Meeting of IATI Steering Committee Members and Observers

Shaw Centre, Ottawa, Ontario, 1-2 June 2015

Steering Committee minutes

INTRODUCTION

IATI Steering Committee members met in Ottawa for two days, 1-2 June. The meeting took place back to back with the IATI Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meeting for the first time, giving an opportunity for the technical and political communities to take part in joint activities during the first morning. A series of informal workshops was held to elicit input from members on the three major themes of governance, outreach and communications, and sustainable funding - to feed in to the evaluation of IATI that is currently underway to examine progress and impact of the initiative, which will feed into the process of decision-making on its future direction. As separate notes have been prepared from each of the workshops, these minutes only reflect formal proceedings and decisions taken on 2nd June.

Feedback from evaluation workshops

The meeting began with presentations on the previous day's evaluation workshops. Since many good ideas had come out of the workshops the Chair noted that several of these could be taken forward immediately, such as those relating to outreach and communications. On certain governance arrangements and sustainable funding mechanisms however, members felt that it would make more sense to wait for the outcome of the evaluation in September, and then establish a consultative process for moving things forward between then and December, so that final decisions can be taken at the next Steering Committee and can take into account any recommendations arising from the evaluation. Full reports from each of the workshops can be found at the following link on the IATI website http://www.aidtransparency.net/governance/steering-committee/steering-committee-documents.

During the governance workshop sessions there was support for the early establishment of an ad hoc group of members to work closely with the Secretariat to take forward a number of strategic questions requiring more urgent attention, and the Secretariat was asked to prepare Terms of Reference for this ad hoc Members Advisory Group, which could potentially be formalized to become a permanent executive body during the December meeting.

Announcements - Bangladesh and Burundi

The Chair gave the floor to the Government of Bangladesh in its capacity as Vice Chair of the IATI Steering Committee to announce a voluntary contribution to IATI for US$100,000 to be transferred by 30 June. In making the announcement Bangladesh wished to encourage other partner countries to consider making similar gestures, stating also that the objective for their making the contribution was to see IATI and transparency further strengthened, and particularly to ensure support for partner countries to actively use IATI data, as without data use the initiative is of little value to

partner countries. The Chair also formally welcomed Burundi's membership of IATI, with confirmation received that day.

Session E – Budget Identifier

Canada and PWYF as members of the TAG Working Group on the Budget Identifier presented an update following their recent presentation to WP-STAT members. The outcome of the discussion was agreement by the WP-Stat – subject to some final analysis including additional information on the technical implications – that the proposal to include a number of additional purpose codes in the CRS on economic classifications would better align aid with partner country budget classifications. This approach can successfully map aid to country budgets, in order to create a full picture of the finances available to them. WP-STAT and the IATI technical team welcomed this outcome and agreed that the solution put forward represents the best outcome. There will be a further update on this work in the December SC meeting, after the November WP-STAT meeting.

Session G – Transparency Indicator

UNDP gave an update on behalf of the GPEDC Joint Support Team including on the establishment of an Advisory Group to review the entire monitoring framework. In January, the GPEDC Steering Committee agreed to adopt a complementary approach to the transparency indicator, disaggregated across the different elements of the common standard. JST's plan is to refine the methodology and allow sufficient time for stakeholder consultation. While the Advisory Group is tasked with refining all of the indicators for endorsement by the next GPEDC Steering Committee meeting in September, the transparency indicator does not require collection of data at country level, so there is scope to allow more time for consultation on the refined methodology, with endorsement at the subsequent GPEDC Steering Committee meeting in January.

The Chair of WP-STAT and the DCD representative both emphasised during the IATI Steering Committee meeting the value of a differentiated approach in bringing out the unique contributions of both systems. IATI's Technical Lead confirmed that the IATI Secretariat would complete the initial mapping by the JST deadline of 10th June, using the IATI Dashboard methodology as the basis of its contribution. Steering Committee members were encouraged to take part in the ongoing consultation on the Dashboard methodology if they wished to input into the IATI component of the methodology, although it was noted that all IATI has been asked to provide at this stage is the broad principles upon which timeliness, comprehensiveness and forward-looking should be calculated. Formal consultation on the revised indicator methodology, including proposals on presentation and disaggregation of data, will take place later in the year, organised by the JST. It was agreed that there should be a formal presentation of the revised methodology at the next IATI Steering Committee meeting in December, so that members can confirm whether they are satisfied with it before it goes to the GPEDC Steering Committee for sign-off in January 2016.

Session F, Joined up data standards – reference new Paper 5

IATIs Technical Lead introduced the paper, explaining that many different data standards face many of the same issues, for example lack of a consistent way of attributing organisational identifiers. At a meeting of data standards and initiatives in the margins of the recent Ottawa Open Data Conference, participants had agreed that there was merit in these standards bodies working together to identify common solutions to common problems. The outcome of that meeting was a loose statement of collaboration, working together in areas that affect the work IATI is already

doing. Others involved initially in this collaboration are Humanitarian Exchange Language, the Open contracting Data Standard and OpenCorporates.

There was support for this proposal from several members, who noted that increasing linkages and promoting interoperability with other data standards would make IATI data more usable. In response to a specific concern about the costs to IATI, Development Initiatives confirmed that it would meet the light-touch costs associated with coordination from its own budget, as a further in-kind contribution to IATI. Steering Committee members agreed to the proposal that IATI should formally agree to form part of a new Joined-up Data Alliance by signing a Statement of Collaboration.

Session H budget and work plan
UNDP gave a presentation on the year 3 budget and work plan in which approval was sought for a core US$1.6m net budget (a total figure of US$1.93 includes in-kind contributions of consortium members). Members were reminded that consortium members are cash-constrained and that prudent financial management would ensure there was no possibility of a deficit at any point.

Members of the Sub-group on budget and finance made additional comments following the presentation, highlighting a lack of adequate and timely consultation with the subgroup in the lead-up to the Steering Committee meeting, and delays in circulating the documentation and lack of clarity as to which activities were funded from the core budget. The sub-group also flagged as an area of concern the fact that the core budget does not include funding for partner country representatives to attend future Steering Committee or TAG meetings. Partner countries who faced administrative barriers to the payment of membership fees asked for alternative ways of making an in-kind contribution. Issues around the need for a clear vision and strategy were raised in the context of the year 3 work plan, though members were reminded that Year 3 remains within the strategic plan approved through the process of selecting and appointing the current hosting consortium. Some members urged the Steering Committee against trying to micromanage such a small budget, and others noted the need for some flexibility between key outputs within the current work plan. The Secretariat was urged to provide more information in future on what additional activities might cost so that members might be more willing to provide voluntary contributions to cover them.

Following the recommendation of the Chair, members approved the Secretariat's proposal for the Year 3 work plan for IATI with a budget of US$1.6m, net of in-kind contribution, for the financial year 3 (September 2015 – August 2016). The sub-group should be regularly updated on the status of implementation of the work plan and consulted about strategic decisions regarding the work plan and any income received in excess of the US$1.6m core. Members also agreed on the importance of supporting the work of IATI through prompt payment of membership fees and voluntary contributions, as well as in-kind contributions of effort towards activities identified in the workplan whether from donor or partner country, based on their own areas of expertise and opportunity.

The Steering Committee approved the core US$1.6m budget for Year 3 on this basis.

Session I outreach and communications
PWYF introduced Paper 7 which provided an update on IATI's outreach activities and sought guidance on some specific areas for focus during the next six month period including the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa in July and the post-2015

discussions in September. On the partner country outreach side Ghana also gave a report-back from the Accra regional workshop on data use at country level which had been very successful and had led to much greater awareness of IATI in the region and a number of new membership enquiries.

On the matter of FFD negotiations, members were urged to support the retention of a positive reference to IATI in the revised outcome document for the Financing for Development Conference (FFD) in the face of opposition from G77. The Secretariat was requested to circulate its briefing notes on IATI and FFD and to develop a similar narrative on IATI and post-2015. Other ideas for action included the creation of an innovation fund for communicating on IATI, working together to follow-up on the recommendations of the USAID country pilots, a high-level communication from Helen Clark to all IATI members in the run up to FFD, completing the humanitarian extension to the Standard and promoting this at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. All members were encouraged to do more to promote IATI within their own organisations, and especially at country level. There was support for a regular IATI newsletter, and renewed support for an outreach subgroup. The Chair appealed to members to volunteer for these sub-groups and for specific outreach activities by actively signing up to a "pledge wall" at the end of the meeting.

Strategic visioning and future hosting arrangements

Taking up a theme that had arisen during a number of sessions as well as in the workshop on Governance arrangements, the Chair returned during the final session to the subjects of strategic visioning and hosting, recalling that the current hosting arrangement expires in August 2016. Certain items are better taken forward only when the results of the evaluation in hand, and should therefore wait until September. Discussions around future strategic visioning, including the funding model for IATI, fall within this category. However, there are other items that can move more quickly and there was support for the creation of an ad hoc executive group of members to work with the Secretariat to guide some of the critical planning up to the December Steering Committee meeting. Future hosting is a matter for the Steering Committee, not the Secretariat, and members favoured a clear process to establish a new subgroup to address this, and to agree a timeline. The Chair would lead in setting up this process.

Chair's conclusions

In closing the meeting the Chair reviewed the decisions made during the day and sought to map out a clear path between the June and December Steering Committee meetings. He requested the Secretariat to carefully review the discussions and outcomes of all the workshops and draw up a list of the proposed activities that could be taken forward, along with a timeframe for doing so. In the spirit of the meeting as a whole he called upon members to volunteer their time and specific expertise to support some of the ideas on governance, funding and hosting. The Secretariat was asked to come up with an outline within the next 2-3 weeks of the decisions required from the December meeting, and to develop Terms of Reference for the work of an ad hoc Members Advisory Group (executive board) for discussion with volunteers as early as possible.

Finally, the Chair reminded members that his term of office would come to an end this year, and he invited nominations for the post of Chair and indicated that the election of a new Chair would take place at the December meeting.