FINAL IATI Board Meeting Minutes

Date: March 20-21, Q1/2025

Location: The Hague, Netherlands

Attendees:

- Thea Schepers, Government of the Netherlands, GB Chair
- Charlie Ngounou, AfroLeadership, GB vice-chair
- Anand Nair, Fields Data
- Motai Ramokoinihi, Kingdom of Lesotho
- Zainab Al-Azzawi, UNICEF
- Mohamed Gele, Federal Republic of Somalia (day 1)
- Yemesrach Workie (UNDP), IATI Executive Director
- Steven Flower (ODS), IATI Technical Lead
- Annelise Parr (UNDP), IATI Manager, Policy and Technology
- Adriel Dutra Amaral (UNOPS), IATI Financial Manager

Agenda:

1. Opening Remarks
2. Approval of Previous Minutes
3. Work Plan and Budget Discussion
4. Implementation Update Q4
5. Financial Update
6. Other Business

1. Approval of Q4/2024 Meeting Minutes, and presentation of Q1 implementation

Chair Thea Schepers referred to the minutes from the previous meeting that had been reviewed previously and adopted virtually without objections. IATI Executive Director Yemesrach Workie provided an update on the status of actions and decisions from previous meetings, encouraging Board members to visit the Board's tracking page for detailed updates.

Workie set out the external context during this quarter (closure of USAID and impact on IATI; PWYF announcement on cancellation of the 2026 ATI; and the Financing for Development 4 process and relevance to IATI). Delivery had however remained strong against this backdrop.

Workie reminded the Board of the goals set for 2025 agreed through the work plan, as follows:

- Evaluation of the current 2020-25 strategic plan;
- Development of the 2026-30 strategic plan;
- Maintenance and strengthening of IATI's infrastructure and support arrangements
- Building strategic engagement and improving visibility through improved online presence
- Concerted advocacy efforts to position IATI as a key stakeholder in discussions on coordination, efficiency and impact of aid.

She continued by presenting an update on delivery within the first quarter, shared previously with the Board through a detailed Q1 implementation update. Workie noted that financial updates covered January 2025 / February 2025 only, indicating that two weeks later, the report would be updated to reflect the end of March, 2025 financial standing.

In the broad discussions that followed, Board members expressed interest in the updates on data quality and the importance of continuing to improve timeliness and accuracy in different ways including by institutionalising and regularising interactions with publishers. They further commented on membership efforts (emphasis in the pacific region), work on the FTS pilot (also discussed during the EU Transparency Seminar and community workshops), different research partnerships such as with University of Korea, and the process of applying for IATI as a Digital Public Good.

The Board reviewed the risk register, noting that new risks had been identified (political and financial, resulting from the US administration decisions and their impacts), and other known risks elevated to high from medium (including financial sustainability, shifting aid landscape, strategic risks of non-inclusion in the FFD4 outcome document, and reputational risks through the perceptions around IATI's decision not to extend funding for a further ATI in 2026). The Board approved the mitigation measures presented in respect of each risk.

Board members expressed gratitude for the strong delivery and enquired whether there was something they themselves could do more of, to support the Secretariat work. Executive Director Workie encouraged each Board member to advocate / champion for IATI their own constituencies to join as members.

2. Financial Update

In its role as financial manager, UNOPS represented by Adriel Amaral provided a verbal update on the status of income and expenditure, progress in managing contribution agreements, and financial risks particularly against the backdrop of the recent change in the US administration. The expected total income for 2025 is $4.33 million, of which $1.25 million comes from the unspent balance carried forward from 2024. Amaral shared a new dashboard developed by UNOPS for closer monitoring and tracking of contribution agreements and income. This would be made available to Board members.

The Board thanked Workie for the presentation and approved the implementation report

3. Institutional update, UNDP

Laurel Patterson, Director, SDG Integration Group, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS) representing UNDP management joined the session remotely, together with Orria Goni, Lead Advisor Public Finance, Financial Sustainability Hub (FSH), to advise the Board of a change in the institutional arrangements of the IATI Secretariat project at UNDP. With the global SDGi program ending this year, the IATI project and its Secretariat will shift into the FSH under a new Inclusive Growth / Prosperity hub from April 1st when Patterson herself takes up a new role with the Crisis Bureau. IATI has always worked very closely with FSH (particularly related to Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFF)), and this shift offers the scope to build collaboration and share both common thematic focus and same stakeholder groups, which could be leveraged for enhanced impact. Goni and FSH Director Mr. Tom Beloe have committed to continue supporting IATI's growth. Goni was particularly enthusiastic to continue working on IATI's inclusion in the FFD4 process, referring to new High Impact Initiatives to be launched by the Government of Spain (hosting FFD4 in July) within this process, and urging IATI to engage in

these. She further noted the value of embedding IATI more closely in country systems as an important step in furthering IATI in the broader development effectiveness agenda.

The Board expressed its gratitude to Patterson for her personal unwavering support and that of the entire management of UNDP during the past year, and reiterated their enthusiasm to continue working with the new leadership at UNDP.

4. Key findings of SP Evaluation - presentation of draft report

Strategic Plan 2020-25 Evaluation report drafters Maria Borisova and Gail Hurley joined the meeting remotely and recapped the objectives of the Strategic Plan 2020-25, and outlined the process of conducting the evaluation. They reminded the Board of the terms of reference for the evaluation, including assessing IATI's effectiveness, relevance, efficiency and sustainability; performance and influencing factors; extracting key lessons to enhance future decision-making and making evidence-based recommendations for IATI's next strategic plan to improve impact and effectiveness. The consultant drafting the new Strategic Plan 2026-30, Jonathan Glennie, joined this session as an observer. The presentation was shared with Board members, with relevant slides for this session at 36-47.

The independent evaluators made the following recommendations:

1. Undertake urgent financial and institutional adjustments
2. Strengthen the value proposition to members and incentives to publish;
3. Prioritize advocacy and strategic partnerships to promote data use;
4. Drive forward the automatic exchange of data and interoperability of different data systems.

Board members provided feedback including a suggestion by Anand Nair to back up the final report with more numbers and examples such as those shared in the presentation, and to address contradictions such as on the timeliness of data, which was a point made during the previous two days of recent engagement with the EU transparency seminar and community discussions. A further question by Zainab Al-Azzawi was on the geopolitics and the new era we are currently living in; some elements are covered such as classical aid and climate funding, but not others. It was noted that this equation was changing daily and that IATI was more necessary than ever and this would be a good opportunity for rebranding. At this moment when support for aid is dwindling, IATI needs high level political champions to advocate for its work. Motai Ramokoinihi asked for additional data on improving incentives for data publishing, and heard that members want to see more, new examples, of data use. Evaluators agreed on the need to brainstorm ideas on more incentives, but elaborated on the findings that where ODA is in decline, IATI's coverage of development and humanitarian data is no longer sufficient to retain its relevance in a dynamic and rapidly shifting geopolitical environment, stressing the need to cover new funding models in this regard They also referred to fragmentation across different data systems as an area in which IATI could be a leader.

In closing, IATI Executive Director Workie shared that the contract for the evaluation concludes at the end of April, giving two weeks for the Board's final comments.

5. Strategic Directions for IATI 2026-30

Strategic Plan consultant Jonathan Glennie set out the context for the draft Strategic Directions paper shared in advance with the Board, (Slides 48-76), noting that it builds on, but does not repeat, the content of the earlier vision paper. Relevant slides shared with the Board are at 48-76. It sets out a proposal for a preliminary outline for the new strategic plan, and inputs from the Board are welcomed in further shaping the plan.

The Board expressed some feedback and will discuss with Jonathan Glennie further at a later stage.

Action point: Board to provide its detailed feedback by the end of April on the draft strategic directions paper.

Day 2

6. Membership Contribution Waivers

The Board reviewed the current membership contribution waiver process and criteria for governments and CSOs to access waivers, noting that the value of waivers represents only 0.08% of the overall budget. Some members argued that the contribution encourages commitment, especially since many members with waivers are financially able to contribute. Others suggested removing the possibility for waivers to potentially increase engagement. Discussion covered the administrative costs of collection of small amounts, alongside the political value of having engagement particularly with G77 members. Al-Azzawi suggested collecting partner country contributions for 5 years at once, to lower the administrative burden. The Board acknowledges the need for a more in-depth discussion on the membership fee structure in future. All 11 waiver requests received from partner countries were approved, and a 12th request received from a CSO remains under review by the Board pending receipt of its most recent financial statement or annual report[1]. However, the Board agreed on the importance of thinking strategically to leverage the political clout of waived members. This matter could be referred to the Financial Sustainability Working Group, or in the reactivated SOP working group for consideration on how waived members could offer value in non-financial ways.

Action point: Secretariat to confirm approval of waivers to those governments that have submitted formal requests. Referral to a WG for consideration on the membership structure of the initiative.

7. Financial Sustainability Working Group Progress

GB Chair Schepers provided an update on the FSWG's progress on behalf of the current Chair of the group who could not be present. The Board reflected on the challenges of such a small group (currently just four members) which is struggling to generate creative ideas, and is behind schedule. The Board discussed the possibility of extending the deadline by a month to allow more time for the group to complete their tasks, but Workie indicated that this would make it too challenging to prepare the 2026 work plan in time. The Board also considered inviting more members, particularly from financial institutions among the membership, to stimulate idea generation. Nair felt that time may not be the challenge, and allowing additional time may not result in more creative results. He offered instead to lead a brainstorming session with the group along with around 4 others from the IATI membership, to generate a list of ideas for the working group to filter and propose to the Board by the original deadline of June.

Action point: Nair to lead a brainstorming session with FSWG and additional members in April to come up with ideas on income generation. Secretariat to support.

[1] The request from the Association of Freelance Journalists (AFJ) is pending the organisation's provision of its most recent financial statement or annual report, as this is required to demonstrate eligibility under point 2.4.1.2 of IATI's SOP.

8. Opportunity Fund Proposal and Approval Process

The Board elaborated on the "opportunity fund" that it created in the 2025 work plan and budget. This fund could be used for strategic initiatives and opportunities arising during the year, which would otherwise not be possible due to the budget cuts made for 2025. Nair clarified that the fund is intended to allow the Secretariat to pursue business development or engagement opportunities that would require additional investment; additional consultancies as deemed relevant during quarterly board meetings; or addressing potential risks that affect the future potential income of IATI. The Board agrees to retain the fund which is already in the approved 2025 budget, and Workie requested more structure around its use. Nair volunteered to create a one-page proposal outlining the process for accessing and approving use of the fund, by mid-April.

Action point: Nair will create a one-page proposal setting out a process for accessing and using the fund, by mid-April.

9. Secretariat Work Plan Update and Prioritization

The Secretariat provided an update on its work plan implementation and prioritization for 2025. Progress is on track, however Workie noted capacity challenges due to vacant positions. Key priorities include the strategic planning process, engaging with members on data quality, resource mobilization efforts, and hiring part-time consultancies to fill gaps. The workload is manageable overall but strained in specific areas, and the Board discussed the importance of not overworking the team. The Secretariat aims to hire two part-time IPSA consultancies for 6 months to cover Engagement, and Data and technical oversight portfolio.

10. IATI Communications Strategy 2025-2028

Workie presented an ambitious three-year communication strategy and action plan for 2025-2028, thanking the Secretariat's Communications Specialist Rohini Simbodyal for her work on the plan, and Nair as the Board's focal point on communications, for his review and inputs. The plan aims to establish IATI as a leading voice for transparency, including goals to inspire one million people to engage with IATI tools, and mobilize the membership base to amplify impact. The strategy outlines target audiences, including partner country governments and top aid donors, and proposes new communication approaches such as data-driven storytelling and increased media engagement. The Board also flagged the need for reviewing the effectiveness of the IATI Connect platform and emphasized the need for proactive, deliberate messaging and consistent branding across all tools and communications.

Board members agreed on the need for more resources to expand the reach of the Communications Strategy. Al-Azzawi pointed to the importance of using case studies to demonstrate the value of their data and the potential for media coverage, offering the support of UNICEF to multiply the reach, and suggested further collaborating with universities and other organizations to increase IATI's reach. Ngounou on behalf of AfroLeadership committed to organising webinars and working with CSOs in Africa, through an upcoming network dedicated to IATI Data use. The Board also discussed the need for a more strategic approach to IATI's online presence and the potential for innovative ideas to drive the impact of the strategy.

In approving the Communications Strategy, the Board thanked the Secretariat for its leadership on this important work.

This concluded the open sessions of the meeting, and the Board continued constructive discussions with Workie on a range of board matters.