



# Use of IATI in Country Systems

## Discussion Paper for IATI Steering Committee Meetings (April 2016 update)

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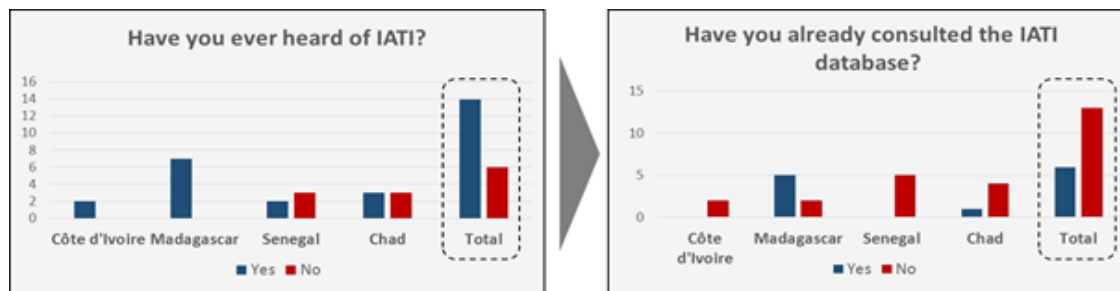
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## Executive Summary

*This paper presents a brief summary of Development Gateway (DG) activities and learning through its ongoing year-long program “Use of IATI in Country Systems.” The goal of this program is to equip partner country governments with the skills, tools, and knowledge needed to gain operational value from existing IATI data, while providing feedback to the IATI community on improvements that can help increase the use and value of IATI data for partner countries. At the conclusion of the program in December 2015, DG will publish a detailed working paper, which incorporates feedback gathered through responses to this paper and the forthcoming discussion during the IATI Steering Committee meetings in Copenhagen, Denmark on December 2-3, 2015.*

During the [first phase](#) of the program, the team focused on understanding data quality for the largest IATI publishers in each of the focus countries. The second phase, detailed in this paper, focused on the actual process of importing IATI data into country systems, and documenting of country awareness, concerns, challenges, and opportunities for using IATI data. DG teams worked closely with the governments of Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Madagascar, and Senegal, training them on the new open source [IATI-AIMS Import Tool](#) developed through the program, as well as on IATI data quality assessment. Surveys were administered to participating government staff before and after DG’s activities, and interviews were performed during the process to help inform the IATI community on country knowledge of and attitude toward IATI as a data source. Pre-surveys found low levels of awareness and limited use of IATI – primarily for the purpose of cross-referencing AIMS data.



<sup>1</sup>Figure 1: Responses on Knowledge and Use of IATI Prior to DG Activity (20 respondents from 4 countries)

Beyond a lack of awareness in some cases, reasons for limited use of IATI were identified as i) provision of most data in only English, ii) lack of trust in the data collection and publication process for IATI, iii) lack of timely (i.e. at minimum quarterly) publication, and iv) challenges in working with xml and csv data formats.

After consultation with government staff, a sub-set of IATI publishers were selected for import into the AMPs, representing more than 300 activities with over \$1,688,072,727.19 in total disbursements added into AMP through the DG program.

<sup>1</sup> Note that the term “IATI database” was used for functional clarity

Total Disbursements to be Imported				
	Chad	Cote d'Ivoire	Madagascar	Senegal
Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation	\$ 4,556,623.72	\$ 5,252,421.63	\$ 5,168,833.00	\$ 47,568,114.00
GAVI	\$ 24,025,224.00	\$ 61,325,088.00	\$ 93,327,413.00	\$ 59,202,057.00
GFATM	TBD	\$ 312,648,344.00	TBD	TBD

Table 1: Overview of Total Imports Performed Through Program

However, despite gains in IATI awareness and knowledge, levels of comfort in using IATI data remain low at the end of the DG program, presenting needs for future efforts from DG and the IATI community. In particular, i) tutorials, ii) continuous training, iii) improved tools for accessing IATI raw data in user-friendly formats for data quality assessments, iv) continued improvement in data quality, and v) data availability in official government languages were frequently cited.

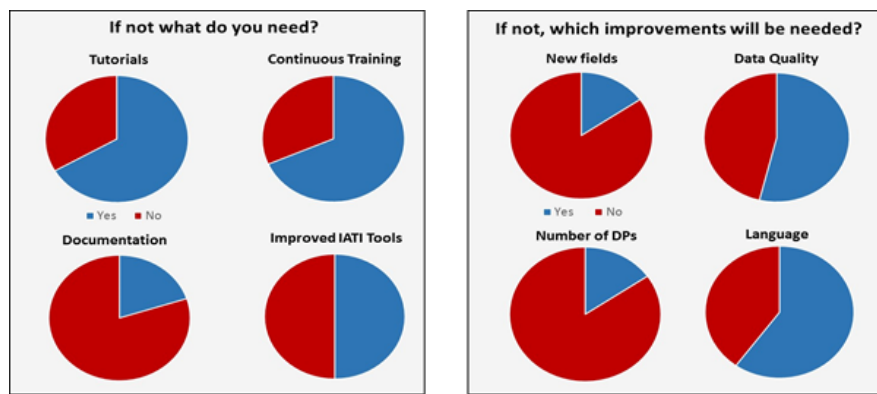


Figure 5: Outstanding Perceived Needs for Partner Country Use<sup>2</sup>

DG recommendations to the IATI community include:

1. Publication of IATI data in the official partner country language
2. Quarterly (preferably monthly) publication
3. Investment in usability of core IATI tools for accessing data (e.g. datastore)
4. Creation of FAQs and data narrative for each IATI publisher to increase trust
5. Increased awareness within DP country offices of IATI publication process
6. Creation of "how to" guides for analysis of on/off budget status and other key data questions important to partner countries
7. Increased partner country consultation during IATI upgrade processes

Moving forward, DG will work with its partner countries on the scaling and sustainability of the IATI import processes, and create a final working paper by end-December, with updates on its activities and learning through this program.

<sup>2</sup> Among respondents who answered "No" to "Are you now comfortable with the use of IATI standards and tools to update AMP data?"

## Background<sup>3</sup>

*This paper presents a brief summary of Development Gateway (DG) activities and learning through its ongoing year-long program “Use of IATI in Country Systems.” The goal of this program is to equip partner country governments with the skills, tools, and knowledge needed to gain operational value from existing IATI data, while providing feedback to the IATI community on improvements that can help increase the use and value of IATI data for partner countries. At the conclusion of the program in December 2015, DG will publish a detailed working paper, which incorporates feedback gathered through responses to this paper and the forthcoming discussion during the IATI Steering Committee meetings in Copenhagen, Denmark on December 2-3, 2015.*

### Recap of Phase I

[A full summary](#) of the first phase of this program is available in English and French and was published in May 2015. During the first half of 2015, the DG team conducted a data quality assessment, held initial remote consultations on the IATI standard, and scoped and developed an [open source IATI-AIMS Import tool](#). Based upon the initial data quality assessment, it was determined that the import efforts would largely focus on development partners (DPs) who are not captured already in each country’s Aid Management Platform (AMP) (notably Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, GAVI, and the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria). Some traditional DPs were also tentatively selected for import consideration by each government, based upon higher volumes of funding available in IATI than in the existing data in their AMP.

### Methodology of Phase II

Based upon the initial set of DPs identified for each country during phase I, DG worked directly with the governments of Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Madagascar, and Senegal<sup>4</sup> to institutionalize the integration of IATI data within their country systems. Each engagement aimed to:

- 1) Understand prior awareness of IATI, both as an initiative and a source of data by conducting a survey of key aid management staff in the government
- 2) Upgrade the AMP to the latest version and integrate the IATI-AIMS Import Tool
- 3) Provide training on IATI tools (e.g. datastore, d-portal) and data quality assessment
- 4) Discuss initial set of publishers identified for import and obtain government agreement on which data should be imported
- 5) Provide training on the IATI-AIMS Import Tool

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<sup>3</sup> The program is generously supported by the French Foreign Ministry. All viewpoints are the responsibility of DG and do not represent the official views of the French government.

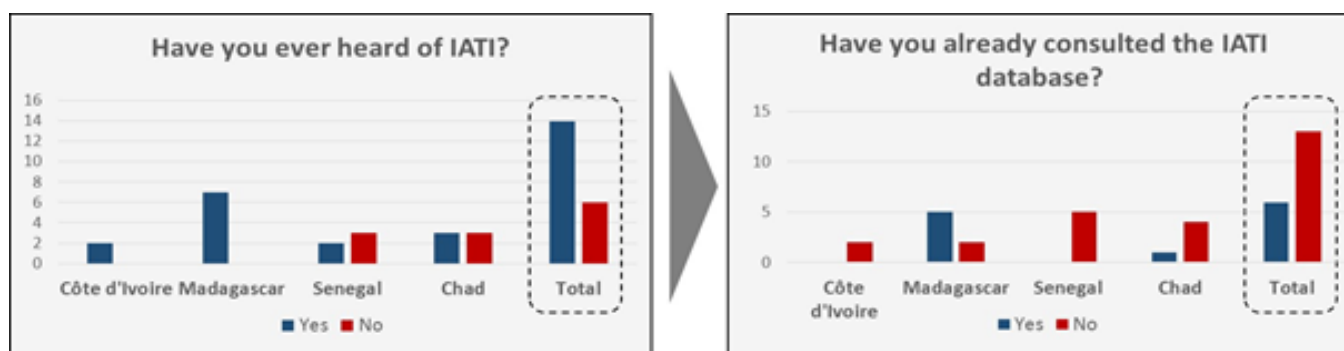
<sup>4</sup> Work is also planned in Burkina Faso, but was temporarily delayed due to events in the country. The team is currently re-engaging with the government to define next steps.

- 6) Discuss updates to the country data management plan<sup>5</sup> to incorporate IATI data for government-selected publishers, and
- 7) Do a post-survey to determine how knowledge and confidence in IATI was improved during the program and what next steps are needed to...?

The key results and learning generated by these activities are detailed below.

## Step 1: Understanding Prior Knowledge and Use of IATI Among Partner Country Governments

At the beginning of each country trip, a small survey was administered to the relevant staff within the aid coordination unit of each target country. The survey responses revealed that a high proportion of respondents are aware of IATI in general terms, largely due to participation in the 2014 AMP workshop, which included a session on IATI co-hosted by the IATI Secretariat. However, despite general awareness, only Madagascar and Chad reported *any* use of IATI, with only Madagascar reporting operational use (comparing IATI and AMP data to identify gaps in AMP).



<sup>6</sup>Figure 1: Responses on Knowledge and Use of IATI Prior to DG Activity (19 respondents from 4 countries)

More in-depth interviews identified several potential reasons why IATI data had not been consulted by aid coordination staff.

- **Language:** The relative lack of data and information in French proved to be the largest limiting factor, as most desk officers in Francophone Africa are not comfortable working with data in English.
- **Trust:** Multiple participants expressed concern at not knowing more details regarding the publication and validation process for each funder in IATI. Greater coherence between funder HQ and country offices, enabling country offices to effectively answer government questions on IATI data publication processes and quality assurance, could potentially offset this lack of trust.

<sup>5</sup> The data management plan is a document created by the government that defines rules and schedules for updating of data, including which fields are mandatory, how funding from trust funds should be reported, how frequently disbursements should be updated, etc.

<sup>6</sup> Note that the term “IATI database” was used for functional clarity

Given frequency of rotation and turnover within country offices, this would perhaps best be accomplished through stronger documentation created by an IATI specialist within each publisher, which could be referenced by country office staff.

- **Timeliness:** Misalignment of publication schedules across funders was also expressed as a significant barrier to uptake of data. Whereas in-country reporting is typically agreed between the government and entire development partner community, IATI data are published at different times and with different frequencies across publishers.
- **Data Format:** As expected, survey respondents reported low levels of comfort in the use of xml, but also surprisingly low comfort levels with the more common csv format. Respondents expressed a strong preference for xls(x) formats, although training on csv could hopefully offset this gap.<sup>7</sup>

## Step 2: Creating an Open Source Tool for IATI Integration

The IATI-AIMS Import Tool was built with re-usability in mind. To date, it has been installed in 5 countries: Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Kosovo, Madagascar, and Malawi. As the tool is now becoming part of the standard AMP upgrade process, this will quickly grow to 10+ countries (next countries include Burkina Faso, DRC, Ethiopia, and Senegal). Additionally, the repository has been shared with the team supporting the Government of Bangladesh through a UNDP program to integrate IATI into GoB's homegrown Aid Information Management System (AIMS). The tool relies on a set of API endpoints for integration, meaning that with modifications it could be integrated to any AIMS. This tool is available in a [public GitHub repository](#) and is available for re-use as an open source project.

The tool was also built with a focus on usability, with feedback from partner countries incorporated after each trip. A wizard process is used to guide users through a step-by-step process to match fields and import the data. Currently, the tool supports IATI versions 1.03, 1.04, 1.05, and 2.01. However, challenges have occurred due to data being published in older (e.g. 1.01) versions of the standard. Future work will create a processor for 2.02, as well.

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<sup>7</sup> Note that the new IATI-AIMS import tool itself does not require any direct use of XML or CSV data. However, if users wish to do a data quality review process in order to assess viability of data import, they will have to work with raw data in XML or CSV format.

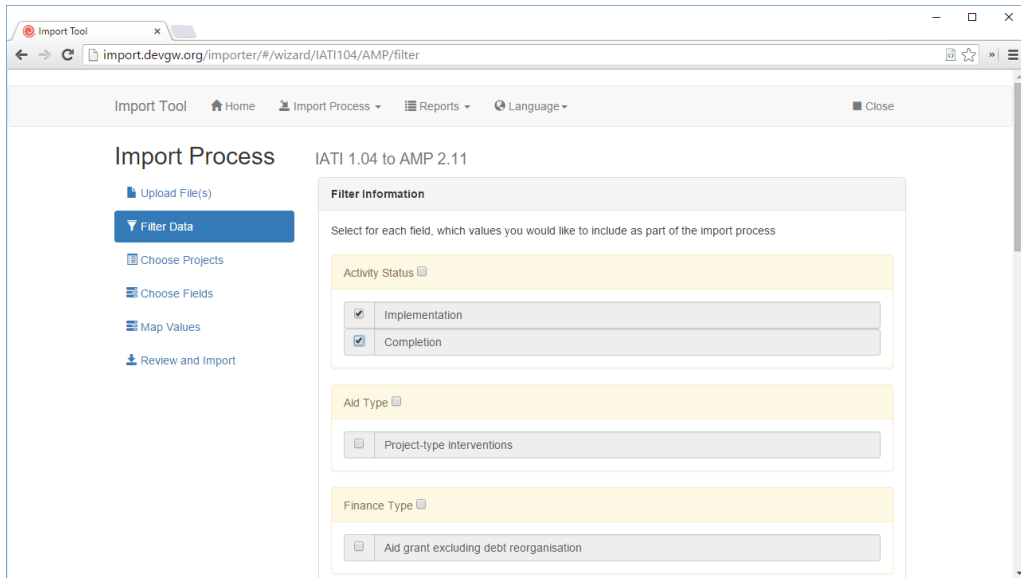


Figure 2: Screenshot of IATI-AMS Import Tool Showing Value Mapping Process

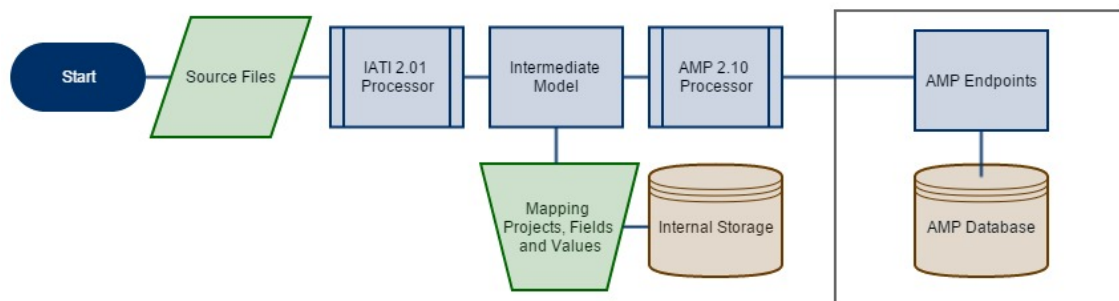


Figure 3: Workflow for Importing IATI Data Into AIMS Using DG Tool

### Step 3: Importing IATI Data into AIMS

To-date, the program has identified for inclusion more than 300 new activities with over \$1,688,072,727.19 in total disbursements in the Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, and Senegal AMPs (see Table 1 below). It should be noted, however, that some of these imports are still ongoing (planned for completion by end-November 2015). Further, except for the case of Madagascar, these imports are being performed by DG staff remotely, due to a combination of delays in finalization of IATI-AMS integration tool development and the need for ongoing training and support to government staff in performing subsequent imports. The DG team has created a user guide for running the import process (in both French and English) and will host follow-on video conferences (and in-person meetings, were feasible) with key government staff to co-implement the next set of imports and ensure that these can be performed sustainably for selected funders.

The current set of data are being imported into AMP in draft form in an isolated workspace separated from the core AMP dataset. After import, the data will undergo



a final review by government staff for i) quality and completeness, and ii) de-duplication of funding (if needed) with existing AMP data. In particular, it was noted that Gates Foundation programs are often implemented through existing AMP data providers, requiring careful review of each activity prior to final validation. Once validated, the data will become part of the government's official AMP data, used in existing planning, reporting, and monitoring processes.

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GFATM	TBD	\$ 312,648,344.00	TBD	TBD

*Table 1: Overview of Total Imports Performed Through Program*

After the initial set of imports have been completed, future work can proceed on two tracks: i) quarterly (or as frequently as IATI data are published) update of data from the IATI publishers listed below, and ii) expansion of IATI import to more publishers. Updates to already-imported publishers will be greatly aided by the IATI-AIMS Import Tool's capability to save existing mappings, meaning that financials for already-imported activities can be quickly updated and new activities will not require re-mapping of sector or other classifications. However, expansion of the import process to more publishers will require careful data review by the government, and possibly mapping of additional fields and values. Further, if the government wishes to replace in-country data collection with IATI import for an existing DP (e.g. as has been discussed for Canadian DFATD in Senegal), this will require matching of IATI activities with each existing AMP project to prevent double-counting – a process that proved too labor-intensive for current government desires in using IATI data, but is still under consideration for upcoming efforts.

#### **Step 4: Assessing Changes in IATI Knowledge and Perception**

At the conclusion of each country trip, DG administered a brief follow-up survey to learn to what extent the week's training and discussion had increased the level of trust and confidence government staff had in using IATI data at an operational level in their aid management processes. The responses showed evidence of increase in knowledge of IATI, but only small increases for roughly 75% of respondents, with interviews suggesting this knowledge encompassed both IATI as an initiative and as a source of data (see chart on left in Figure 4). However, the majority of respondents reported still feeling uncomfortable in using IATI data and tools to update the data in their AMPs (see chart on right in Figure 4).

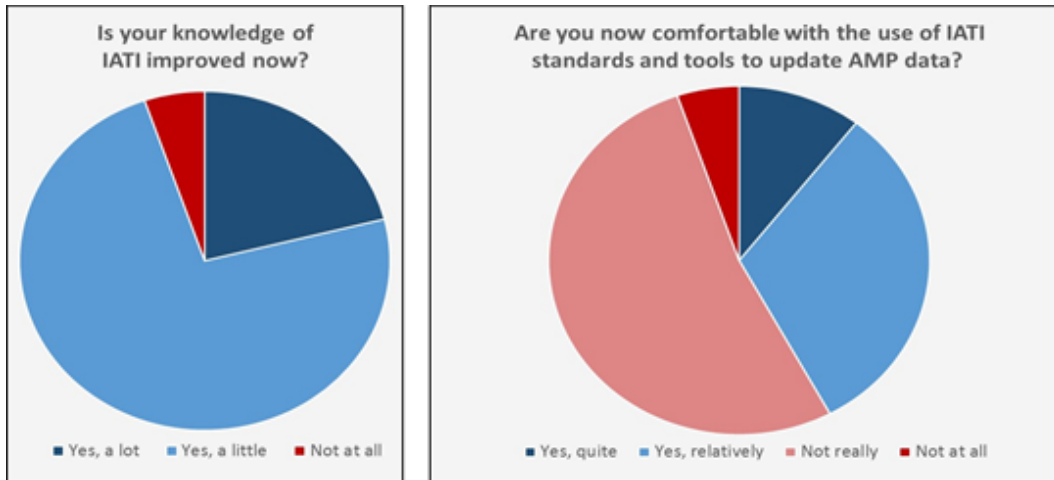


Figure 4: Changes in Perception and Intended Use Among Program Participants

Two subsequent questions aimed to understand the reasons for the remaining discomfort. First, asking which tools, training, or other support are needed to enable staff to feel comfortable with the functional task of using IATI. Respondents felt that existing documentation for IATI is largely sufficient, but expressed concern over the usability of and functionality of existing tools (particularly the IATI datastore) for accessing raw IATI data for quality assessment. In particular, the inability to access data in xls(x) format was a concern that arose during interviews. Participants also felt that, while initial training provided by DG had increased their knowledge, continuous training and online tutorials would greatly increase their ability to use IATI (see chart on left in Figure 5).

When asked which improvements to IATI data would increase the comfort level of using IATI in AMP, respondents focused on two key issue areas: data quality and language (see chart on right in Figure 5). As noted above, government staff in each country work in French and most have limited or no capability to work with data in English or other languages. Concerns over data quality largely focused on i) lack of understanding or trust in the publication process (i.e. where the data come from, with whom they can discuss data concerns), and ii) concerns over double counting of funding. For example, Cote d'Ivoire participants initially expressed concern of importing Gates Foundation data, due to funding for some programs being implemented through USAID, UN Agencies, INGOs, or other funders already present in AMP. In order to address this issue, these data have been imported to AMP as draft activities for review and validation, with non-duplicated funding incorporated into the core AMP dataset, once approved by government staff.

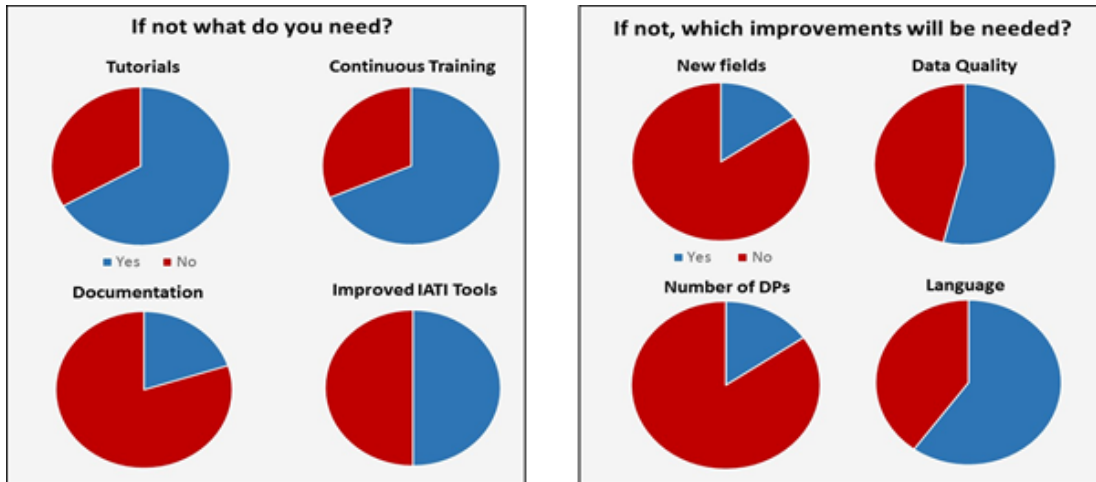


Figure 5: Outstanding Perceived Needs for Partner Country Use<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion: Assessing Opportunities for IATI in Country Systems

Many participants did feel IATI presented significant opportunities to enhance the aid management function in their country, if some of the barriers described above can be overcome. In particular, Madagascar representatives expressed interest in the presence of some historical data in IATI, which they could use to do some limited trend analysis. Madagascar representatives also noted that USAID data in IATI are presented at the project/activity level, whereas USAID reports to the AMP in Madagascar at a higher level of aggregation (program level).

Ivorian participants noted the presence of data from non-traditional funders, particularly Gates Foundation, GAVI, and Global Fund as a strong value-add for IATI. Traditionally, data from these funders has been difficult to acquire due to a lack of presence in-country. These funders have been imported to AMP and are currently undergoing validation (see below).

Chadian participants felt IATI data could play a significant role in capturing “off budget” data while complementing “on budget” data already available in AMP. The presence of non-traditional funders was also cited as a key value-add for IATI.

## Recommendations and Next Steps

While the DG team feels that significant progress has been made through this activity during 2015, we acknowledge that there is much to be done in continued partnership with the IATI Secretariat and broader IATI community. An initial set of recommendations and next steps are listed below. It is important to note that this paper is intended to facilitate a discussion resulting in new approaches and resources for partner country governments, continued improvement to IATI data

<sup>8</sup> Among respondents who answered “No” to “Are you now comfortable with the use of IATI standards and tools to update AMP data?”

quality, and ultimately better data for government and DP decision-makers at country level. We look forward to the discussion at the Steering Committee meetings in December, and beyond.

## Recommendations to IATI Community

- Publication in the official language of the partner country must be a focus for all IATI publishers. This represents a crucial blocker, particularly to using IATI to update/enrich data for funders already present in AIMS, as this process requires matching of projects by title. This also represents a barrier to mapping of category values, although this is largely offset when numeric codes are used as in version 2.01+. In conversation with multiple publishers, it is evident that language presents a significant publication cost and challenge, although publishers like the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development (DFATD) demonstrate that this process is technically possible.<sup>9</sup> It is largely unrealistic to expect that partner country governments will switch from current data sources in the national language to IATI data available in only English.

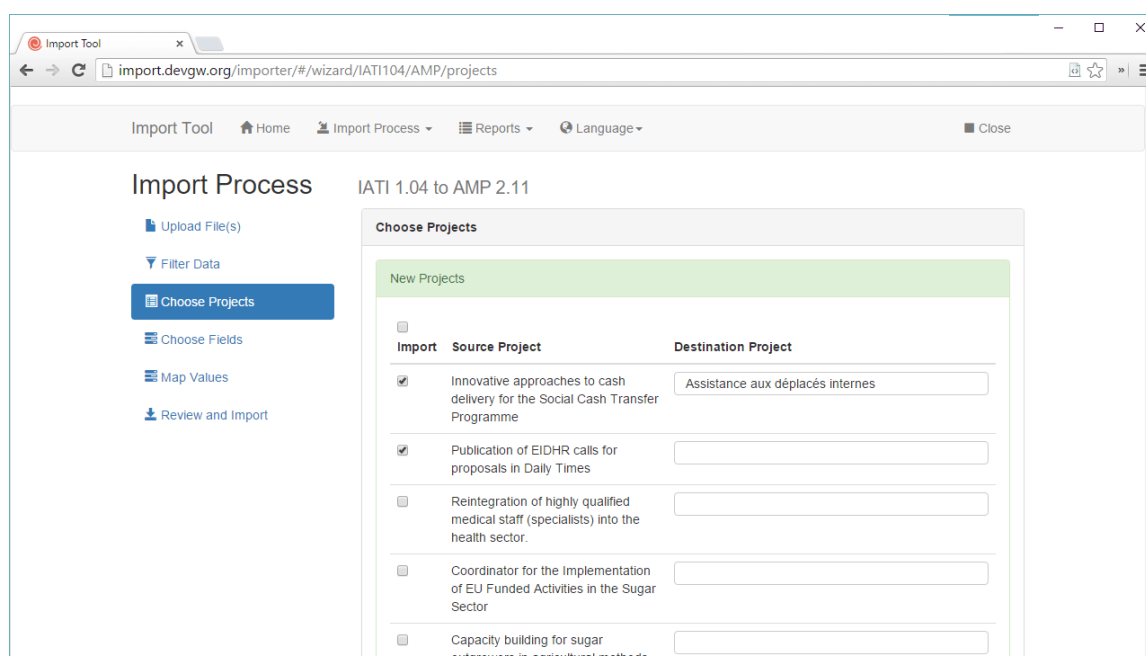


Figure 6: Interface for Mapping of English Project Titles (IATI - Left) to French (AMP - Right)

- Publication should occur as a minimum on a quarterly basis and preferably monthly. This is critical for i) eliminating the challenge of mapping funding between/across differing funder and partner country fiscal years, and ii) meeting the needs of partner countries for up-to-date financial information to be used in public financial management.

<sup>9</sup> Canadian law requires publication of official data in both English and French. While this represents a unique situation, it illustrates the technical feasibility of publishing data in multiple languages.

- Tools for exploring and evaluating IATI data quality should be strengthened. In particular, the IATI datastore should be strengthened through:
  - Improved system stability, as the tool was frequently inaccessible when needed;
  - Added filter criteria (e.g. disbursement channel, year) to reduce the amount of manual data manipulation required by users in evaluating IATI data for possible import;
  - Consideration of an xls(x) export, or (recommended) provision of brief “how-to” guide for opening IATI csv data in Microsoft Excel.
- To increase trust from partner countries in IATI data, each publisher should provide a brief publication narrative or FAQs, explaining:
  - How data are collected, calculated, and selected for publication;
  - What quality assurance methods are in place; and
  - What potential differences between HQ and country office-level data exist and why.
- Publishers should increase IATI awareness at the country office level (based on the recommendations above) to ensure that partner country governments can interact with country office teams when concerns over data accuracy or definitions occur. Currently, partner countries are not sure whom to contact when they have concerns about the data and are thus discouraged from using the IATI data versus data provided locally as a result of face-to-face discussions and locally-agreed processes.
- Based upon the recommendation of DFATD, the IATI Secretariat should create documentation/how-to guides for handling more nuanced data mappings, for example using disbursement channel and aid type fields to determine on/off/through budget status.<sup>10</sup>
- Consider augmenting the current update process to include more direct consultation of partner country government staff outside of formal TAG, Steering Committee, and internet message forums to obtain user feedback that informs priority items for upgrade.<sup>11</sup>

### Next Steps for Development Gateway

There are several remaining tasks, which DG intends to perform both through and beyond the current support from the Government of France. These are aimed toward the sustainability of IATI use in each country, and include:

- Update country data management plans to include guidance on continued/repeated import of initial set of publishers selected for each country (see Table 1 above), including frequency of import, flagging of data quality or funding duplication considerations, and field mappings.

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<sup>10</sup> Note that this represents a solution based on existing IATI fields to the request to create a specific on/off/through budget field as recommended in the initial working paper. The updated working paper will reflect this recommendation.

<sup>11</sup> This recommendation is partially the result of conversations with the Secretariat, in addition to general DG observation and discussion with partner country government staff on the challenges of providing feedback on technical data discussions in a largely online and English-speaking forum.

- Disseminate, in English and French, a final user guide for open source IATI-AIMS integration tool, including step-by-step guide for mapping and importing IATI data into AMP.
- Discuss with IATI Secretariat i) possible tutorials, training modules, and outreach methods to increase IATI proficiency among partner country government, and ii) methods to improve IATI upgrade process to directly engage partner country governments as key data users in a non-technical, user-centered design approach.
- Update mid-year working paper, based upon feedback collected throughout the program and direct comments from reviewers, and publish it end-December.
- Final working paper, incorporating feedback gathered through discussion paper and Steering Committee presentation, published by end-December.
- Working with additional countries to install the IATI-AIMS Import Tool and provide training on its sustained use for continued increase in uptake and use of IATI.

## Annex A: Updates to June Working Paper Recommendations<sup>12</sup>

- With the approval of the [budget identifier](#) work led by Publish What You Fund and DFATD, and further consultation with partner countries, the inclusion of on/off budget, Sub-Sector, and National Planning Objective fields are no longer recommended for consideration. Instead, increasing the awareness of country office staff will assist in creating accurate mappings from IATI definitions to AIMS National Planning Objectives and Sub-Sector fields, when questions arise. Similarly, mandatory adoption and use of updated OECD DAC codes will ensure that governments only need to create mappings once, including to budget categories, rather than custom mappings for each publisher they hope to import.
- Sub-national data remain an area of emphasis for IATI publication. Where this information is not available in IATI, a hybrid process for input of location data post-import should be considered. However, this process is not viable for publishers without a country office presence.
- Continued emphasis on efforts to increase data quality in the core set of fields identified in Table 2 below should be made by publishers.

Field Name	Field Definition
Title	Title of Project
Start Date (planned)	Planned initiation of project activities
Start Date (actual)	Actual initiation of project activities
End Date (planned)	Planned completion of project activities
End Date (actual)	Actual completion of project activities
Recipient Country	Country name
Recipient Country % (if multiple)	If multiple countries are funded through a project, % of funding to each country
Sector (primary)	Primary sector or purpose of project
Reporting Org	Organization reporting the activity to IATI
Transaction Type Code	Type of transaction (e.g. commitment, disbursement, expenditure)
Transaction Date	Date of transaction
Transaction Currency	Currency used for amounts in transaction
Transaction Value	Financial amount of transaction (in specified currency)
Funding Org	Organization providing the funding
Sub-national locations	Individual locations in which project activities will take place
Disbursement Channel	To be used in conjunction with Aid Type for determination of on/off budget status
Aid Type	To be used in conjunction with Disbursement Channel for determination of on/off budget status

<sup>12</sup> See: <http://www.developmentgateway.org/2015/05/21/iati-and-country-systems-dg-working-paper/>