



Meeting of IATI Steering Committee Members and Observers: 2-3 December 2015
Auditorium 3, UN City, Marmorvej 51, Copenhagen, Denmark

Paper 4: Members Advisory Group Paper on Vision and Strategic Direction

Introduction

The Members Advisory Group (MAG) noted that the IATI evaluation confirmed it was a “critical requirement for IATI to define and communicate clearly its vision and strategic direction”. It therefore identified ‘vision and direction’ as key issues to focus on in the run up to the December 2015 Steering Committee meeting.

The MAG concluded that, in its role as an interim advisory body, it would be appropriate for it to make recommendations on how a vision should be agreed; propose some key questions on which the Steering Committee should be asked to provide a steer; and set out relevant background and context which must inform those choices. The MAG considered providing a draft statement, but felt that it would be more productive to consult the Steering Committee on the elements of a vision, rather than conduct a drafting exercise in the large group.

The MAG suggests that the proposed new Board is empowered to draft a new vision and three year strategic framework for IATI, based on feedback from members in Copenhagen, and the findings of the evaluation. To assist this process, the MAG has identified four key areas for discussion and decision by the Steering Committee, and puts forward its own recommendations on each of these. This paper contains background information at Appendix 1.

Questions for consultation and MAG recommendations

1) Should IATI just be a global data standard, or also a political initiative?

The evaluator suggested that respondents have two different views of IATI’s future vision and direction:

- a) “IATI should focus on, and limit itself to being and maintaining a global data standard for development resource flows.”
- b) “IATI should (in addition) work to ensure that aid financing data is fully published, and is used by partner countries to inform decisions that reduce poverty.”

MAG members can see the attraction of reaching a point where IATI is simply the established global data standard that organisations use to routinely publish high quality, re-useable open data as part of the normal business of supporting development. At the same time, the evaluation makes it clear that there is more to be done to improve the quality of IATI data and increase its use, especially in partner countries. It also recommends more outreach to the increasingly diverse number of development actors and greater investment in communicating the IATI offer. Success in each of these areas requires continued action at the political level to complement the technical development of the IATI Standard. The evaluation confirms that “IATI has been successful in putting aid transparency on the international agenda” as well as noting that “stakeholders perceive IATI as being successful in developing a common open

data standard”. This suggests that in the medium term (0-5 years), IATI needs to continue to be both a successful political initiative and a robust global data standard.

Recommendation 1

The MAG recommends that the new vision and three-year strategic framework should continue to reflect IATI’s dual role as a political initiative and a technical standard. Do members agree?

2) Should IATI be positioned as a tool for increasing aid transparency and effectiveness or as an open data standard that can capture information on all international resources for development, and promote effectiveness more broadly?

The evaluation highlights the fact that the landscape in which IATI operates is changing. While IATI grew out of the aid effectiveness agenda, the world has moved on significantly since 2008. Both the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action and the recently agreed Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development emphasise that aid alone is not enough, and that all available resources – domestic and international, public and private, development and climate – will need to be mobilised to realise these ambitious global goals. Indeed ‘aid’ will make up less of the overall resources contributing to development over time, but the importance of supporting development effectiveness and accountability with timely, comprehensive and forward looking information will apply equally to the emerging new mix of resources and channels.

The evaluation says that IATI’s positioning statement should reflect this change from aid to all resource flows for development, In Ottawa, the outreach and communications session heard calls to “change the way we talk about IATI – frame it in terms of open data, open governance, open development rather than aid transparency/effectiveness”. The MAG agrees with these sentiments, and believes that increasingly positioning IATI as an open data standard that can capture data on all international resource flows for development is essential in ensuring its relevance to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Recommendation 2

The MAG recommends that IATI should be positioned within the 2030 Agenda as an open data standard that can capture data on all international resources for development, and support results and impact more broadly. Do members agree?

3) Should IATI consider changing its name and branding to reflect the proposed change from aid to all resources?

The evaluation also touched on the issue of IATI’s name and branding in relation to its future positioning, noting that the conversation on whether the terms “Aid” and “Initiative” remain useful “reflects a perceived weakness in its brand and a desire by an important segment of the IATI community to strengthen its relevance and increase its potential in looking ahead”. The MAG notes that the term “Aid” already feels potentially exclusionary to several members and other providers of development resources. IATI has struggled to engage with providers of South-South Co-operation, and other constituencies who do engage with IATI and publish to the Standard but do not regard themselves as providing “aid”. While not underestimating the risk in adjusting known brands, the MAG believes the time is right to question whether the continued use of the word “Aid” is a help or a hindrance in terms of IATI’s future positioning within the 2030 Agenda in an increasingly complex and diverse development resource landscape.

Recommendation 3

The MAG recommends that the new Board should begin a process to consider re-naming and re-branding IATI in the interests of supporting outreach to a more diverse range of development actors, underpinning its positioning within the 2030 Agenda. Do members agree?

4) Should IATI define a new set of values that better reflect its proposed positioning within the 2030 Agenda?

At present, those wishing to join IATI are required to support the [IATI Accra Statement](#), so membership is directly linked to endorsement of the aid transparency and effectiveness agenda. As noted above, the language of this agenda is perceived as exclusionary by some new actors. If Steering Committee members agree with the MAG's recommendation (2) above, it follows that a new, more inclusive statement of values may be required as the basis of IATI membership going forwards. For example, this might include a commitment to promote transparency and accountability in development, share good practice, encourage others to publish to the IATI Standard and support use of data in partner countries.

Recommendation 4

The MAG recommends that the new Board is also empowered to develop a new, more inclusive statement of values for IATI as the basis for future membership. Do members agree?

Appendix 1 - Background

Where have we come from?

- IATI has its origins in the aid effectiveness agenda.
- The original [IATI Accra Statement in 2008](#) was endorsed by nine bilateral donors, plus UNDP, EC, Bank, GAVI and Hewlett Foundation. In this statement, they committed to:
 - Increase their aid transparency by providing more detailed, up-to-date information on aid, as well as more reliable information on intended future aid where possible
 - Build on existing standards and consult partner countries, CSOs, parliamentarians and other users of aid information to agree common definitions and a format for sharing this.
 - Urge all public and private aid donors, and those who delivered their aid, to work with them to agree and implement these common standard and format, expecting their implementing partners to adhere to the same standards of transparency.

Where have we got to?

- The Steering Committee agreed the IATI Standard in 2010/11, so IATI became a global data standard, as well as a political initiative.
- The Busan High Level Forum in 2011 moved the agenda from aid effectiveness to development effectiveness, and IATI was referenced in para 23c in relation to implementation of a common, open standard for electronic publication of information on resources for development cooperation¹ - a commitment reinforced by the G8 in the Loch Erne communiqué in 2013, and by members of the Global Partnership at the Mexico High Level Meeting in 2014.
- In 2013, the IATI Steering Committee selected the current consortium to host IATI on the basis of a bid that set out a vision of IATI as a streamlined component of the aid effectiveness agenda and development cooperation architecture, with membership expanded to cover as many actors as possible within the changing architecture, at the same time as improving the credibility and usability of data.
- IATI's membership has grown to 69 organisations, including bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, partner country governments, CSOs, foundations, development finance institutions and private sector actors.
- Over 350 organisations currently publish their data to the IATI Standard, including representatives of all of the providers of development cooperation named above.
- The quality of the data they publish to IATI is mixed – the best IATI publishers are already meeting in full the Busan commitment to publish timely, comprehensive, forward-looking data on their activities, but others are lagging behind.
- The evaluation identifies “getting to use” as critical to IATI's sustainability, and highlights the vital link between improved data quality and increased data use.
- IATI members promoted IATI as a standard that could capture information on all international resource flows during this year's FFD negotiations, and IATI's contribution to greater transparency is noted in the Addis Ababa Agenda for Action.
- IATI is increasingly working with other global data standards in order to find common solutions to common data standard problems, as well as increasing the usefulness of

¹ Implement a common, open standard for electronic publication of timely, comprehensive and forward-looking information on resources provided through development co-operation, taking into account the statistical reporting of the OECD-DAC and the complementary efforts of the International Aid Transparency Initiative and others

IATI data – the last SC meeting endorsed a [statement on collaboration](#) with other global data standards.

Where are we going?

a) IATI and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

- The newly agreed Agenda 2030 sets out an ambitious, universal vision for sustainable development, based on 17 goals and 169 associated targets – whereas the MDGs set targets for reducing the proportion of people living in poverty, the SDGs set the much harder target of leaving no-one behind.
- The outcome documents from both the UN Summit and the Addis FFD conference emphasise the need to mobilise all resources – domestic and international, public and private, development and climate - to meet these global goals.
- ODA from traditional donors will make up a small proportion of the overall resources required to meet the SDGs, but the importance of supporting development effectiveness and accountability with timely, comprehensive and forward looking information will apply equally to all of these resource flows. Rather than being an aid transparency initiative, IATI has the opportunity to become an open data standard that captures information on all international resource flows for development, and helps to promote results and impact more broadly.
- IATI could potentially contribute to the 2030 Agenda in two ways:
 - Through d-portal, IATI provides a ready-made tool for monitoring international resource flows for development at country level, as well as providing decision-makers at national and sub-national level with information to support decisions on resource allocations.
 - Pending final decisions on the global indicator framework, IATI could also contribute to global monitoring of the SDGs, particularly with regard to the means of implementation targets set under goals 1 and 17, by providing data on international resource flows beyond ODA (which will be monitored by OECD DAC).