



FULL GUIDE: THE INTERNATIONAL AID TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE STANDARD

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Standard*

INTRODUCTION

Have you heard of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)? Perhaps you are familiar with the term and your organisation is already considering publishing in IATI, or maybe it's completely new to you. No matter where you are with IATI, we have put together this guide to help you understand this rapidly evolving international reporting initiative a bit better.

Stay with us as we explain:

- What is IATI
- Who is IATI for
- How does IATI work
- The benefits of IATI for NGOs
- How can your organisation get involved in IATI and publish information to help the development community achieve greater impact.
- Plus, we will show you how to easily produce and report your data as per the IATI Standard, using TolaData's data collection and results management features together with D4D's Spreadsheets2IATI converter tool and IATI training support.



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WHAT IS IATI?

What is IATI?

IATI stands for **International Aid Transparency Initiative**, a voluntary, multi-stakeholder initiative launched in September 2008 at the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra. Governments and multilateral institutions like UN organisations who are active in international aid agreed at the time that standardising the available data on aid efforts would help to increase the effectiveness of Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding. IATI seeks to make aid information across the development and humanitarian communities more timely, effective, comparable, compatible, accessible and easily understandable for all. This way IATI enables organisations to manage international development efforts effectively and efficiently to contribute to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and monitor the actual progress achieved on the ground against original intentions.

In other words, with IATI, professionals working in the development and humanitarian sector can easily track how much aid goes where and for what purpose, as well as what impact the development operations are making, which helps to ensure that resources go to the people, places and projects that need them most. IATI's goal is simple – to make our fight against poverty more transparent, effective and impactful.

Who is IATI for?

Basically for anyone and everyone engaged in international development who is willing to make their aid, activities, and results information transparent in order to maximize the effectiveness of aid. This can include governments, donors, multilateral institutions, private sector companies, civil society organisations, foundations, NGOs, and others. Organisations can publish their own data to IATI, increasing the amount of information on aid activities available in one common format (XML) for everyone to access and utilize.

The top three reasons why most organisations use the IATI open data standard to share data about their work are:

1. Their organisation is committed to transparency and aid effectiveness;
2. Their funder has required it;
3. They are part of a consortium or network which has agreed to use the IATI data standard to share information between members.

As an increasing number of donors are requiring IATI publishing as part of their funding requirements and with an aim to improve coordination, accountability and effectiveness of Aid, and with IATI's apparent benefit on aid coordination efforts, many more NGOs across the globe are looking for streamlined and efficient ways to deliver IATI reporting.

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HOW IATI WORKS

How does IATI work?

IATI has designed a common standard for the publication of aid information. Meaning, the standard set rules and definitions provide guidance for publishing useful development and humanitarian data – basically information on what data organisations should publish and what format it should be presented in to ensure comparability across the datasets. This set of rules and guidance is called the IATI Standard.

But you ask, who can access the IATI Standard?

Any organisation willing to commit to the aims and objectives of IATI can become an IATI publisher and thus access the IATI Standard to publish their aid information in the agreed IATI format, via a public link. The link to their IATI data set will be made available via the centralised **IATI Registry**, which acts as an open catalogue or an open database for anyone and everyone wanting to access information about aid. The information can be accessed via the Registry's d-portal, but, as Open Data, can also be used by anyone to create their own dashboard or visualisations to access and analyse the data.

What kind of data can you publish in IATI Standard?

According to the **IATI website**, here are some of the components of the standard:

- Data about project activities.
- Financial information for those activities – budget, incoming funds, disbursements, expenditures.
- Important details beyond finances – location data, the sectors or policy area that the activity falls into.
- Results data on the impact or outcome of the activity.
- The conditions attached to an activity – the interest rate on a loan or any specific requirements for funds to be spent on goods or services in a particular country.
- Useful background documents, such as country action plans and annual reports.

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THE BENEFITS

What are the benefits of IATI for NGOs?

The benefits of IATI are undoubtedly apparent, which is stimulating more and more development and humanitarian organisations to partake in this initiative. By publishing to IATI, organisations can not only demonstrate their commitment to international aid transparency and effectiveness but also portray their ability to adapt to a rapidly changing environment and data-oriented future.

Here are some top benefits of publishing to IATI:

- First of all, when an organisation chooses to publish their data on IATI from the start, their activities can be traced from initial commitment to final delivery, helping them create smooth communication and a good relationship with their donors, while improving internal and external coordination, enabling overall improvement in development outcomes and fostering data driven decision making within their teams. IATI also helps NGOs to establish themselves as a transparent and trustworthy organisation in the sector.
- Secondly, by publishing data to IATI, organisations help to expand the IATI database with more quality information, which is free and available in one common format to be used in a variety of ways by different people or platforms, as single data sets or combined with other data. And we all know how good quality data on aid, activities and results can improve operational efficiency and effectiveness of humanitarian action.
- Additionally, by publishing to IATI, organisations can help governments of developing countries to stay up-to-date on which development and humanitarian organisations are operating in their country, so they can work with them successfully. Also, extracting information from IATI can assist governments to plan and manage their budgets properly.
- Moreover, by publishing to IATI, organisations help donors and multilateral agencies to understand where their spending will have the greatest impact.
- Similarly, the IATI data allows civil society organisations and NGOs to see what's happening where which helps them to improve coordination and avoid duplication of effort.
- By committing to the IATI initiative, organisations also empower citizens, journalists, and activists around the world to access pertinent information to investigate the use and impact of the aid funding in their countries and hold their governments accountable

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GET STARTED

Looking to publish IATI data but don't know where to start?

So, your organisation is interested in publishing to the IATI Standard, but you are not sure about the process or how to bring all your data together for the purpose? Or, perhaps your organisation has already begun publishing but you are struggling with the reporting process? Like many organisations, we assume you probably also have multiple systems or data sources, and perhaps, it takes time to map your systems and harmonise existing data structures to the IATI standard?

Recognising the need to simplify the process, **Data4Development** has been providing consultancy services to help organisations navigate the IATI reporting requirements and improve their data quality. For publishing, D4D has developed a tool called the **Spreadsheet2IATI Converter** that combines results data with data from other sources such as an organisation's financial system, which can easily be exported into Excel or Spreadsheet formats. To further simplify the process, they saw that the key to making it totally seamless was for the results data to be automatically extracted from a project monitoring system, rather than manually preparing it.

Meanwhile, TolaData was investigating how they could help organisations produce IATI compliant results using the data they already input in TolaData, but recognised that this was just one step because the results data still needs to be combined with financial data and then formatted and validated before publishing.

This is exactly why TolaData recommends Data4Development to offer comprehensive IATI reporting services, seamlessly extracting your results data from TolaData and then using D4D's expertise and tools to combine it with your financial data to produce and publish your IATI reports. No matter where your organisation is in your IATI journey, with TolaData and D4D, you can start to produce or automate IATI publications right away.

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RESOURCES

How can TolaData and Data4Development help your organisation?

TolaData helps your organisation manage and monitor a complete indicator workflow in one comprehensive platform with tools for the full data cycle. From data collection in the field to tracking indicator results against your targets to aggregating results across your project and then visualising and sharing your progress using TolaData's configurable dashboards – with TolaData, all your project data is at your fingertips for reporting to donors, managers and other stakeholders.

Organisations that want to publish to IATI can have TolaData and D4D do all the hard work for them by adding the IATI feature to their TolaData package, and using D4D's Spreadsheets2IATI converter.

Every quarter, you deliver an IATI export of your results data directly from TolaData, combined with your financial data, D4D converts it into an IATI compliant dataset according to the IATI standard. D4D will also provide feedback on the quality of your data and even publish the report to the IATI registry on your behalf.

In case you need additional support, the D4D team has a wealth of experience supporting organisations with **IATI Training** and **Strategic Consultancy** services to make your work processes, workflows and systems IATI-proof.

Before we sign off, here are some IATI resources and aid explorers that you might find helpful:

- **Official IATI portal** – Information on the initiative, news, governance, how to join, including detailed technical information on the standard, tools, guidance material, use cases etc.
- **IATI community platform** – recently launched a community platform to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience of a wide variety of IATI publishers.

Aid explorers:

- **European Union**
- **USAID**
- **The United Kingdom**
- **Germany**
- **Sweden**
- **The Netherlands**
- **Belgium**

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CLOSING

Closing words

Like many other technical developments, the IATI Standard has also been evolving constantly. Initially developed with traditional development flows in mind, it has since been modified to better meet the needs of a variety of actors, as well as adapting to the changing external environment but their goal remains the same – to provide good quality, comprehensive and up-to-date IATI data, reducing the reporting burden while ensuring a ready availability of information.

We hope with time, we can help more and more humanitarian actors to publish timely data according to the IATI standard. This would play a huge role in bridging the data gap, providing freely available data for anyone to track international aid efforts throughout the delivery chain

Want to learn more about how TolaData and Data4Development can help your organisation produce, use and improve your IATI data? Contact our **Client Support** team for a quick demo.

For a 30-day free trial of TolaData visit toladata.com; please email us at info@toladata.com for any questions or support you may need.

