# Partos & IATI Results

Paper to report back to Partos member organisations[1] about the IATI Technical Advisory Group meeting in Dar Es Salaam (March 6-9, 2017).

March 20, 2017

## Context

The IATI Technical Advisory Group meeting took place in Dar Es Salaam on March 6-9, 2017. The meeting consisted of a few parts:

- Community meeting on Monday: introductions and general presentations.
- User experiences on Tuesday and Wednesday: three parallel tracks to exchange experiences and look ahead with presentations, discussions and workshops.
- Standard Day on Thursday: a more formal discussion about technical proposals feeding into future upgrades of the Standard.

As part of the user experiences, we presented the Partos paper and discussed working with results on Tuesday, and Bond and WaterAid hosted a workshop on their 8 principles and proposals on Wednesday.

The Standard Day on Thursday tested for broad consensus on possible changes to the standard, either in the next decimal or in the next integer udate:

- There will be an official upgrade consultation process for the next decimal upgrade (to version 2.03). Decimal upgrades should only bring *backward compatible, optional* changes to the standard. There will be a full consultation process, and the Members Assembly in June will make formal decisions on what to include in this upgrade. The purpose of the Standard Day was to test for broad consensus on issues that then would not have to be discussed separately again in the consultation process later on.
- There are no concrete plans yet for the next integer upgrade (to version 3.01). Integer upgrades can break existing versions of the standard, and should not happen often. It is possible to *deprecate* certain elements in the standard in the next 2.0x version, indicating that these will likely be removed in the next integer update. Part of the discussions on the Standard Day was on possible changes for this next integer upgrade, and on disposing of earlier versions of the Standard.

This document captures some observations on these discussions, and on working with results in IATI. This will be input for the Partos workshop on working with results data in IATI, to be held on April 11th.

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1Partos is the Dutch membership body for organisations working in international development.

# General observations

## SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals were a recurring theme in many of the discussions. They will be a key mechanism within UN institutions to report on results, and so a lot will happen around this in the years to come.

At the moment, the SDGs indicators are not listed as special vocabulary of indicators, so IATI is still at an early stage here. An open question is whether IATI will function as a platform to share results on the SDGs, and how to link the indicators to other data sources.

## Humanitarian data

Within the context of the Grand Bargain, IATI is selected as a format to exchange data.

In general, the data exchange within the humanitarian sector has been defined a lot more formally, and is functioning already a lot better. There are processes to gather bottom-up data in spreadsheets, usually under heavy time pressure.

HXL, the Humanitarian Exchange Language, and HDX, the Humanitarian Data eXchange, offer a format and a repository that is quickly winning ground for data exchange, with relatively few database skills required. An important development is to make 3W and 4W reporting processes more compatible with both HXL and IATI.

Together with Young Innovations[2], and with additional checks on data quality, it is now possible to import IATI data into OCHA's Forward Tracking Survey system (FTS). This data is also re-published by OCHA.

Within the humanitarian sector, a lot of focus is on so-called *p-codes* for geographical information: these p-codes are standardised by the UN, based on a country's own data about different administrative levels. They're not available for every country, and not linked with IATI data right now. These locations mainly focus on geographical boundaries (and mandates), rather than points.

Another code list is for *Glide* codes to designate emergencies: originally, these codes were only issued for natural disasters, but now these are assigned to all types of humanitarian aid, to (eventually) replace a separate OCHA code list for these events.

The way activities develop in the humanitarian sector (in disaster responses) differs from the IATI model:

- The start usually is a strategic framework, across independent actors, based on a needs assessment, and continuously adjusting the allocation of funds depending on priorities and needs, with specific organisations starting activities as a result of that.
- There is a need to publish humanitarian appeals.
- A major question is "how much money do we have as a whole?", at a plan, sector or cluster-level. There is less interest in expenditures, more in the planning and allocation of funds.
    - A challenge is unearmarked and pooled funds, without a clear link between resources and how they are used.
    - Also, reporting on incoming funds before they are allocated, and on multi-step allocation: to country offices, then to outcomes, then to specific projects.

2Young Innovations in Nepal also developed AidStream

- Another major question is how to link a plan (on a yearly basis) to strategic objectives and eventually implementing organisations: this is where there seems to be overlap with the Theory of Change in organisations and partnerships: the results and objectives may be defined before activities or projects are conceived, and updates to the strategy would need to be preserved.
  - There are no simple 1-to-1 relations between objectives and activities.
  - There are shared and overlapping contributions.
  - There is difficulty in aggregating financial and beneficiary data (overlapping and complementary data on case loads, beneficiaries reached, etc.)
- A third major challenge, not addressed at the TAG, is about reconciling different organisation-activity level world views, in essence an extension of the previous point: how to match internal activities at a purchase level (overhead, expenditures) with IATI activities.

## Donor harmonisation

There was a separate discussion on harmonising donor guidelines.
- The Dutch MFA presented their case of replacing progress reporting with IATI data.
  - There still are barriers wiithin the Ministry as well, sometimes departments or embassies are more worried than grant recipients.
  - An important focus is on multilaterals: for instance asking the OECD to report to the Ministry in IATI format as well. Especially in the context of multilaterals, donor harmonisation becomes even more important.
  - Where applicable, receiving governments are also pushed to publish IATI data.
  - The Dutch MFA deals with direct funding relations: these already require a change of culture. Following the money chain changes the needs and the nature of information, and therefore the guidelines may be different as well.
- The British DFID presented their case, where focus now shifts from NGOs to private sector recipients, and where "full chain" transparency is needed:
  - DFID needs information further along the chain, working with multi-tier flows.
  - A major question is "why does my data not appear in DevTracker?"
  - Can we find out how much organisations are spending as unit prices? (e.g. per vaccine in different countries?)
- The Swedish SIDA already requires XML-based reporting since 2004, the complaint that "XML is too complicated" did not occur for them.
- Pelle presented the case of the Dutch Red Cross, and the fact that the Dutch MFA now accepts it as progress report as an argument in discussions with other donors: "if you want another format, we'll need more overhead for the progress reports".

## NGO and country-level experiences

- Sarah (Bond) remarked that NGOs want to use the whole standard, not just a part.
- Introducing the standard is *change management*: organisations need resources and time to identify and address gaps in their internal data.
- Donors should advocate towards tool builders to have tools that can work with the standard they desire.
- Start with the questions you want answered: "do you know IATI?" is not a good starting point, and needs at a country level (also within a donor) are often different from those at a global level.
- We need to work with local champions, and if we do, resource mobilisation at a country-level is often also possible.

# Results

The main conclusion from both the CSO/NGO and the humanitarian discussions and in general, is that a wider discussion is needed on how to integrate IATI with results. It is clear that apart from very direct per-activity output indicators, it is difficult to declare or monitor outcome or even impact or SDG indicators in meaningful way per activity.

There will be an IATI Working Group on results, to be formally instated at the Members' Assembly in June, with the task to formulate how results can become part of IATI.

- Perhaps as part of version 3.01 for IATI, perhaps as a separate standard to publish a Theory of Change
- There needs to be a focus on use cases: especially at a country level, in relation to SDGs, there are issues around double counting, usefullness, channels used, subnational level data, and so on.
- In general, around funding and results, there are reasons not to publish data to safeguard local non-state actors.
- There may be a role for UN agencies (or others?) to provide country-level data at subnational levels? Should UNDP offices take a more pro-active role in this? (Since UN results at the SDG level and country-level dashboards are needed?)
- Opennness at an NGO-level may encourage state-level openness?

# References

Partos Results, Paper to articulate priorities of Partos member organisations for next steps for IATI, and to share experiences and results.

Working with Results in IATI, presentation at the Technical Advisory Group meeting in Dar Es Salaam about Partos