

IATI Data Use Strategy 2017-19

What are the problems we need to solve?

IATI has been successful in increasing the supply of data, but for this to contribute to sustainable development outcomes, that data must be used. While we can point to individual examples, IATI data is not yet routinely or systematically used in support of international development goals. This problem is not unique to IATI, and research to date (see Annex II) highlights the following barriers to use:

- Lack of basic awareness, training and guidance, particularly amongst non-technical audiences;
- Partner countries have difficulties in (or choose not to) integrate IATI data into national systems;
- Data quality issues affect trust in IATI data and limit its usefulness;
- Existing tools, including the IATI website, datastore and d-portal are not user-friendly to non-technical users and do not facilitate easy access to the data in common usable formats;
- Language barriers, connectivity and low levels of data literacy impact accessibility and use in different countries and regions.

Process around strategy development

Building on extensive research conducted in 2016/17 which examined the challenges faced by actual and potential data users, a draft strategy was developed by the IATI Secretariat, discussed by the Governing Board and presented at the IATI Members' Assembly by the TAG Chair in early October 2017. Members agreed the proposal to establish a Data Use Task Force but asked for further work to finalise the data use strategy. Feedback was gathered from members in plenary sessions and through virtual means, and this together with further input from an initial Data Use Task Force call has informed the latest draft.

Aim of this strategy

Drawing on IATI's agreed vision, mission and theory of change, the aim of this strategy is for all stakeholders to know and trust IATI as a source of aid data and use it routinely to help achieve sustainable development outcomes.

Rationale and purpose

It has become increasingly clear that active efforts are necessary to overcome the barriers identified above and promote data use, particularly at country level. It is equally clear that this is not a problem that the IATI Secretariat can fix on its own, but it is a priority for **everyone** in the IATI community. The purpose of this strategy is to coordinate efforts and mobilise action across the community so that IATI data contributes to sustainable development outcomes, in line with its vision and mission.

Key objectives

- **Objective 1:** Raise awareness of IATI as a source of aid data and develop a common understanding of the priority needs of different user groups.
- **Objective 2:** Improve data quality in order to facilitate use, and assure users of its reliability, including through the development of feedback mechanisms.
- **Objective 3:** Improve existing tools and develop new, user-friendly tools that help multiple actors access and use IATI data;
- **Objective 4:** Improve guidance, training and support for specific user groups;
- **Objective 5:** Promote integration of IATI data into partner country aid systems and processes.

Roles and responsibilities

In order to implement the aims of the Data Use Strategy, each group within the IATI community has a crucial part to play. While specific actions are listed in Annex I (Results Framework), the broad areas of responsibility proposed are as follows:

<p>Secretariat (led by UNDP, supported by DI)</p>	<p>The Secretariat will play a central coordinating role, support the work of the Data Use Task Force (see below) and lead outreach to key stakeholders, identifying different user groups, understanding their needs, and working with them to support them to use data in their specific contexts. This will include attendance at key data-related events, the development of materials to support data use by different groups, and work with partners at country level to support integration of IATI data into national systems.</p>
<p>IATI Governing Board</p>	<p>The Governing Board will provide oversight of the Data Use Strategy. This will include steering the Task Force through regular updates from the TAG Chair, make recommendations for decisions to the Members Assembly, and support decision-making, prioritisation of strategic actions and oversight of the Data Use Fund.</p>
<p>IATI Technical Team (DI)</p>	<p>The Technical Team is responsible for the core tools that enable IATI to function on a technical level. They must develop and maintain a reliable and sustainable infrastructure that is crucial to increase ease of access for data users.</p> <p>In the context of this strategy, the Technical Team will develop a new datastore that is reliable, sustainable and makes it easier to access and use IATI data. They will develop further data validation tools. They will also undertake the development necessary to underpin the new IATI website, and contribute to the development of new guidance for users.</p>

<p>IATI TAG community</p>	<p>The TAG community is a vital source of innovation for IATI, and members have many strong relationships with data users. The TAG community holds one another and the Technical Team to account for the quality of its work, and has a vital role to play in helping to define the user needs for the new datastore and validation tools, bringing forward new use cases for inclusion in future Standard upgrades, and playing a direct role in developing and maintaining tools that solve specific problems and respond to data users' needs.</p>
<p>Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies</p>	<p>Donor agencies play a key role as publishers, ensuring the quality of their data continually improves and reflects feedback from users, as well as using their own and partners' data for internal purposes and for traceability. Donor agencies can also support efforts at country level by ensuring their own country offices are aware of IATI, and can use it appropriately in their interactions with government counterparts, including in Development Partner Forums.</p>
<p>Partner country members</p>	<p>Partner countries can work with AIMS providers on the process of automatic data import and begin to extend awareness of IATI data laterally across government departments and within Development Partner Forums. By demanding better data through feedback loops to be established, they can help to create a cycle of improvement and increased reliability.</p>
<p>Civil Society Organisations</p>	<p>CSOs have a key role in extending awareness through their existing networks and are encouraged to share training materials where this would be valuable to others, whether locally, sectorally or regionally. As users of data, they can contribute to the specification of the datastore and the establishment of feedback mechanisms to publishers. As publishers to IATI CSOs also have a role to play as providers of information, ensuring that the quality of their own data continually improves and reflects feedback from</p>

	users, as well as using their own and partners' data for internal purposes and for traceability.
Private sector organisations	As providers of systems and tools, private sector organisations have an opportunity to innovate and generate different ways to use, present and visualise using IATI data, moving towards a future phase of storytelling using the data.

Key building blocks for joint action

While some of the activities outlined above rely on the actions of specific members of the IATI community, many others will require collaboration between members of different constituencies. There are also many shared user needs and challenges, and it is better to tackle these together. To support this, two new mechanisms are proposed:

1. A Data Use Task Force

Consistent with IATI's SOP, the proposed Data Use Task Force will be a working group established by the Chair of the Governing Board. Its role will be to drive progress across the community, identify opportunities for collaboration and help members invest in solving the right problems together. The proposed governance arrangements are as follows:

- a) Membership - volunteers for the Data Use Task Force will self-nominate, though care will be taken to ensure that the group includes representatives of all IATI constituencies.
- b) Leadership - the Task Force will be led by the TAG Chair in order to maintain clear links with the wider IATI community and with the Governing Board (of which the TAG Chair is a member).

- c) Secretariat support - within the current consortium, overall coordination of the group plus outreach will be led by UNDP, with DI providing technical leadership and support.
- d) Decision-making - the Task Force will take decisions by consensus and these will inform recommendations put forward by the Governing Board on data use for approval by the Members' Assembly, in line with the SOP.
- e) Meetings - the Task Force will meet virtually every two months, with all papers circulated in advance and available online.
- f) Initial tasks - the Task Force will work with the Secretariat to update the data use strategy based on feedback from the MA, draft TORs for its operation and put forward proposals to the Governing Board on decision-making, prioritisation of strategic actions and oversight of the Data Use Fund.

2. A Data Use Fund

Consistent with the view that “getting to use” requires action by all members of the IATI community, a new Data Use Fund will be established so that those with relevant expertise can apply for funding to deliver specific pieces of work aimed at overcoming identified barriers to use or solving real-world problems experienced by current or potential data users.

- a) Funding - the initial fund will be established using a roll-over of approximately \$250,000 set aside in the Y4 budget for work on data use. If successful, the fund should remain active in future years, and sustainable funding arrangements will be explored.
- b) Decision-making - the Task Force should make recommendations for the Board's approval on the priority areas for investment by the Fund, and put forward proposals for a mechanism (such as a small sub-group) for selecting a contractor to undertake each of piece of work identified by the Task Force. Consistent with the SOP (which give the Board authority over variations of spending that amount to less than 20% of the overall budget), the Board will have final approval of all expenditure by the Fund.

- c) The Technical Team should contribute to the setting of standards for selection and delivery of work e.g. in relation to coding, documentation and licences.
- d) Management - the Task Force will also make recommendations for Board approval on the most cost-effective way of managing the fund.
- e) Monitoring, evaluation and impact - an update on the Fund's activities will be shared at the next MA meeting, with an evaluation of its impact carried out after the end of Y5.

Overview of outputs

The results framework attached in Annex 1 sets out in detail the proposed outputs, indicators and activities that will be undertaken under each of the objectives. In summary:

Objective 1: Raise awareness of IATI as a source of aid data and develop a common understanding of the priority needs of different user groups.

Key outputs will include identification of priority user groups, a library of user stories and existing research on different user needs helping the community to understand the range of user needs for data users. As IATI data is only one of several sources of information for development, we will promote interoperability between IATI and other data standards and the development of tools that promote easier access and use of IATI data.

Objective 2: Improve data quality and usability in order to assure users of its reliability, including through the development of feedback mechanisms.

Proposed outputs under this objective include enhanced validation tools, the development of feedback mechanisms so that users can flag issues with quality, clarity, usability, or missing information to data providers that helps to develop a common understanding of what people are trying to achieve that builds on the work

in objective one, and informs future development of the Standard in line with users' needs.

Objective 3: Improve existing tools and if needed develop new, user-friendly tools that help multiple actors access and use IATI data

Starting with a fundamental understanding of user needs (objective 1), this objective supports the improvement of tools to address those needs. Priorities here are the development of a new, robust data store, and validation tools that are built into the publication process. Other elements could be the continued enhancement of d-portal and the development of a directory of tools that support data use, kept maintained on the IATI website.

Objective 4: Improve guidance, training and support for specific user groups

Key outputs will be the development of improved generic guidance materials on data use, translated into multiple languages, bespoke training for specific constituencies such as CSOs and the promotion of peer-to-peer learning.

Objective 5: Promote integration of IATI data into systems and processes at partner country level.

Outputs under the final objective include an AIMS workshop run by partner countries to identify and overcome the challenges to automated data import, training to support use of IATI data by aid management staff in five partner countries and efforts to support integration of IATI data into national systems and processes more widely. This should also involve local donor offices, who are key players in national aid systems and processes.

What does success look like in the medium term?

This is an ambitious strategy and in the next three to five years, collective action should result in the following achievements:

- Existing and potential users will be familiar with IATI as a source of aid data and, where it's relevant to them, they will be using it in their daily work. We will investigate how to measure an increase in awareness.
- Data quality will no longer be identified as a barrier to use, and trust in IATI data will have increased.
- Improved tools and guidance will ensure that anyone who wants to access IATI data can do so easily, and use it to meet their specific needs.
- IATI data will be integrated into partner country systems and processes where appropriate.
- The role of IATI data, alongside other sources of data, will be recognised in key international processes as contributing to sustainable development outcomes and improving operational effectiveness in humanitarian crises.

What can we achieve by August 2019?

We also need to develop short-term milestones against which progress can be measured and these need to be owned by the whole community. It is proposed that once the overall strategy is agreed, the Data Use Task Force helps to develop a small number of milestones that are linked to the results framework set out in Annex II, and can be achieved by the end of the current hosting period.

Monitoring and evaluation arrangements

This strategy is accompanied by a monitoring framework which will be reviewed periodically by the Data Use Task Force, supported by the Secretariat. Updates on progress and obstacles will be shared with the Governing Board on a quarterly basis by the TAG Chair. An internal evaluation will be carried out after two years.

Budget and workplan

A draft budget and workplan for this work was presented to the MA. Once the strategy has been finalised, this will be updated and incorporated into the overall Y5 budget and workplan, which will be presented to the Board for discussion, then to the MA for approval on a no objection basis.

Annex I: Specific outputs/Results framework

The IATI Data Use Strategy Results Framework can be accessed here: <http://bit.ly/2BdqVUy>

Annex II: Research findings underpinning strategy development

Key research findings by specific data user groups

Partner country government ministries / agencies

- The strongest demand and existing use case for IATI data is to inform budget preparation by finance ministries. Forward-looking data on ODA resources is cited as particularly useful as many struggle to get responses from direct requests for information from providers of development cooperation.
- A small number of other uses cases were discovered, including line-ministries using data for strategic/forward planning, specific coordination in response to crises and providing information to parliamentarians.

Donors (bilateral and multilateral) at both headquarter and country levels

- The most evident current use case for IATI data in practice is for information portals set up by donors and development partners. Data is also used to answer requests from accountability actors for information, particularly the media.
- There is demand for using IATI data for improved accountability of grantees, internal reporting, portfolio analysis and better coordination of development cooperation with other development partners.
- Staff at HQ level also see the benefit of IATI data being used at country level for portfolio analysis for planning and coordination purposes.

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) implementing development cooperation activities

- NGOs are particularly keen to understand where activities occur at a sub-national level to ensure their assistance complements other activities in similar sectors and locations that they are working in.
- Geo-location data and contact details for IATI publishers were amongst key information required to improve coordination and planning.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) holding development actors to account

- Evidence for the use of IATI-based information to hold development resource providers and implementers to account is the most limited to date.
- CSOs want to use IATI data to help verify whether aid/development activities have been implemented, whether the interventions were effective and if assistance is being distributed fairly.
- A demand for forward looking data to raise awareness to local people about planned services was cited as useful for local CSOs.

Research organisations / Academics

- There is a demand for IATI data to inform analysis by research organisations and academics, where data on sectors and results is seen as particularly useful.

Media

- There have been a number of high profile uses of IATI data to hold bilateral donors to account. For example, [The Times newspaper created a Dashboard](#) using IATI data to look at the UK Department for International Development's spending.

Key research findings – General

- IATI data is useful, providing huge amounts of information that partner country governments are unable to access or have difficulty accessing elsewhere.
- Demand for better data has extended beyond partner countries. Other user groups, including bilateral and multilateral donors and CSOs, want better access to IATI data for coordination, decision-making and accountability.
- Improving data use tools would have the greatest impact on improving use of existing IATI data across data user groups. Tools need to be more accessible, robust and user-friendly, while search parameters and functions need to be widened to take into account varying user needs.
- Data users want access to a wider range of IATI data such as humanitarian, south-south cooperation, SDG delivery and specific sectors, e.g. agriculture and climate finance.
- There is low awareness of IATI, both as an initiative and a source of data, amongst staff working in donor offices/embassies in-country.
- There is a strong demand from partner country civil servants for the automatic import of IATI data into their Aid Information Management Systems (AIMS) which most currently struggle with (although there is positive progress in some cases).
- Integrating IATI (and AIMS) data into a government's Public Financial Management System (PFMS) would increase the use of IATI data in decision making within partner country governments.
- Partner country governments' priority need is for IATI training and technical assistance to support data use.

- IATI engagement with data users is hampered by staff turnover within organisations. Knowledge and understanding of IATI needs to be embedded in an institution, not just amongst one or two people.
- Data users want to learn from their peers within their IATI constituencies.
- Data users want support and guidance in multiple languages.
- Data users are encountering a range of data quality issues that affects the trust in and usefulness of IATI data (including timeliness, sub-location and double counting).