iati
International Aid Transparency Initiative

Update series: Strategic Plan 2020-2025

Improving the quality of IATI data - *September 2021*

FACTSHEET ONE **1** FACTSHEET ONE

Welcome to the first in a series of factsheets from IATI's Secretariat providing IATI's members and community with updates on progress against different objectives of IATI Strategic Plan 2020-2025 (ES / FR).

Four factsheets have been created to outline key progress since the beginning of 2020 in implementing IATI's five year Strategic Plan:

Factsheet #1: Improving the quality of IATI data

Factsheet #2: Enabling the use of IATI data

Factsheet #3: Strengthening IATI technical infrastructure, tools and services

Factsheet #4: Reinvigorating IATI's Community

Factsheet #1: Improving the quality of IATI data

Progress on improving the quality of IATI data

To date, over 1300 organisations have published IATI data on over one million development and humanitarian activities. To ensure this data is useful to partner country governments, civil society, academics and other data users, IATI is working with many of our publishers to improve the quality of the data they publish.

This update focuses on the progress towards achieving the Strategic Plan's first objective:

Drive a significant improvement in the quality of data published to IATI.

New guidance on 6 data topics for using the IATI Standard

Through our engagement with publishers and users of data we identified a number of areas in the IATI Standard that were unclear or needed further definition. The IATI Secretariat worked on each of the six areas to understand the specific issues and consulted the IATI Community to develop new/enhanced guidance on the following topics:

Results, understanding results data and conditions – how to publish and interpret data on the results of development and humanitarian activities and what types of conditions can be published to IATI data.

COVID-19 – how to publish data on development and humanitarian activities relating to COVID-19.

Humanitarian – how to publish data on funds and activities addressing emergencies/crises.

Traceability – how to improve IATI data for tracking development and humanitarian funds and activities throughout complex delivery chains.

View these IATI Standard Guidance documents, along with guidance on 18 other topics on IATI's website.

Factsheet #1: Improving the quality of IATI data

❯ New IATI Validator launched to support publishers to find and fix data errors

IATI launched the Validator tool in 2020 to allow publishers to automatically check their IATI data files for errors. Publishers can use the tool to understand where there are systematic errors and resolve these independently or with the support of the IATI Secretariat. While the use of the Validator alone will not ensure data quality, it is a significant step toward enabling publishers to determine where additional attention is needed to improve data quality.

In 2021 the IATI Secretariat has provided training webinars on the use of the Validator and offered one-to-one support to all IATI publishing members to use the tool. Increasingly, publishers are now using the Validator independently to check the quality of the data they are publishing and taking steps to eliminate errors. Further work to support publishers to use the IATI Validator will continue throughout 2021.

Case Study:

In 2020, Oxfam Novib was able to make significant improvements in the quality of their data by using the IATI Validator. Upon the launch of the tool, organisations were made aware that most were likely to find errors in their data and this would take considerable time to correct. Within just a few months of using the tool, Oxfam Novib worked hard and were able to eliminate 100% of errors in all their data files.

"Currently no errors and warnings occur, and that was certainly not the case one year ago."

- Leo Stolk, Project Manager Open Data, Oxfam Novib

❯ Improving the quality of data on COVID-19 related activities

In 2020 the IATI Secretariat provided tailored support to IATI members to improve their IATI data on COVID-19 development and humanitarian activities. In July 2020 the Secretariat undertook analysis of COVID-19 data published using the IATI Standard, then shared specific data quality issues with IATI members. They provided support to members to help them publish data that adheres to the IATI Standard guidance on COVID-19 related data.

To date, over 200 organisations have published more than 15,000 COVID-19 related activities.

Factsheet #1: Improving the quality of IATI data

> IATI Helpdesk and one-to-one support

IATI's Helpdesk plays an important role in supporting organisations to understand the steps towards publishing good quality IATI data. Since January 2020, IATI's Helpdesk team has received and addressed 1,469 diverse requests for publisher support, including for example helping the European Commission - Humanitarian Aid & Civil Protection to restructure their older XML files to remove critical errors, ensuring all activities are unique and that each activity has a sector classification. A further example was providing support to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) to break down their annual spend into monthly disbursement and expenditure transactions.

Collaborating with other open data standards and initiatives

The Secretariat is collaborating widely with relevant open data standards and initiatives to promote the interoperability of IATI with other development and humanitarian data. Since 2020, IATI has contributed to discourse through its participation in workshops, briefings and consultations with a wide range of different organisations and networks. These have included:

- Bern Network on Financing Data for Development

- Centre for Humanitarian Data; managed by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and focused on increasing the use and impact of data in the humanitarian sector.

- Grand Bargain Transparency workstream which works towards a shared open-data standard and common digital platform to enhance transparency and decision-making

- Humanitarian Data Exchange (OCHA) open platform for sharing humanitarian data across crises and organisations

- IFR4NPO - International Financial Reporting for Non-Profit Organisations

- International Task Force on measuring the Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD)

- OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (WP-STAT)

- Open Contracting Partnership, ensuring open, fair and efficient public contracting

- UN System Chief Executives Board, the highest-level coordination forum of the United Nations system, and the UN Transparency Task Force

IATI's work with each of these different bodies is essential to ensuring its work remains aligned with that of other relevant organisations and processes.

Factsheet #1: Improving the quality of IATI data

▶ What's coming up

As part of an overarching five year implementation plan for meeting all the objectives of its Strategic Plan, IATI continually reviews and adjusts annual work plans together with Governing Board thematic focal points. Upcoming work on improving data quality in 2021 includes the following activities that build on foundations laid in 2020:

- **Review of how publishers are using the IATI Standard**
  The Secretariat is conducting a systematic review of how organisations are currently using the IATI Standard to publish data. Findings from this review, together with insights from data users, will inform a strategy to bridge the gap between current publisher practices and data users' needs.

- **Consultation: Data Quality Index**
  As a key commitment towards implementing the IATI Strategic Plan, IATI has launched a consultation to inform the development of a new Data Quality Index that will focus on measuring the components of IATI data that matter most to the IATI community. We invite our community to join and participate in this important piece of work by providing feedback on IATI Connect.

- **Harmonising IATI publishing guidelines set by donors**
  A new group has been established on IATI Connect to promote the harmonisation of IATI publishing requirements across donors. Representatives from the UK, Dutch, Belgium, Danish and Swedish governments attended its first meeting in spring and the group will continue to collaborate during the year. Their focus includes alignment across donor reporting requirements, exchanging opportunities for shared learning, and the role and impact that donor guidance has for IATI data quality.

How to get involved in improving the quality of IATI data

Here are just some of the activities for publishers and the wider IATI Community that will contribute to improving data quality:

- ✓ Start using the IATI Validator to identify where you need to fix errors in your data.

- ✓ Take part in IATI's upcoming Data Quality Index consultation to share ideas on the most important measures of data quality for both publishers and data users

- ✓ Join IATI's Data Publishing Community of Practice on IATI Connect to collaborate and offer support to other organisations.

- ✓ Share your stories of improving IATI data with the IATI Secretariat info@iatistandard.org

- ✓ Stay updated with data quality news by signing up to our monthly IATI Newsletter

We're here to help

As always, please reach out to us for support via the IATI Helpdesk: email: support@iatistandard.org