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Paper 6A: IATI and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Introduction

2015 has been an especially important year for international development, with the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD3) taking place in Addis Ababa in July, and world leaders agreeing a new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the United Nations (UN) Summit in September. Taken together, the outcome of these two events sets the framework for development over the next 15 years, so it is important to reflect on how IATI fits in to the new international architecture, and what it has to offer in terms of meeting and monitoring the newly agreed global goals.

This paper presents the relevant outcomes from these respective processes, and analyses IATI's potential contribution in the medium and long term for consideration by IATI members within the context of the strategic vision for IATI.

The Addis Ababa Agenda for Action¹

In the run up to the Third International Conference in Financing for Development (FFD3), donors, partner countries and CSOs promoted IATI during the consultation and negotiation sessions using language developed with the support of the Secretariat. This highlighted IATI's potential as an open data standard that is already capturing information on a variety of different international development finance flows and could easily be adapted and extended to cover more. As a result of members' efforts, IATI was referenced in paragraph 127 of the AAAA as follows:

“We recognize that greater transparency is essential and can be provided by publishing timely, comprehensive and forward-looking information on development activities in a common, open, electronic format, as appropriate. Access to reliable data and statistics helps Governments to make informed decisions, and enables all stakeholders to track progress and understand trade-offs, and creates mutual accountability. We will learn from existing transparency initiatives and open data standards, and take note of the International Aid Transparency Initiative.”

Acknowledgement of IATI in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is a welcome sign that it is increasingly accepted within the international architecture. Similar language was used in relation to the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative, the Open Government Partnership and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation.

¹ http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA_Outcome.pdf

Paragraph 128 of the outcome document also included the following wording on data use and on the importance of joined-up data standards in making information more useful: “Data access alone, however, is not enough to fully realize the potential that data can offer to both achieving, monitoring and reviewing sustainable development goals. We should endeavour to ensure broad access to the tools necessary to turn data into useful, actionable information. We will support efforts to make data standards interoperable, allowing data from different sources to be more easily compared and used.”

In addition to these specific paragraphs, the importance of transparency and visibility was highlighted throughout the document in relation to tax systems, financial institutions, the corporate sector, national budgets, procurement, philanthropy, development cooperation, climate change finance and development banks. As a result, the AAAA effectively makes the case for transparency of all resources for development, and **provides IATI with an opportunity to position itself as a global data standard that offers an ideal basis for developing a fully comprehensive standard for publication of information on all international development finance flows.** Decision-makers at national level can gain an overview of the international resources available to them to add to the information they have on domestic flows and build a complete picture of the total resources available for development to inform their decisions on resource allocations.

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development²

The document agreed by world leaders at the UN Summit in September echoes the importance of mobilising all actors and multiple resources for development, stating that it will “facilitate an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors and mobilising all available resources.” (Paragraph 39).

With regard to the development of indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals, it notes that “Quality, accessible, timely and reliable disaggregated data will be needed to help with the measurement of progress and to ensure that no one is left behind. Such data is key to decision making. Data and information from existing reporting mechanisms should be used where possible”. (Paragraph 48).

The 2030 Agenda sets out a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity that includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals, and 169 associated targets. Those particularly relevant to IATI include:

Under goal 1 - End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Target 1.a Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions

² <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

Under goal 17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

17.3 Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources

The document makes it clear that primary responsibility for meeting and monitoring the ambitious, universal goals set out in the 2030 Agenda rests with national governments. For the governments of developing countries, this will mean increasing domestic resource mobilisation and maximising the effectiveness of the international resources available to them.

IATI's support to government efforts to meet and monitor the SDGs at country level

This is an area in which IATI is well-placed to make a contribution and already has a number of facilities in place to do so. IATI already makes available data published by a wide range of different actors, and the Standard could easily be further adapted and extended to become a comprehensive global data standard that captures data on all international resources for development.

Jointly with Development Initiatives, IATI has developed d-portal.org, a country-based platform that provides a ready-made monitoring tool for real-time tracking of the available international resources for development by country, sector or resource flow.

In addition, the latest decimal upgrade to the standard will provide the facility within the sector code field to record activities against SDGs, and/or targets and indicators.

By providing up-to-date management information on international resource flows, IATI can help governments to build a complete picture of the resources available to them which can in turn support evidence-based decision-making that maximises the effectiveness of those resources.

This will further enhance IATI's capacity to support governments in meeting and monitoring the SDGs at country level.

<p>IATI should support national efforts to meet and monitor the SDGs, for example by promoting d-portal as a ready-made tool for tracking international resource flows at country level.</p>

IATI's contribution to global processes

At global level, an SDG indicator framework is currently being developed by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, and is expected to be agreed by the Statistical Commission by March 2016. Depending on the outcome of this process, IATI could potentially make a contribution to the global monitoring exercise, since there are a number of targets where it may be able to provide supplementary data. The most relevant targets would appear to be the means of implementation targets set under Goals 1 and 17 (see above) regarding financial resource mobilisation from multiple sources.

With regard to review and follow-up, the 2030 Agenda states:

“We commit to engaging in systematic follow-up and review of the implementation of this Agenda over the next 15 years. A robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated follow-up and review framework will make a vital contribution to implementation and will help countries to maximize and track progress in implementing this Agenda in order to ensure that no one is left behind.” (Paragraph 72).

Specific mechanisms proposed include the high-level political forum, which will have a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level. This will be informed by an annual progress report on the Sustainable Development Goals to be prepared by the Secretary-General in cooperation with the United Nations System, and based on the global indicator framework and data produced by national statistical systems and information collected at the regional level. The high-level political forum will also be informed by the Global Sustainable Development Report, which will “strengthen the science-policy interface and could provide a strong evidence-based instrument to support policymakers in promoting poverty eradication and sustainable development.” The high-level political forum will meet every four years, with the next meeting taking place in 2019. Paragraph 89 notes that “The high-level political forum will support participation in follow-up and review processes by the major groups and other relevant stakeholders in line with resolution 67/290. We call upon those actors to report on their contribution to the implementation of the Agenda.”

Once the global indicator framework has been finalised, and the political process to support the global monitoring exercise is clear, IATI should consider whether it can also make a contribution to the global monitoring of the SDGs, and participate in the associated political processes.