



IATI and Civil Society Organisations

14th October 2010 - Draft

What is IATI?

The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) was launched in September 2008 at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, and is a multi-stakeholder initiative that seeks to increase the transparency of aid information in order to maximise the effectiveness of aid in reducing poverty. IATI aims to make more information about aid available more quickly, and ensure that aid information from a variety of different sources easier for people to find, use and compare.

Who is involved in IATI?

Membership is open to all organisations who endorse the [IATI Accra Statement](#), and sign the Framework for Implementation when it is finalised. To date, 18 organisations have joined, including 12 bilateral donors, five multilateral agencies and one private foundation. In addition, 15 partner country governments have endorsed IATI – see <http://www.aidtransparency.net/> for details.

How will IATI work?

Rather than constructing a new mega-database, IATI aims to establish a common standard for the publication of aid information. IATI members will undertake to publish their aid information in the agreed IATI format, usually via their website. The location of their information will be recorded in a central IATI Registry, which will act as a catalogue for users wishing to access information about aid.

CSOs and IATI

Many CSOs are already involved in IATI in a number of different ways, for example:

- Publish What You Fund, Transparency International, the BetterAid platform and the International Budget Project are all members of the IATI Steering Committee;
- Leading European and US NGOs took part in IATI consultation meetings in Brussels and Washington DC in 2009, and 13 international NGOs joined the 156 regional and national CSOs who took part in regional IATI consultation meetings in the South organised by IBON;
- Over a dozen NGOs are already contributing to the work of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), including CARE International, Global Giving and InterAction, the largest alliance of US-based NGOs;
- In addition, many CSOs have been powerful advocates for IATI, ranging from individual NGOs such as Oxfam America, who have pressed the US Government to join IATI, to the 30 organisations who signed joint letters to IATI signatories in advance of the July Steering Committee meeting urging them to maintain a high level of ambition for IATI.

All of these contributions are very valuable to IATI's work. Going forward, IATI is keen to step up its engagement with CSOs and to begin a dialogue to explore the application of the IATI standard to the work of NGOs themselves for the following reasons:



- Firstly, it is clear from last year's regional IATI consultations that there is a real demand from partner country governments for more and better aid information from international NGOs;
- Secondly, feedback from users of aid information confirms that they are interested in *transparency about overall resources*, rather than *transparency of individual organisations* – this points to the need for common standards to ensure comparability across the system;
- Thirdly, if IATI members are to achieve full transparency and make it possible for their aid transactions to be traced throughout the system from initial commitment to final delivery, the IATI standard will, ultimately, need to be applied throughout the implementation chain – the IATI Accra Statement was explicit on this point, stating that “To the extent possible, we expect that organisations that deliver aid on behalf of our respective organisations should adhere to the same standards of transparency”.

IATI recognises that NGOs and CSOs are already involved in a number of initiatives aimed at addressing their own transparency, accountability and effectiveness, including:

- The [Open Forum for Civil Society Development Effectiveness](#), a globally mandated CSO process which seeks to develop an International Framework on CSO Development Effectiveness, including the principles of transparency and accountability;
- The [International NGO Accountability Charter](#), which outlines NGOs' common commitment to excellence, transparency and accountability, with a specific commitment to enhance transparency and accountability, both internally and externally;
- The [Global Reporting Initiative](#), under which sector-specific reporting guidelines for NGOs have been developed, and adopted by the INGO Accountability Charter.

All of these demonstrate the commitment of CSOs to increasing their own transparency, and IATI is keen to learn from these, and engage with them as appropriate. At the same time, IATI is keen to engage with CSOs to adapt the IATI standard in a way that is relevant to them, in the interests of ensuring comparability and traceability throughout the system, thereby meeting the needs of stakeholders in partner countries. CSOs can engage with IATI with a view to implementing its commitments on transparency in a number of ways:

- Endorse the [IATI Accra Statement](#), contribute to finalising IATI's Framework for Implementation (FFI), and sign the FFI once it has been agreed - this includes a commitment for each signatory to develop an implementation plan for publishing information to the IATI standard;
- Join a new Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Working Group on CSOs which will start work in January 2011, exploring how the IATI standard can be adapted to make it applicable to CSOs;
- As part of their implementation plan, organisations may also request an IATI visit to assess their systems with a view of complying with the IATI standard. These visits are aimed at developing a better understanding of the challenges and constraints individual NGOs may face in adopting the IATI standard;
- Promote access to information and advocate for aid transparency as part of IATI.

Expressions of interest in joining IATI or the TAG Working Group on CSOs should be sent to Isabel Bucknall (Isabel@devinit.org).