

Complementary roles for the OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System and the International Aid Transparency Initiative

What is the purpose of each approach?

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) maintains two databases that are the authoritative source of **annual statistical information** of international aid flows from OECD countries. They record Official Development Assistance (ODA), other official flows and private flows reported by the members of the DAC, most multilateral organisations and other non-DAC donors. The DAC has been tracking aggregate information about aid since 1960. The **Creditor Reporting System** (CRS) was established in 1973 to collect more detailed information about individual aid loans and later grants to complement the recording of aggregate flows.

The **International Aid Transparency Initiative** (IATI) is not a database. It is a voluntary initiative for donors and other organisations to categorise and publish **detailed information about development assistance** in a timely and accessible way. It will make it possible for a wide variety of services to access and present this information. These services may include country specific aid management systems (AIMS), sector specific databases, donor and NGO websites, accounting systems, and new aid databases such as AidData (operated by the Development Gateway).

IATI is an open information standard which can be used by all providers of development assistance, including members of the DAC, non-DAC donors, providers of South-South cooperation (SSC), NGOs, private foundations and private sector organisations.

IATI offers its members a way to meet their commitments in the Accra Agenda for Action for increased transparency on aid flows (see box) and builds on Freedom of Information Acts and Information Disclosure Policies adopted in the past years.

Signatories and members of the IATI Steering Committee agreed the details of Phase 1 of the IATI standard at their meeting in Paris in July 2010. Proposals for the remaining phases of IATI have been developed and will be subject to full consultation before being submitted for agreement by signatories and Steering Committee members early in 2011.

In particular, IATI donors plan to publish their data:

- at least **every quarter**
- in a way which can be reconciled with the **recipient's financial year** and **budget classifications**¹
- showing the **organisations receiving the funds**

Specific commitments to transparency agreed in the Accra Agenda for Action

Donors will publicly disclose regular, detailed and timely information on volume, allocation and, when available, results of development expenditure (§24a)

Donors and developing countries will regularly make public all conditions linked to disbursements (§25b)

Donors will provide full and timely information on annual commitments and actual disbursements so that developing countries are in a position to accurately record all aid flows in their budget estimates and their accounting systems. (§26b)

Donors will provide developing countries with regular and timely information on their rolling three to five year forward expenditure and/or implementation plans, with at least indicative resource allocations that developing countries can integrate in their medium-term planning and macroeconomic frameworks. (§26c)

¹ These items have yet to be agreed by IATI signatories and members of the Steering Committee.

- **disbursements** (transfers within the aid system) **and expenditure** (on goods and services) and if they are **on or off budget**
- **indicative aggregate budgets** for each country
- project **budgets** and **planned disbursements**
- links to country-specific policy, programme and **project documents**, including those containing **results and conditions**¹
- an optional mechanism to publish **detailed geographical information** to enable the data to be presented on a map
- **contact information** for people involved in project implementation.

What are the differences between the two approaches?

These two approaches are not competitors; they are complements. CRS is a comprehensive, authoritative *database* which provides consistent and coherent information about aid spending by DAC donors. IATI is a streamlined way for donors to publish a lot of detailed information which can be used in many different ways and by different people, while avoiding duplication of effort.

When donors provide information to the DAC for inclusion in the CRS, they are required to submit it in Unified Standard Input Format (USIF) format. IATI is a data standard: it can be thought of as a more comprehensive, more detailed equivalent of USIF. Because IATI definitions are consistent with USIF, any information which donors provide to the DAC in USIF format can also be published automatically through IATI, and *vice versa*.

The following table summarises how CRS++ and IATI compare at present.

Comparison of CRS++ and IATI	
CRS	IATI
Central database Available on web and CD-ROM	Data published online by donors accessible by both people and machines through links from a registry (address book)
Covers all ODA from DAC members Includes data from some non-members and most multilateral organisations such as World Bank and UNDP.	Covers primarily country programmable aid Some aid agencies will not publish via IATI Open to data about South-South cooperation, non-DAC official donors, private foundations, and NGOs
Published over a year in arrears	Published and updated as often as donors want, and at least quarterly.
Subject to statistical scrutiny; data "of record"	Management information, not statistics.
Primarily designed to meet the information needs of donors in order to monitor their aid flows and is maintained by them	Designed to meet the information needs of a broad range of stakeholders, supported by multi-stakeholder process.
Focuses on aid spending by donors	Allows developing countries to look specifically at aid inflows into developing countries.
Single classification system agreed by DAC donors	Data will also be classified consistent with budget codes and classifications of recipient countries.
Provides historical data	Includes as much forward looking information as donors have available and are willing to publish.
Provides spending data and descriptions of each project	Includes all CRS data about projects, plus additional information, such as documents, names of implementing organisations.
All data is provided by the donors	Additional information can be published by other stakeholders and linked to project data e.g. by recipient country governments, users of aid-financed services.
A single database for multiple purposes	Information in standardised formats which allows the development of many different services tailored to users

The major difference is that CRS produces comparable, comprehensive **annual statistics**, properly scrutinised, consistent and coherent, while IATI will publish more timely, more detailed, but less comprehensive **management information**, including forward looking information. Hence CRS focuses on transactions made in the calendar year, sometimes combining several projects in the same sector in a country. IATI donors will publish details of individual projects, both financial and documentary. CRS covers **all** ODA flows; IATI will cover a **subset** of flows for which timely data are available (e.g. just from the main aid agency, only for country programmable aid²) and is open to publication of assistance provided through South-South cooperation and aid from non-DAC donors and others.

The IATI standard has made use of existing CRS definitions to the fullest extent possible. Bilateral donors have mechanisms in place to report information according to these definitions and multilateral donors map their data to CRS purpose codes so that they can provide information to the DAC. This means that information that donors record for the purpose of publishing it through IATI can also be readily used to report to the CRS.

The correspondence between the IATI standard and the CRS definitions is shown in the Annex which matches IATI data items to the field names in the CRS and shows where the standard is used or extended, with a comment on each extension. It also shows the additional data that IATI donors will publish.

Meeting the information needs of developing countries

Much of the IATI standard provides for publishing information that the CRS does not currently cover, specifically in order to meet the needs of developing countries. As noted above, IATI donors will publish information related to **individual projects**. It will show the amounts received by **each organisation** involved in managing each project, whether the funds are in **cash or in-kind**, and how they align to the budget classification¹ of the recipient. Donors will also publish links to existing **project documentation** covering information such as the project's objectives, conditions, monitoring, outputs, and results¹. They will also publish **forward looking information**, both indicative budgets at the country level and budgets and planned disbursements at the project level. Both the amounts received and planned amounts will be reported at least quarterly to enable alignment with the **financial year of the recipient**.

Could CRS provide the same information as IATI?

There are already a number of improvements underway to make CRS an even more powerful tool. These include improving timeliness, more detailed descriptions, geographical targets, the new typology of aid and distinguishing country programmable aid within total ODA. The DAC also collects aggregate information on forward spending by country and is piloting release of the detail of this information for some donors.

But the DAC system is designed to be an authoritative record of aid spent by donors; it is not designed to meet the management information needs of stakeholders in developing countries. Although CRS is being extended, no single database could meet all the needs of developing countries.

² Country programmable aid (CPA) is defined through exclusion, by subtracting from total gross ODA aid that is: (i) unpredictable by nature (humanitarian aid and debt relief); (ii) entails no cross-border flows (administrative costs, imputed student costs, promotion of development awareness, and research and refugees in donor countries); (iii) does not form part of co-operation agreements between governments (food aid and aid from local governments); or (iv) is not country programmable by the donor (core funding of NGOs).

The CRS serves important function: it serves DAC members by providing comparable, complete statistics about donor outflows. It would be difficult to reconcile the statistical integrity that this requires with the need for more timely management information covering a broader range of sources of finance, which IATI aims to make accessible to enable better decision-making in developing countries.

IATI is intended to meet a different need. There is demand from a wide and growing variety of stakeholders for more information about how development assistance is spent. Without an information standard, donors will be faced with a burden of duplicate reporting, and information users will be faced with a burden of trying to aggregate data from many different sources in irreconcilable formats. Though it is time-consuming to agree and implement, a common information standard will, in future, reduce the burden for both providers and users of information.

In short, CRS and IATI meet distinct and important needs. They make use of common standards, but CRS is a database providing comprehensive, quality-checked statistics from DAC donors; IATI is an information standard which can be used by a wide variety of organisations to publish accessible, timely, and detailed management information.

Annex: Comparison of CRS++ and IATI data items and standards

	CRS++ Field name	CRS++ Order	IATI data item	CRS standard	Comments
IDENTIFICATION DATA	Reporting year	1	Date of each transaction	N/A	CRS calendar year total; IATI can compile data for any period, e.g. recipient financial year
	Reporting country / organisation	2	Funding organisation	✓+	IATI will extend organisation lists to cover all stakeholders
	Extending agency	3	Extending organisation	✓+	
	CRS Identification N°	4	CRS ID (where applicable)	✓+	IATI also provides for link to other systems (e.g. local AIMS, OCHA)
	Donor project N°	5	Donor ID	✓	Some CRS reporters aggregate flows within country and sector. IATI records each activity (project) individually with a unique IATI ID comprising funding organisation ID+donor ID
	Nature of submission (new, revision, increase, decrease)	6	Full record of all transactions	N/A	
BASIC DATA	Recipient country	7	Recipient country or region	✓+	IATI provides % split if activity benefits several countries
	Channel of delivery name	8	Implementing organisation	✓+	IATI will extend organisation lists to cover all stakeholders
	Channel code	9	Code for implementing organisation	✓+	
	Bilateral/Multilateral	10	Collaboration type	✓+	IATI will extend to include types relevant to foundations and NGOs
	Type of flow	11	Flow type	✓+	
	Type of finance	12	Finance type	✓+	
	Type of aid	13	Aid type	✓+	
	Short description / Project title	14	Activity title	N/A	IATI requests formal project title
Sector / Purpose code	15	Sector code	✓+	CRS single sector only; IATI allows CRS and donor's own sectors and multiple entries that sum to 100%	
SUPPLEMENTARY DATA	Geographical target area <i>Specify the area (town, region) in the recipient country that is intended to benefit from the activity.</i>	16	Sub-national geographical location (optional)	✓+	IATI provides for names or coding of admin. areas or full geocoding
	Expected starting date	17	Expected and actual start dates	✓+	IATI extended to record actual dates and to allow for other dates, e.g. physical start
	Expected completion date	18	Expected and actual end dates	✓+	
	Description	19	Activity description	✓+	IATI will provide a link to project documents for full details of the activity
	Gender equality	20	Policy/thematic markers	✓+	IATI records CRS policy markers and donor's own themes
	Aid to environment	21			
	Participatory Development/Good Governance	22			
	Trade Development	23			
	Freestanding TC	24	From aid type and disbursement channel	X	
	Programme-based approaches	25	From aid type	✓	
Investment project	26	From aid type	✓		

	CRS++ Field name	CRS++ Order	IATI data item	CRS standard	Comments
	Associated Financing	27	<i>Not recorded</i>	✓	
	Biodiversity	28	Themes	✓+	IATI records CRS policy markers and donor's own themes
	Climate change	29			
	Desertification	30			
VOLUME DATA	Currency	31	Currency included with each transaction	✓	
	Commitments	32	Commitment value	✓	
	Amounts extended	33	Disbursement value	✓+	IATI extended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to include date and recipient of disbursements (often transfers within the aid system) to cover actual expenditure on goods and services
	Amounts received (for loans: only principal)	34	Loan repayment value	✓+	Extended to include date and recipient of repayment
	Amount untied	35	Tied aid status and transaction value	✓	
	Amount partially untied	36			
	Amount tied	37			
	Amount of Investment Related TC	38	From aid type	X	
	If project-type, amount of experts: commitments (optional)	39	From transaction receiver and transaction value	X	
If project-type, amount of experts: extended (optional)	40				
Amount of export credit	41	<i>Not recorded</i>	X		
For loans only	Commitment date	42	Activity date and transaction type	✓	
	Interest received	49	Interest repayment value	✓+	Extended to include date and recipient of repayment
ADDITIONAL IATI DATA			Activity status		Pipeline, Implementation, Completed, Post-completion, Cancelled
			Activity contacts		
			Activity website		
			Related activities		Link to other reported activities related to this activity.
			Disbursement channel (cash or in-kind)		Cash to treasury or implementing organisations or aid in kind managed by third parties or the donor
			Recipient budget classification		In addition to CRS and donor sector codes, this will provide a link to the functional or administrative classifications of the recipient
			Activity budget		As in the project document— for each financial year of the recipient
			Planned disbursements		In each of the next three financial years of the recipient

	CRS++ Field name	CRS++ Order	IATI data item	CRS standard	Comments
ADDITIONAL IATI DATA AND INFORMATION			Forward indicative aggregate budget by country		On a rolling 3-5 year basis where they exist, or for as many future years as possible, and on, or be able to be mapped to, the financial year of the recipient country. (With suitable qualifications about the data being indicative, and subject to parliamentary or Executive Board approval and change.)
			Verification status		Whether the data are final (verified) or still subject to further data quality control (unverified)
			Documents		Content to be covered: <i>Agency level:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports • Strategy papers • Country strategy papers <i>Activity Level</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre- and post-project impact appraisal • Objectives / Purpose of activity • Intended ultimate beneficiaries • Conditions • Budget • Summary information about contracts • Project performance monitoring and evaluation • Results, outcomes and outputs • Memorandum of understanding (If agreed by both parties)
			Results and output indicators (optional – TBD)		Provision for optional recording of result and output indicators
			Conditions (optional – TBD)		Provision for optional recording of text of conditions linked to disbursements
For loans only	Type (EPP:1,annuity:2,lump sum:3,other:5)	43	<i>Not recorded</i>	N/A	
	Number of repayment per annum	44			
	Interest rate	45			
	Second interest rate	46			
	First repayment date	47			
	Final repayment date	48			
	Principal disbursed and still outstanding	50			
	Arrears of principal (included in item 50)	51			
	Arrears of interest	52			
	Future debt service: First year, principal	53			
Future debt service: First year, interest	54				