



Supporting aid transparency

// IATI aims to make information about aid spending easier to access, use and understand //



Example of the benefits of transparency

UGANDA - a randomised control trial of community health clinics showed the remarkable effects of transparency on health care in Uganda. Clinics subjected to greater public scrutiny reduced under-five mortality rates by 33%. The experiment randomly assigned community health clinics to receive published "report cards" and to be subject to NGO-organised public meetings on the quality of the clinics' health care.

In those clinics receiving transparency "treatment", waiting time for care decreased, absenteeism among doctors and nurses plummeted, clinics got cleaner, fewer drugs were stolen, 40-50% more children received dietary supplements and vaccines, health services got used more and, most impressively, 33% fewer children died before their 5th birthday.

This amounted to 550 saved lives in one small area of Uganda encompassing only 55,000 households—a strong testament that transparency in development finance can save lives.

¹ Bjorkman and Svensson,

About IATI

The International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) was set up in 2008 by 18 leading international development organisations. It aims to make information about aid spending easier to access, use and understand.

Launched at the Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, this multi-stakeholder initiative brings together donors, developing countries and civil society organisations to help donors and developing countries meet their Accra Agenda for Action commitments on aid transparency.

After widespread consultation, IATI decided to do this by:

- developing and agreeing a common standard for the publication of aid information – the IATI standard (<http://iatistandard.org/>) which includes agreements on what to publish, common definitions and formats for publication, and a Framework for Implementation; and
- setting up an on-line registry (<http://iatiregistry.org/>) that acts as an address book to the location of aid information that participating donors publish on their own websites.

What will the initiative do?

The new standard builds on existing agreements and definitions. It provides comparable classifications and definitions so that citizens, governments, parliamentarians, and people working in the development community can find out:

- how much money is being provided
- when it was, or is, due to be paid out
- what the funds are expected to achieve.

Participating donors are adjusting their existing processes for collecting information about their aid expenditure in order to publish more information, more quickly, in a common, open format. This will enable IATI to meet the needs of a much wider range of stakeholders. Donors choose their own systems for collecting and publishing information. A new central registry makes it possible for people to find information quickly and easily because it points users to where the information they need has been published.

Publish Once, Use Often

Organisations only need to publish their aid information in one place and one format. This allows many different information users to access the information they need and use it for their own diverse purposes. This widens access to comparable aid information. It results in more openness and accountability. It makes it easier to monitor aid effectiveness and thus help to accelerate poverty reduction.

Who Benefits?

Having one gateway for accessing information from different sources is essential for:

- governments of developing countries who need to know how much aid is spent in their country and when the money will be paid out, so that they can plan their budgets and activities accordingly;
- citizens who want to check whether governments are keeping their promises and hold them to account;
- participating donors who are able to meet their 'access to information' obligations and reduce their administrative costs because they only need to publish their information once and no longer need to respond to multiple information requests;
- donors who want to co-ordinate their spending with that of other donors;
- community-based organisations who want to know what resources are available and influence how they are used;
- anti-corruption activists who want to track recipient governments' aid receipts and expenditure to find out whether money is being siphoned off; and
- journalists and researchers who want to investigate where aid is going and how effectively it is being spent.

Why is IATI needed?

People working in development find it difficult to gain access to information. Donors devote increasing resources responding to numerous information requests. Aid information in the main existing data sources, although can be good, is often out of date. None of the sources provide sufficiently comprehensive aid information to meet user's diverse needs.

The main sources are:

- Creditor Reporting System (CRS). A widely respected online database from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It provides high quality statistics on past annual aid flows from DAC donor countries, the European Union, the World Bank, and some UN agencies. Statistics are not as extensive or up to date enough for developing country governments and others wanting information on current and planned aid flows.
- AidData. A relatively new database by Development Gateway, Brigham Young University and the College of William and Mary. It includes CRS data and data from donors, with more detailed descriptions and sectors, more data on non-concessional flows and geocoding of projects. It links to recipients' aid management systems and can aggregate data from the IATI registry.
- Aid Information Management Systems (AIMS). Many recipient countries have systems to monitor aid flows, but recipient governments must request information from donors. This is labour intensive and replies from donors are late, incomplete or missing. IATI allows automatic data transfer that makes AIMS data more complete.
- Annual reports. Some donors publish their aid spending information in annual reports on their websites; people who contribute money (via taxes or charitable giving) can monitor spend. But, this information is difficult to compare with information from other sources.
- NGOs and charitable foundation reports. There are thousands of NGOs and foundations, who between them give millions of dollars to developing countries. Not all publish detailed information on their websites. IATI is working with some of them to collect the information in one place in a common, comparable format.

IATI STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Australia, Bangladesh, Betteraid, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Development Gateway, Development Initiatives Poverty Research, Dominican Republic, European Commission, Germany, Ghana, Hewlett Foundation, International Budget Partnership, INGO Accountability Charter, Malawi, Montenegro, Nepal, Netherlands, Publish What You Fund, Rwanda, Sweden, Transparency International, UNDP, United Kingdom, Vietnam and World Bank.

FIND OUT MORE

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How will IATI improve on existing systems?

IATI offers added-value in a number of ways. Those providing data to IATI:

- update their information at least quarterly, so it is more timely;
- will publish forward-looking data, such as project budgets, planned disbursements, and aggregate country budgets;
- can publish in a way that data can be reconciled with the financial year of the recipient country (and IATI is undertaking work to classify data by national budget classifications);
- publish more detailed project information, such as which organisation receives the funds, details of disbursements and expenditure, and contact details;
- can publish key documents, as well as data, including documents specifying any conditions attached and results expected;
- can opt to publish detailed geographical information so that projects can be presented on a map showing the villages, towns and regions they benefit.

Data published under IATI is legally open for re-use. Published in a common data format, it is readily comparable and easily combined with other datasets to meet users individual needs.

All donors, including providers of south-south development co-operation, NGOs, foundations and other private donors, are invited to use the IATI standard, so it offers the potential for being much more comprehensive than current reporting systems.

How does IATI operate?

IATI is not an organisation but a network of like-minded organisations who have come together to promote greater aid transparency. As of September 2011, 21 organisations who collectively account for around half of global aid spending are IATI signatories. In addition 22 developing countries have endorsed IATI. Other organisations and developing countries participate as observers.

The initiative is serviced by a small secretariat comprising staff from the UK Department for International Development, United Nations Development Programme and Development Initiatives Poverty Research (DIPR). It is run by a multi-stakeholder Steering Committee, assisted on technical and implementation work by the multi-stakeholder Technical Advisory Group.

How to get involved with IATI

Donors:

- Join IATI by endorsing the Framework for Implementation and agreeing a timetable for publishing your information to the IATI standard;
- Contribute to IATI financing and receive help in implementing and developing the standard;
- Work with IATI to see how to map your information to the IATI standard.

Partner countries:

- Endorse IATI's aims and objectives and encourage donors and other providers to publish their aid information to the IATI standard;
- Publish aid information provided by donors and other organisations locally and link it to the IATI Registry;
- Participate in application of the standard in partner countries and use the information for aid coordination, national development planning, budgeting and accountability processes at the country level.

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):

- Encourage donors to publish their information to the IATI standard
- Join IATI by endorsing the Framework for Implementation and agreeing a timetable for publishing your information to the IATI standard
- Participate in consultations on the application of the IATI standard to CSOs.

