2023, the Global Alliance for Food Security (GAFS), worked closely with IATI on using open data to strengthen the response to emerging food and nutrition crises. An G7-sponsored initiative involving the World Bank, GAFS actively engages humanitarian and development partners, regional organisations and governments to catalyse a swift and coordinated response to the global food and nutrition security crisis.

Over the last year, GAFS has been working with IATI to include data on food security financing on its Global Food and Nutrition Security Dashboard which brings together key data from a wide range of global, national, and sub-national sources. Through close joint efforts, IATI and GAFS have successfully included IATI data into the dashboard, allowing users to find data on the financing of thousands of activities that address global food and nutrition crises. The inclusion of IATI data in the Dashboard is intended to drive improvements in the coordination of policy and financial responses to the global food and nutrition crises. Next steps in early 2024 are to establish a Community of Practice for Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) on IATI Connect to create a robust framework for tracking FNS contingency resources. The new COP will link data publishers with data users working on policy to ensure that the new framework meets the needs of those working in the sector.

Objective 2: Drive a significant improvement in the quality of data published to IATI

IATI Publisher tool launched

In January 2023, IATI launched a new publishing tool commissioned by the Governing Board and developed for the initiative by software provider Young Innovations. IATI Publisher is an online tool that enables organisations to publish data according to the XML format required by the IATI Standard. The tool was built to support small or medium sized organisations (or those with only a limited number of activities) to publish data on their development and humanitarian activities. IATI Publisher is free to use and simplifies the process to register a publisher account with IATI. It also offers useful explanations and guidance to enable publishers to understand the data fields in the IATI Standard.

Improving validation

The IATI Validator is a key online tool that enables publishers to check whether data complies with the rules of the IATI Standard. In 2023, the usage of the IATI Validator significantly increased, with the number of unique visitors at 9,200 compared to 7,300 in 2022. This 26 percent increase suggests progress in the commitment of IATI publishers to checking and improving their data quality.

IATI support

As part of the transition to new IATI Secretariat hosting arrangements in July 2023, Open Data Services (ODS) began providing support to publishers and users as the Secretariat's new technology delivery partner. During the transition, ODS maintained a high standard of support to organisations requesting assistance to publish and improve their data, including answering over 600 requests from more than 300 organisations through IATI's support desk.

The IATI Secretariat also provided more extensive one-no-one support to existing publishers. This included the Australian Government, as it seeks to strengthen IATI reporting as part of it's new International Development Policy[1].The policy includes a commitment to enhancing the transparency of Australia's development program, and the Australian Government recognises engagement with IATI as an important component of implementing this commitment. The IATI Secretariat also provided support to the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF[2]) as a new IATI member, as it prepares to publish IATI data for the first time. CAF is a significant provider of development resources and its data will enhance IATI's relevance across the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

The Secretariat released new online resources to support publishers addressing common issues. For example, new guidance was created to help publishers overcome restrictions placed by their own websites' security products which prevented tools such as the IATI Datastore from gaining access to their published data.

Financing the Aid Transparency Index 2024

In March 2023, the IATI Governing Board announced its decision to finance Publish What You Fund's next Aid Transparency Index, to be released in July 2024. The Index uses IATI data to help track the progress of the world's major development agencies towards improving their transparency. The provision of funding by IATI ensured that PWYF was able to work towards delivering the assessment of donor transparency again in 2024. As with previous years, the Aid Transparency Index 2024 remains independently managed by PWYF and is carefully firewalled to ensure there is no potential for conflict of interest by IATI's Governing Board or other IATI stakeholders.

As part of the funding arrangement, PWYF researched the feasibility and value of applying the Aid Transparency Index's automated tests for all IATI publishers as a way to help improve data quality of IATI's many smaller publishers. As the Index currently assesses around 50 large donors representing 84% of all IATI data[3], PWYF provided clear guidance on how a much larger group of IATI publishers could be assessed, and will work with the Secretariat towards delivering these assessments on a data dashboard in 2024.

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[1] Australia's International Development Policy
[2] Banco de desarrollo de América Latina
[3] 2022 Aid Transparency Index

Objective 3: Strengthen the IATI Standard by consolidating its technical core, maintaining its infrastructure and reinvigorating its community of publishers and members

Maintaining stable services during Secretariat transition

In 2023, the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) focused on transitioning its technical services and tools to the new IATI Secretariat hosting arrangements. The outgoing Technical Team at Development Initiatives worked hard in the first part of the year to produce documentation on IATI's technical services alongside the incoming IATI Secretariat delivery partner, Open Data Services (ODS). In July 2023, all services were successfully moved over to the responsibility of ODS, with no downtime or break in any of IATI's technical tools during the Secretariat transition. Since then, the Secretariat has implemented various activities to improve the hosting platforms used by the initiative, increasing the security and long-term sustainability of services provided by the initiative.

Improving IATI Datastore

Following a successful transition of technical services, the Secretariat worked to enhance the reliability and resilience of the [IATI Datastore](#), a key tool for downloading IATI data in CSV, JSON and XML formats. The Secretariat focused on use cases from its community, whilst also being informed by ongoing research and benchmarking. Enhancements were made to the methods the Datastore uses to process and store data, to better handle the increasing numbers of publishers updating daily. In turn, this provides a more accurate picture of IATI data to those using the Datastore regularly.

Improvements were also implemented to ensure clearer and more accurate querying of tools, particularly around budget data, whether using the website [Datastore Search](#) or the Datastore API. New work also commenced on [validating IATI activity identifiers](#), which is vital for uses around traceability and network mapping. In all instances, the Secretariat communicated and discussed planned changes on IATI Connect, before, during and after each stage of implementation.

Maintaining engagement on the IATI Standard

The IATI Standard is the foundation by which the initiative works to improve the usefulness of development and humanitarian data. Organisations publish data according to the rules and framework set out in the IATI Standard. Major upgrades are undertaken infrequently, with the last upgrade taking in 2018, to Version 2.03. The IATI Secretariat monitors external sources such as the International Standards Organisation ([ISO](#)) and OECD DAC and incorporates changes in their relevant codes into IATI code lists to remain synchronised with these sources, and ensures that the IATI community remains informed of updates where these are relevant for publication or use of IATI data.

In 2023 the Secretariat [sought input from the community](#) on how best to reflect a change to the OECD CRS reporting guidelines in the IATI Standard. The Secretariat also consulted the community on

[clarifying the use of NGO Organisation Types](#) when it became apparent from publisher feedback that there was confusion on how to describe different types of NGOs using the Organisation Types in the Standard (i.e. International, National, Regional and Partner Country based NGOs). This discussion on IATI Connect revealed that this was a longstanding issue and it attracted a high volume of community engagement.

In 2023, the Standard was also updated outside a formal upgrade process to meet the needs of specific data communities, with the addition of a new vocabulary to support the European Commission and member states to annotate relevant IATI activities in relation to the [Team Europe Initiative (TEI)](#). Whilst the addition of the new vocabulary did not require a formal upgrade, it does illustrate the continued flexibility of the Standard, which is important to all stakeholders. This example shows how the IATI Standard can be utilised to meet the increasing need for common practices between specific communities of publishers. IATI's new partnership with the Global Alliance for Food Security (see page 3) is one recent instance that demonstrates this approach in practice.

Cross-cutting action areas

Governance and membership

In 2023, the initiative warmly welcomed five new organisations: CAF – Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean, the Government of Niger, CanWaCH (the Canadian partnership for women and children's health), and the development data organisations Emergentally and Open Data Company. Waivers of membership contribution were approved by the Board for 22 partner countries, in accordance with the IATI Standard Operating Procedures (2.3.6) and for a period of one year, after which these waivers will be reviewed. Work has been undertaken by a Working Group on Standard Operating Procedures to examine and make a proposal on language governing availability of waivers for eligible members, where they meet certain criteria.

IATI's seven-member Governing Board elected by IATI members in 2022 for a two-year term, continued to meet quarterly. The Board also continued to hold 'IATI Board Drop-in Sessions' ahead of quarterly meetings, inviting IATI members to discuss pressing governance issues. During 2023, the Board set up three working groups: a Technical Working Group; a reinstated Data Use Working Group, and a Publishing Working Group.

Transition to new IATI Secretariat Hosting Arrangements

In 2023, members voted on new hosting arrangements for IATI following the expiration of the previous hosting mandate in December 2022 (extended for a six month period for transition).

The IATI Governing Board worked with an Institutional Working Group of IATI member representatives to develop terms of reference and subsequently to carry out a robust selection process for new hosting arrangements which concluded in 2023. Following an open invitation to bid launched in 2022, the Board and the Working Group submitted options to the IATI Members' Assembly in March 2023. Members reviewed the options and selected UNDP as the host (with

responsibility for policy and technology services), and the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) as the provider of operational and financial services. Open Data Services is engaged as the new technology delivery partner through UNDP. Hosting arrangements were formalised with the signing of a Letter of Agreement between the Governing Board, UNDP and UNOPS setting out the areas of responsibility on the part of each. The Secretariat developed and published a detailed [IATI Service Catalogue](#) based on the Terms of Reference for Hosting. The Service Catalogue sets out all the scopes of work as proposed through respective organisations' successful hosting proposals, and underpins the development of annual work plans. The Service Catalogue will be updated annually by the Secretariat to reflect new scopes of areas of focus as these emerge.

Outreach and engagement

During 2023, IATI undertook a range of outreach activities to engage new audiences in the initiative. The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data's (GPSSD) [Data for Development Festival "Festival de Datos"](#)gave IATI access to a network of hundreds of development data experts from leading organisations across the globe. Participation further provided the opportunity for IATI to engage with data users from across Latin America and the Caribbean, ahead of strategic expansion of the initiative into the region in 2024.

During the UN Climate Change Conference - United Arab Emirates (COP28), IATI raised awareness of the kind of data that is available on climate action by releasing a [detailed briefing](#). It included analysis showing that IATI data has been published on over 33,300 activities targeting climate adaptation and more than 25,300 targeting climate mitigation. The briefing was promoted via social media and targeted at the COP28 participants, and received interest from a range of climate action stakeholders.

Engaging IATI's Community

IATI hosted its first in-person annual meeting since 2019 (due to Covid-19 travel restrictions) on 13-16 March 2023 at UN City in Copenhagen. The event included IATI's Members' Assembly and Community Exchange and a total of 179 people attended the event 133 in-person participants and 46 online participants).

At the Members' Assembly, members of IATI discussed important governance issues, including the IATI Secretariat's new hosting arrangements. The Members' Assembly also successfully engaged major development organisations. For example, the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UAE MOFA) and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) were invited to attend the event as observers for the first time. Following successful engagement, both organisations began publishing the data to IATI for the first time towards the end of the year. Furthermore, IsDB decided to join the initiative as an IATI member (with membership confirmed in January 2024).

The Community Exchange invited IATI's community to lead sessions on topics related to their IATI work and relevant open data issues. The 2023 Members' Assembly and Community Exchange

received the highest satisfaction rating recorded by IATI through its annual event participation survey. Recordings of the sessions of the Community Exchange (15-16 March) were made available on IATI Connect.

Later in the year, IATI provided another opportunity for its global community to meet at the fifth IATI Virtual Community Exchange (VCE5) on 15 November. The event offered 29 speakers in nine sessions, ranging from how to scale IATI Publishing, to enhancing global food security tracking. VCE 5 attracted 170 participants from across the globe and more watched the sessions back on IATI Connect.

Between meetings, IATI's community engaged with the initiative through its community platform, IATI Connect. The platform enables discussion amongst IATI's Communities of Practice on publishing data, using data and on IATI's technical services. It also enables the IATI community to set up their own discussion groups, for example 'Netherlands Corner". During 2023, the number of user accounts steadily increased by 17% and the platform attracted 12,200 unique visitors.