

INTERNATIONAL AID TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE

REPORT OF THE EUROPEAN CSO CONSULTATION MEETING, BRUSSELS, 3RD JULY 2009

Introduction

The International Aid Transparency Initiative held a half-day consultation with European CSOs in Brussels on 3rd July 2009. The aim of the meeting was to ensure that European CSOs had an opportunity to make suggestions on the categories of information that are most important for donors to publish; and the code of conduct. This will help IATI members in determining the priority areas to be included in the proposed IATI standards. The meeting was organised and facilitated by DFID. Twenty two NGO representatives attended (see attached list.)

Overview of IATI

Romilly Greenhill, IATI Co-ordinator at DFID, presented an overview of the initiative. Questions raised by the NGO participants included:

- Why is IATI only focused on donors, not on partner governments in terms of improving transparency?
- What is the role of CSOs, particularly those from the South, in both the Steering Committee and the Technical Advisory Group?
- What is the involvement of the OECD-DAC?

Identifying priority information needs

Participants were divided into three groups and given a list of potential information categories identified through IATI scoping work (see Appendix 1 for full list). They were asked to identify their *additional* information needs – i.e. needs that are not currently being met, by ranking each category given as high, medium or low, and to identify other categories not covered by the list.

The full report is shown in the table below. In summary:

1. **All groups rated a large number of areas as ‘high priority’**, suggesting that there is strong demand for more and better information on aid from European CSOs.
2. Areas rated as top priority by all three groups were as follows:
 - More **up to date information** – groups also stressed the need for more **timely** information.
 - More detailed information about **where** aid is spent;
 - More information about **how** aid is spent, including channels of delivery;
 - Improved information on which **sectors** aid is spent on; and
 - Details of **aid agreements and conditions**. Conditionality was highlighted as a particular priority by the groups.
3. Areas rated as top priority by at least two of the three groups were

- More reliable information on **future aid flows**;
 - Better information about **when** aid is spent;
 - Better information on **what** aid is spent on
 - **Contract and procurement details**; and
 - **Non-statistical information**
 - Information on **non-ODA** spending and policies;
4. All groups identified **additional needs**, not covered by the list given. Particular areas highlighted included:
- Information about non-aid spending, for example other official flows and non-aid policies that might impact developing countries;
 - Information about policy making processes, including minutes of meetings and records of key decisions
 - Information on disclosure policies and details of how to find relevant information including key contacts.

CSO suggestions for the Code of Conduct

The last part of the session identified CSO priorities for inclusion in the IATI Code of Conduct. The same groups were given a series of questions on the Code of Conduct, drawing from the IATI Scoping paper (see appendix 2.) See table below for full responses. In summary, groups felt that:

- Phased implementation may be necessary, but the level of ambition should remain high;
- There was debate about NGO flows, with all groups agreeing that NGO transparency standards should be agreed through a separate, NGO led process. However, in the discussion it was conceded that ODA channelled through NGOs may need to adhere to IATI standards;
- IATI standards should apply to private flows and Other Official Flows (OOF), but with exemptions for NGOs.
- Unvalidated information should be published, in the interests of timeliness, but that it should be clearly differentiated from validated information;
- There was a divergence of views on whether retrospective information should be published;
- There should not be a minimum size threshold for projects expected to adhere to the standards;
- There will need to be exemptions, e.g. for NGO activities, but these should be based on clear criteria and reviewed regularly.
- Information should be made available on user friendly websites, in the relevant languages;
- There needs to be a clear, independent process for reviewing and assessing compliance with the IATI standards, linked to mutual accountability processes and follow up to the Accra Agenda for Action, Monterrey consensus etc

Exercise 1: Summary results on additional information needs identified by groups

No.	Area	Group A	Group B	Group C	Notes
1	More up to date information	High	High	High	Group A and B added timeliness as high priority
2	Future flows	High		High	
3	Where aid is spent	High	High	High	Group A: community level information is low priority
4	When aid is spent	High	High	Medium	
5	How aid is spent	High	High	High	Group A: channels should include modalities and instruments Group C: channels of delivery and traceability identified as priorities.
6	What aid is spent on	High	High		
7	Which sectors aid is spent on	High	High	High	
8	Aid agreements, conditions and terms of concessional loans	High	High	High	Group A: conditions should include triggers, benchmarks, prior actions etc. Group C focused on conditionality in particular as high priority area
9	Contract and procurement details	High	High		Group A: add grants.
10	Better coverage			High	Group A felt this needs to be differentiated by donor, with multilaterals given high priority.
11	Policy markers			Medium	
12	Anticipated outputs and outcomes		High	Low	
13	Non-statistical information	High		High	Group A added consultation process and timeliness.
Additional information needs identified					
14	Standards for transparent policy			High	Area added by Group C

No.	Area	Group A	Group B	Group C	Notes
	making processes				
15	Non ODA policies and spending relevant for partner countries.	High	High		Added by Groups A and B
16	Donors disclosure policies, information about how to use them and their monitoring systems	High			Added by Group A
17	Contact information for how to find information	High			Added by Group A
18	Qualitative information including political dialogue/decision making meetings, minutes and agendas available.		High		Added by Group B
20	Evaluations		High		

Exercise 2: CSO priorities for the Code of Conduct

No	Question	Group A	Group B	Group C
1	Phased implementation?	Need to avoid a minimum standard, and instead incentive the highest standard possible.	Phasing is inevitable, but political elements should be done first, e.g. conditions and meeting agendas and minutes.	IATI should agree a comprehensive set of information to be published, but with a staggered implementation timetable.
2	All development assistance, including private flows?	Yes, both ODA and OOF, and multilateral aid.	Both private and public parts of ODA should be included. Difficult to include other private donors unless they sign up to IATI	Development assistance and private flows, but with exemptions for some CSO activities.
3	Mandatory and voluntary elements?	Avoid minimum standard and incentivise highest possible standards.		All areas should be mandatory
4	Should retrospective information be included?	Yes for documents.	Yes, from beginning of current budget cycle. Information from previous budget cycles should be voluntary.	No
5	Should invalidated information be published?	Yes, with a coding system showing which information is validated versus unvalidated.	Yes e.g. future flows.	Yes. Unvalidated information assists in timeliness.
6	Minimum threshold?	No	Probably, but this should be based on a % rather	No

No	Question	Group A	Group B	Group C
			than an absolute threshold, and be reviewed annually.	
7	Valid exemptions?	Exemptions should be drawn from Fol practices.	Any exemptions should be fully justified/explained and procedure made clear.	Yes for sensitive NGO activities e.g. support for human rights work. There should be strictly limited set of exemptions for others.
8	Pushing through the supply chain, including to NGOs?	This should be a two-way negotiated process, involving NGOs. Language should be changed to 'reflected in contractual relationship' rather than 'pushed through the supply chain.'	Transparency standards apply to NGOs but IATI isn't the right place to do this. This is being considered through the Open Forum process.	NGOs need a separate, owned, suitable process.
9	How should information be made available?	Cloud idea?	Embassy/agency websites; local languages; summaries; country pages; hard copies; regular submissions to parliaments; annual summarised packages. Languages and dissemination were identified as key.	User friendly website and database. Language issues should be considered.
10	How can users access information?		See above	A focal person; official procedures for complaints; useability

No	Question	Group A	Group B	Group C
				is important.
11	Compliance mechanisms?	After signing, establish timetable for compliance/levels of compliance for each donor. Should be included in national law, and linked to Accra or other reporting mechanisms. A strong, independent organisation is needed to do this. It should be mandatory for signatories.	IATI Steering Committee; peer review processes. Process needs to be linked to mutual accountability and mutually agreed aid compacts.	Regular independent reviews.
12	Regular review mechanism.		Regular reporting to the AAA; built into other reporting mechanisms e.g. Monterrey reporting; follow up through UNDCF.	Clause on addition/review.
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Appendix 1: Questions for Exercise 1

What *additional* aid information do you need, and which of these are your priorities ? Please indicate this by rating each of the following on a scale of 1-3, 1 being a top priority, 2 being good to have, and 3 being something that is not important to you.

1. Information that is more up-to-date;
2. Reliable information on future aid flows, at country, sector and project level;
3. More detailed information about precisely *where* aid is spent, from sub-national down to community level, with ability to map to administrative areas;
4. Better information about exactly *when* aid is spent, including donor commitment and disbursement and project expenditure dates ;
5. More information about *how* aid is spent, including channels of delivery, and ability to map spending through the system from initial commitment to final expenditure;
6. Better information on *what* aid is spent on, including detailed project data, descriptions and dates;
7. Improved information on *which sectors* aid is spent on, including ability to map sector classifications to national budgets;
8. Details of aid agreements, including any conditions attached and the terms of any concessional loans;
9. Contract and procurement details;
10. Better coverage from a wider range of donors, including non-DAC donors, all multilateral agencies, large NGOs, foundations and private donors;
11. Ability to map aid spending against commonly agreed policy markers such as gender or climate change, and against Paris Declaration targets;
12. Information on anticipated outputs and outcomes;
13. Non- statistical information about aid such as documents relating to strategy, policy, procedures and evaluations;
14. Other (please specify)

Appendix 2: Questions for Exercise 2

1. Should IATI phase implementation, starting with a core information set and then expanding?
2. Should IATI include all development assistance, including private flows?
3. Should there be mandatory and voluntary elements of the IATI standards?
4. Should retrospective information be included?
5. Should unvalidated information be published – and if so how should they be distinguished?
6. Should there be a minimum threshold (e.g. \$1m) over which the standards apply?
7. Should there be any valid exemptions, e.g. for staff security reasons?
8. How should transparency standards be pushed through the supply chain – including to NGOs?
9. How should information be made available (e.g. through the donor website)?
10. How should users expect to access information, and what process should there be if they cannot?
11. How should donors be held accountable for compliance?
12. Are there any other issues that should be considered when developing the IATI Code of Conduct?

Appendix 3: Participants List

Name	Organisation
Romilly Greenhill	DFID
Karin Christiansen	Publish What You Fund, London
Emma Broadbent	Publish What You Fund, London
Fatima Proenca	ACEP, Portugal
Dorota Sienkiewicz	Action for Global Health
Karine Sohet	APRODEV, Brussels
Anne Lauridsen	Development Gateway
Gideon Rabinowitz	UKAN, London
Victoria Room	DIPR
Anita Ramsak	Ekvilib, Slovenia
Maria Chiara Campisi	Terre des Hommes EU office
Sally Nicholson	WWF European Policy
Jasmine Burnley	CONCORD, Brussels
Ester Asin	CONCORD, Brussels
Bodo Ellmers	EURODAD, Brussels
Marcin Wojtalik	Institute of Global Responsibility, Poland
Denise Auclair	CIDSE, Brussels
Kirstine Drew	International trade Union Confederation
Martina Maier	World Vision, Brussels
Javier Pereira	CONCORD, Brussels
Monia Matus	CEE Bankwatch and Counter Balance Coalition
Franz Josef Berger	CONCORD, Brussels
Adrian Aupperle	Transparency International