IATI – Improving countries' access to and use of aid information

In 2011, IATI signatories began to publish timely, detailed data on their aid projects in the IATI format. Through a series of country pilots, work has now begun to understand how publication of such data can improve aid management and accountability in the countries that receive aid.

Background

The IATI Standard has been designed to meet the needs of partner country stakeholders. In 2009, representatives from 72 partner country governments and over 150 civil society organisations took part in regional consultations aimed at identifying their priority information needs.

22 aid recipient countries have now endorsed the initiative, supporting the efforts that aid providers are making to be more transparent about their development cooperation activities.

72 COUNTRIES IN 2009 PARTICIPATED IN THE IATI REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

22 PARTNER COUNTRIES HAVE ENDORSED IATI

Why is aid information important for partner countries?

Each partner country has its own specific information needs, with various stakeholders requiring aid information for different purposes. Nevertheless, there is much commonality about what information is required to meet their diverse needs. Above all, stakeholders in partner countries are more interested in better information about the **execution of aid**, rather than simply its allocation.

- **Finance and Budget Ministries** need data that can be **easily integrated** into their planning and budgeting systems, to improve planning and accounting processes. Their priority is **timely, accurate** and **comprehensive data**. They also need **forward looking** information to ensure effective budget projections.

- **Line Ministries** require similar information, but with more specific focus on aid that is directed to their particular sectors, e.g. health or education. Information on expected and actual results is critical, and detailed **geographic information** on aid projects is required to enable better coordination and planning of services.

- **Parliamentarians** play a vital role in holding governments to account for the resources and services provided to their constituents. For accountability mechanisms to work effectively, parliamentarians need access to **detailed, timely, comprehensive** and **consistent** data from both national governments and donors.

- **Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)** use aid information to support their advocacy and hold service-providers to account. They have a key role to play in tracking aid expenditure through the system; to do this they need information on **geographic locations** of projects and **details of implementing organisations**.

- **Donor Agencies and INGOs** operating in each country need better information about aid allocation to assist with better coordination.

> *"It is very difficult to get the data on time, and to get detailed information."*
>
> *Lucretia Ciurea (Ministry of Economy and Trade, Republic of Moldova)*

- **Implementing agencies and organisations** often struggle to plan and coordinate their efforts effectively with other stakeholders. **Timely** information regarding **geographic location**, **sector** and **project descriptions** can provide implementers with the data that they require to plan and coordinate well, avoiding duplication of effort.

Supporting Government and Donor Aid Management Processes

In many cases, partner countries' aid information management processes and systems still require manual entry of data from multiple sources and in multiple formats. This represents a significant burden in terms of staff time for both government departments and donors, and increases the potential for errors.

In collaboration with partners in **Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)** and **Rwanda**, the IATI Secretariat is working on pilots to test the benefits of IATI to support:

- Aid Informational Management Systems (AIMS) through automated data exchange
- South-South-cooperation information sharing
- Alignment of aid information with Budget and Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks

For more information, please visit www.aidtransparency.net

Easing the reporting burden on donors

Donor offices in partner countries perceive that the large amount of time required to report aid information to different government actors significantly hampers the effectiveness of reporting and results in inconsistent data between systems.

"We do not have the accurate, reliable and timely data to fit into our budgeting processes."
Abie Kamara (Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Sierra Leone)

Potential benefits of IATI

Initial experiences with IATI in Malawi, DRC, Colombia and Burkina Faso suggest that IATI has the potential to **add value** in several ways for both donors and governments:

i)   As an internationally supported framework for publishing information on projects, IATI provides **timely, reliable and accurate** data from a wider range of aid providers, including CSOs and private foundations.

ii) Data published in line with the IATI standard by donors will, in many cases, be more comprehensive than the data they provide at the country level, and its quality more sustainable.

iii) The **automatic exchange** of data in the IATI XML format from donor systems into government systems helps ensure that data entered into systems is more **reliable** and **accurate.** This **saves time and financial** resources for both partner country governments and donors.

iv) By **raising the profile of transparency** and access to data on aid and other resource flows, IATI increases the leverage for recipient governments to request **better information** from their development partners.

v)   IATI reduces parallel reporting for donors and increases consistency of data being used across donor, government and CSO systems.

Supporting Civil Society

IATI can benefit civil society organisations (CSOs) by improving their access to data on resources available for development. It also provides a framework for sharing data on CSO activities in a standardised way that links to official aid data.

aidinfo are partnering with five organisations in Nepal to test how these ideas can work. This will include:

- A traceability pilot to see how aid flows can be tracked through the delivery chain to their grassroots destination;
- Assessing the information needs amongst national CSOs and community based organisations, looking at how better information can be effectively captured and disseminated;
- Exploring how best to capture and share better information about what INGOs and national NGOs are doing, linking this to information from donors;
- Assessing the capacity amongst NGOs to access and use information and providing capacity development support.

For more information, please visit www.aidinfo.org