Meeting of IATI Steering Committee Members and Observers

UN City, Copenhagen, Denmark 2014

Paper 4a: Country Survey - IATI Data and Aid Information Management Systems (AIMS)

INTRODUCTION

At the October 2013 Steering Committee partner countries noted that IATI data was not readily available at country level and called for data published through the IATI standard to be made more readily available through existing country systems. This survey was developed by the IATI Secretariat with inputs from partner countries to review the needs of Aid Information Management Systems (AIMS) around the world and to assess, inter alia, how the automatic exchange of data in IATI format may improve access and use of IATI data at country level to support planning processes.

The data contained in this report, together with all raw data (with personal details removed) can be accessed here[1]. The survey itself can be viewed here[2].

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

The survey results echo and indeed amplify the demands made in Accra in 2008 and the outcomes of the UNDP-IATI regional workshops on country needs conducted in 2009. Timely, accurate and forward-looking data are critical for AIMS to play their proper role within the public financial management of the partner country. The work undertaken in 2008-9 painted the issues with broad brushstrokes. While these needs still remain to some extent, this survey uses the IATI standard to pinpoint more clearly the challenges still faced at partner country level, and suggests some areas for focus in order to bring the promise of IATI data into reality.

This survey is seen as the basis for more detailed discussion leading to practical suggestions by which IATI data will bring the greatest value at country level.

AUTOMATIC DATA EXCHANGE

Based on pilot work already carried out, IATI automatic data exchange has been shown to offer two immediate improvements for AIMS. Moving data electronically from a Development Partner's (DP's) own system directly into the AIMS can improve both the **frequency** and the **accuracy** of data delivery. Less time is required in manually keying data into the AIMS, avoiding data entry errors and improving accuracy. DPs in-country can work with AIMS managers locally to ensure locally relevant information accurately supports the data automatically populating the AIMS. More time is available in-country for data verification and addition of locally-specific data. With donors working hard to improve the quality of their published data, partner countries in more than 70 AIMS countries can really begin to benefit from the availability of this data.

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[1] https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1T1p7lPn84loaBUa0u4n7CI7MBLuJ7oT221y403q-rc4/edit#gid=1983556
[2] http://www.esurveyspro.com/Survey.aspx?id=cf64500c-6ca7-43d8-bb70-5bde76f7758e

METHODOLOGY

Where more than one response was received from a number of countries, the following selection criteria were adopted:

- For questions requiring objective answers only one response per country was included. Typically this came from the most senior government official responding.
- For questions requiring opinions, two responses per country - one from government and one from a UNDP or other consultant - were selected (where present).

PARTICIPATION

Invitations were sent out to 116 AIMS specialists around the world. Responses were received from 41 people in 24 countries. Government officials, aid effectiveness specialists and other consultants all participated.

Countries	
Bangladesh, Benin, Burma / Myanmar, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritania, Moldova, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Romania, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania, Yemen	24

Roles of Respondents	
Government officials	22
UNDP aid effectiveness specialists	11
Other consultants	8

Respondents reported on proprietary and bespoke systems housed in a range of government departments.

Aid Information Management System Providers	
Aid Management Platform	11
Bespoke	7
Development Assistance Database	6

In which ministry is the Aid Information Management System located?	
Planning / Development (or similar)	12
Finance (or similar)	7
Foreign Affairs / Cooperation (or similar)	2
Other	2

DATA COLLECTION

Development partner (DP) country offices are the primary source of data for AIMS. Surprisingly in only 25% of cases do DPs rely on the AIMS as the primary channel for data into government systems. Most DPs provide data to a range of departments, and this multiplication of reporting is often a cause of confusion. In all but one case it is reported that data is keyed into the AIMS by both DP and AIMS staff.

What is the primary source of data entered into the AIMS?	(%)
Development Partner country offices	71
Government ministries	29

Do development partners provide data to government agencies other than the AIMS?	(%)
No, to the AIMS only	25
Finance	42
Foreign Affairs / Cooperation	25
Development / Planning	21
Other	21
Budget	17

What is the primary method of adding data into the AIMS?	(%)
Keyed in by development partners	48
Keyed in by AIMS staff	33
Keyed in by both AIMS and DP	10
Keyed in by Consultant	5
Imported from Spreadsheet	5

FREQUENCY AND TIMELINESS OF DATA UPDATES

60% of respondents believe it is important for DPs to provide data to AIMS on a monthly basis. The survey reveals however that only 6% actually do so. A total of 87% of users called for quarterly updates - while only 53% of DPs meet this request. There is a similar lack of delivery on the timeliness of data when it is supplied.

Rank the importance of the following categories of information that you receive from your development partners.		Critical / Important (%)	Nice to have / Not Important (%)
Frequency	Development partners should add and update data monthly	61	39
	Development partners should add and update data quarterly	87	13
Timeliness	Latest data should be no more than a month old	73	27
	Latest data should be no more than three months old	91	9

How often, on average, do your biggest five development partners provide you with new and updated information?	(%)
Quarterly	47
Six-monthly	29
Annually	12
On demand	6
Monthly	6

How current, on average, is the new and updated data when it is provided to you by your five biggest development partners?	(%)
One month old	44
Three months old	19
Six months old	13
One year old	19
More than one year old	6

FORWARD-LOOKING DATA FOR BUDGET PREPARATION

59% of respondents indicated that the AIMS provided insufficient information to support the budget preparation process.

Does the AIMS contain sufficient data to provide the budget preparation team with all the required information timely and accurate manner?	(%)
No	59
Yes	41

The main reasons for this are ascribed to the lack of timely, accurate forward-looking data.

If not, what are the reasons?	(%)
AIMS data is not available in time	69
Development partner financial year does not match budget planning cycle	46
Forward-looking activity level data is missing	46
Forward-looking data is inaccurate	38
Sector or budget classification in AIMS cannot be matched with budget account codes	38
Activities in AIMS cannot be matched against budget lines	31
AIMS data is different from data provided by development partners to budget team	31
AIMS data is not reliable	23
Lack of human and technical resources	8

91% respondents said that they needed forward-looking activity data for the next financial year.

Rank the importance of the following categories of information that you receive from your development partners.		Critical / Important (%)	Nice to have / Not Important (%)
Forward Looking	Annual project budget for next three years must be available	78	22
	Annual project budgets for next year must be available	91	9

DATA REQUIREMENTS

Rank the importance of the following categories of information that you receive from your development partners.	Critical / Very Important (%)	Important	Not Important / Not Entered	Entered by AIMS staff only
Project Title and Description	91	4	0	4
Actual disbursements	90	10	0	0
Total project budget/commitment	82	9	5	5
Flow Type (ODA or non-ODA)	78	4	9	9
Project Dates	77	18	0	5
Sector classifications	77	0	5	18
Annual forward-looking budgets / planned disbursements	73	14	9	5
Details of Participating Organisations	70	26	0	4
Sub-national geographic information	70	13	9	9
Classifications relating to national development plans	52	9	13	26
Results - Outcomes and Impacts	52	26	9	13
Results – Outputs	52	30	4	13
Information relating to national budget classification	45	9	9	36
Donor Project Number	43	35	13	9

While much of this table confirms information already well known, there are three issues are of particular relevance to IATI:

- 78-82% of respondents consider results data (78% Outcomes and impacts, rising to 82% Outputs) to be very important or important.
- In relation to national budget classification, only 54% of partner countries consider DPs as the best solution to budget integration. This supports a similar finding from the table on budget integration on the previous page.
- AIMS are not currently interested in aligning their data with DP's own data (this is one of the biggest problems likely to be faced when it comes to importing IATI-formatted data into production AIMS systems for the first time.

AWARENESS OF IATI

Among stakeholders directly dealing with AIMS, there was a very high level of awareness of IATI. However, it is clear from the responses in relation to those further away from AIMS that IATI's outreach strategy should include awareness-raising among a much broader cross-section at country level including civil society, the national press and especially Parliamentarians.

How aware do you think each of the following officials or stakeholder groups are about what IATI is and does?	Very Aware / Fairly Aware (%)
Head of AIMS	92
AIMS staff	86
Minister responsible for AIMS	75
Development partner head of missions	66
Development partner focal points	62
Head of national budget	48
Civil Society (Transparency & Accountability)	37
Head of state	15
National press	14
Parliamentarians	4

ACTION REQUESTED OF STEERING COMMITTEE

Steering Committee members are requested to consider the findings of this survey as a basis for discussion on some practical ways in which they can support the increased use of data at country level, including by supporting further efforts to institutionalise automatic data exchange with AIMS in partner countries.