



Publishing SDG data using the IATI Standard



Introduction

IATI has developed new guidance on [How to use the IATI Standard for publishing and using data on the Sustainable Development Goals \(Annex A\)](#).

This paper sets out how publishers can use the open data standard of the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) to share data on finance and results of activities that are intended to contribute to SDGs. The new guidance, developed collaboratively with a working group of IATI members, recommends best practice in publishing detailed SDG information using the IATI Standard.

The flexibility of the IATI Standard provides a range of ways in which organisations can publish SDG data. This guidance recommends a preferred approach to sharing data on both resources and results relating to the SDGs, using the IATI Standard. With more organisations publishing in a uniform manner, the published data can be accessed and analysed more effectively.

By following the methodology set out in the new guidance, the data already shared by these organisations will reveal much more clearly how their funding and activities are contributing to achieving the SDGs. IATI encourages all its publishers to start using this new guidance to improve the quality and comparability of the available data and ultimately to make it more useful for more people to use for more purposes.

The guidance is specifically targeted at organisations that are already familiar with publishing data according to the rules and guidance of the IATI Standard. Organisations wishing to begin publishing their data to the IATI Standard should refer to online [IATI Publishing Guidance](#).

International development and humanitarian actors not already doing so are invited to engage with IATI to see how they too can make use of data or champion the IATI Standard and ensure that open data contributes to the achievement of sustainable development outcomes.

Why use the IATI Standard to capture SDG resources and results?

The availability of open, transparent data on resources and results is essential in monitoring progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Access to timely, forward-looking and comprehensive data on international development flows can enable governments, donors and delivery partners to plan, budget and coordinate better, making the most effective use of all available resources. Open data can also play an essential role by enabling civil society organisations, media and the public to find the relevant information they need to hold decision-makers to account for progress in meeting the SDGs.

The IATI Standard sets out rules and guidance for publishing useful development and humanitarian data. Launched in 2011, the IATI Standard is regularly used by more than 1000 donor governments, multilateral agencies and foundations, non-government organisations, development finance institutions and private sector organisations to publish timely, comprehensive and forward-looking information on spending and results for over one million development and humanitarian activities. As an established Standard used by many different types of stakeholders it can be used to monitor both spending and results of activities contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals.

Captures a wide range of resources

Financing the delivery of the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals requires a wide range of resources, expanding beyond traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA). The Addis Ababa Action Agenda emphasised the need to mobilise all resources, and refers to the need for increased transparency in relation to financial institutions, philanthropy, development cooperation, climate change finance and development banks. The document references IATI ([see Annex B](#)) as a good example of an existing transparency initiative and open data standard that could provide a basis for improving transparency of development activities.

As the IATI Standard is widely recognised and used across all sectors; public, private and non-profit, development and humanitarian, it can be a useful vehicle for both existing IATI publishing organisations and new organisations to highlight how their spending and projects relate to the SDGs.

Ability to record results

The IATI Standard's flexible framework allows publishers to provide narrative text describing the results achieved through the implementation of different activities, and to tag projects using any of the Sustainable Development Goals Indicators.

Meeting the data needs of developing countries

IATI was originally set up to meet the demand from developing country governments for timely, comprehensive and forward-looking information on external resources, to better inform their decision-making. The 2030 Agenda renews the focus on this mission, as it places primary responsibility for meeting and monitoring the global goals with national governments. For the governments of developing countries, this means increasing domestic resource mobilisation and maximising the effectiveness of the international resources available. The IATI Standard helps to meet this need by promoting the availability of:

- **Timely data:** The Standard recommends publishing organisations to update their data at least quarterly and allows for monthly or even daily updates. This helps to ensure that information is up to date, relevant and useful to governments and civil society.
- **Comprehensive data:** In addition to finances, the IATI Standard allows organisations to share other useful information on their development and humanitarian activities. For example, it makes provision for the publication of precise location coordinates for projects and key documents such as country strategies, as well as results achieved.
- **Forward-looking data:** IATI makes it possible for donors to publish their spending plans several years in advance, which assists national governments with their long-term planning.

Progress to date

Since the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted, IATI's members and technical community have shown huge commitment to ensuring that the initiative supports the delivery of this agenda. IATI's **vision and mission** recognises and is aligned with the SDGs, and accordingly the **IATI Standard was upgraded** to enable publishers to capture information on the resources and results of activities contributing to the SDGs. At its 2019 annual meeting, IATI **approved a five-year Strategic Plan** to help IATI achieve its vision:

To have transparent, good quality information on development resources and results available and used by all stakeholder groups to help achieve sustainable development outcomes.

Working with members to **develop this guidance** on how to publish SDG data was therefore an essential next step.

In 2015 the IATI Standard was upgraded to version 2.02 to include changes to enable data on the SDGs to be published. Reflecting feedback from IATI's community of publishers and users, further changes have been introduced since then to allow organisations to publish more comprehensive data about their SDG-related resources and activities, together with the results achieved.

Summary of the new guidance

Increased use of the guidance will enable development actors to access finance and results data published by many different organisations in the same format on their projects contributing to the SDGs, making it easier to understand and analyse. The guidance recommends clear ways in which organisations can provide IATI data that indicates:

1. Which of their projects help to meet one or more SDG Goals and/or Targets;
2. What results are achieved through those projects, with reference to SDG Indicators.

In addition to applying these guidelines, IATI publishers may also wish to include more detailed information on their contributions towards the SDGs, using alternative elements of the Standard.

The full detailed guidance is provided at Annex A.

In summary, organisations should publish SDG Goals and/or Targets using the [<tag>](#) element. If possible, organisations should also publish SDG Indicators using the indicator [<reference>](#) element as part of their results reporting.

- Using the [<tag>](#) element is the simplest way of reporting SDGs and aligns with OECD DAC Common Reporting Standard (CRS). Everyone who can attach SDGs to their activities should be able to use this. Data users can also turn SDGs reported in other areas into tags (see guidance section 2.2).
- Using the [<reference>](#) element adds further details by ‘tagging’ an SDG Indicator to a result and aligning it with the organisation’s internal indicators. It allows SDGs to be published at an outcome level, providing additional detail to the [<tag>](#) element. It is recognised that not every organisation will be able to do this, but organisations that have this data in their systems are encouraged to provide it in order to enrich their datasets.

To note:

- The guidance only provides recommendations and has been developed with a view to introducing conformity in published data to benefit end users by providing better comparability. It is not mandatory and does not prevent a publisher from using a different method according to their own business models and internal processes.
- No IATI Standard upgrade is taking place at this time and accordingly, publishers are still governed by all the existing rules and capabilities within the IATI Standard.

Looking ahead

IATI will encourage its multi-stakeholder membership to commit to publishing data on how their activities relate to the SDGs. IATI’s Secretariat and Technical Team will actively engage publishers to encourage them to adopt the new IATI SDG guidance within their organisations by providing webinars, case studies, one-to-one support calls and other awareness-raising activities.

As the volume of published IATI SDG data increases, IATI will also encourage its members to start using the published SDG data to inform decision-making and to increase accountability. There are many ways in which the data can be used, such as to plan, coordinate or monitor outcomes, and to visualise SDG data on IATI search tools.

While this guidance focuses on improving and streamlining the **publication** of data, IATI’s next phase will be the development of recommendations on the **use** of published data which will be released for public consultation and once agreed, will be added to the SDG guidance.

Annex A: Guidance:

How to use the IATI Standard for publishing and using data on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Guidance for publishing and using SDG data in the IATI Standard.

Version 1.0, August 2019

1. How to publish SDG data

IATI recommends that, if possible, you should attribute SDGs to your activities as well as to their specific results:

- SDG Goals and Targets should be attributed to activities using the [<tag>](#) element;
- The more granular SDG Indicators should be attributed to results via the result indicator [<reference>](#) element.

If you are unsure which SDG Goals or Targets your activity relates to, it may be helpful to look at other activity classifications including sectors, policy markers and expected results you are using. Look for keywords that relate to specific SDGs.

If the activity has an SDG Indicator in its results framework, or the result relates to an SDG Indicator, the corresponding SDG Indicator code should be added to the indicator [<reference>](#) element in the results section. The corresponding SDG Target should also be included in the [<tag>](#) element.

1.1 Publishing SDGs at activity level using <tag>

Version 2.03 of the IATI Standard introduced the element [<tag>](#). This allows you to ‘tag’ the whole of an activity to one or multiple SDG Goals or Targets. This will indicate which SDG Goals or Targets a given activity contributes to, without associating specific percentages, finances or priorities.

It is possible to identify SDGs at two levels, either using the 17 SDG Goals or the 169 SDG Targets. You specify what level you are using by declaring the [tag vocabulary](#).

Using the SDG Target level is recommended.

- **SDG Goal:** `<tag vocabulary="2" code="8"/>`
- **SDG Target:** `<tag vocabulary="3" code="8.8"/>`

As one SDG Goal contains a number of Targets but Targets only link to one Goal, it will always be possible for data users to derive SDG Goals from reported SDG Targets (but not the other way around). Please note if you are reporting at target level, you **should not** also report the corresponding SDG Goal.

It is possible to link an activity to one or more SDG Goals or Targets. IATI does not place a limit on the number of SDG Goals or Targets you can publish in the [<tag>](#) element.

Caution: when publishing both [<tag>](#) and [<reference>](#) elements in a single activity, you should take great care to keep the data coherent. For example, if you publish SDG Indicator 6.4.1 (which belongs to target 6.4) in the results section, ensure you also publish SDG Target 6.4 as a [<tag>](#).

It is also likely that some SDG Targets or Goals published in [<tag>](#) elements will not have a corresponding SDG Indicator in the results section e.g. you may publish SDG Target 1.1 in a [<tag>](#) element without having SDG Indicator 1.1.x in the results section.

Example:

In the examples below an activity is tagged to SDG Target 8.8 which relates to SDG Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Note that only the code is reported in the first example. The second example shows how descriptions can be added in multiple languages. You can download translations of the SDG Goals and Targets [here](#).

Example 1:

Tag element with no narrative:

```
<tag vocabulary="3" code="8.8" />
```

Example 2:

Tag element with narratives in English and French:

```
<tag vocabulary="3" code="8.8">
  <narrative xml:lang="en">Protect labour rights</narrative>
  <narrative xml:lang="fr">Défendre les droits des travailleurs</narrative>
</tag>
```

1.2 Publishing SDGs at result level using <reference>

Version 2.02 of the IATI Standard introduced the [<reference>](#) element within the result indicator element. A result can be measured through multiple indicators; publishers may link each of their indicators to one SDG Indicator.

If you publish an SDG Indicator in the indicator [<reference>](#) element IATI strongly recommends that you publish the corresponding SDG Target in the [<tag>](#) element. For example, if you publish SDG Indicator 6.4.1 (which belongs to target 6.4) in the results section, ensure you also publish SDG Target 6.4 as a [<tag>](#).

SDG Indicators

The SDG list of indicators currently contains over 200 indicators measuring progress towards the SDG Goals. Organisations can specify which SDG Indicator their own result indicator best relates or contributes to. This is done by using code 9 from the [indicator vocabulary codelist](#).

If an organisation's internal indicator directly corresponds to one of the SDG Indicators, then the SDG Indicator code and name should be given as the indicator [<title>](#). The SDG Indicator code should also be specified in the [<reference>](#) element using code 9 from the [indicator vocabulary codelist](#).

When providing an SDG Indicator code, you should use the format 1.1.1 and not the UNSD Indicator Codes format CO10101.

Alongside this you can provide links to your own indicator codelist within the result indicator element using code 99 from the [indicator vocabulary codelist](#).

Please note that you can only attach **one SDG Indicator** to each of your result indicators published to IATI.

Examples:

Example 1:

In the example below an organisation's reported indicator is linked to SDG Indicator 8.8.2, which is part of SDG Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). It is also linked to the organisation's own indicator codelist using vocabulary 99. Please note that narratives cannot be added to the reference element.

```
<result>
...
<indicator measure="1" ascending="1">
  <title>
    <narrative>Description of the indicator</narrative>
  </title>
  <reference vocabulary="9" code="8.8.2" />
  <reference vocabulary="99" code="1" indicator-uri=
    "http://example.com/indicators.html" />
...
</indicator>
</result>
```

Example 2:

The example below provides a full example with more detail about linking an activity's reported indicator with a related (not exact) SDG Indicator, in this case 6.4.1 (change in water-use efficiency over time).

Organisation A implements a programme to improve the standards of operation of water operators in Africa, which contributes to SDG Goal 6 - "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all."

In order to measure its results, Organisation A has defined an indicator "Number of Water and Sanitation Service Providers that have reduced Non Revenue Water (spilled water) at utility level according to target" which relates to SDG Indicator 6.4.1 – "Change in water-use efficiency over time."

In IATI this looks as follows:

```
<result type="2" aggregation-status="0">
  <title>
    <narrative>Non-Revenue Water reduction</narrative>
  </title>
  <indicator measure="2" ascending="1" aggregation-status="1">
    <title>
      <narrative>Number of Water and Sanitation Service Providers that have reduced
        Non-Revenue Water (spilled water) at utility level according to
        target.</narrative>
    </title>
    <reference vocabulary="9" code="6.4.1" />
    <baseline year="2018" value="0" />
    <period>
      <period-start iso-date="2018-01-01" />
      <period-end iso-date="2022-12-31" />
      <target value="8">
        <comment>
          <narrative>The goal is to decrease NRW levels with at least 8 partners out of
            10 involved in this program.</narrative>
        </comment>
      </target>
    </period>
    <period>
      <period-start iso-date="2018-01-01" />
      <period-end iso-date="2018-12-31" />
      <actual value="1" />
    </period>
  </indicator>
</result>
```

2. Using SDG data in IATI

2.1 Different areas where SDG data can be found

The IATI Standard is designed to allow organisations to publish SDG data in a way that makes sense to them. IATI recommends that publishers should attribute SDGs to their activities, as well as to the results of each activity. This means when using IATI SDG data, you may be required to combine SDG data published in different parts of the IATI Standard.

IATI recommends that organisations publish SDG data in two places:

- Goals and Targets can be published at activity level via the [<tag>](#) element
- Indicators can be published at result level via the indicator [<reference>](#) element

Both approaches involve ‘tagging’ an activity or result with either an SDG Goal, Target or Indicator. The guidance below explains how the data can be combined and used.

Please note that [<tag>](#) was introduced at version 2.03. The indicator [<reference>](#) element was introduced at version 2.02.

Exceptions (not recommended)

It is possible that organisations will have published SDG data under the [<sector>](#) and [<policy-marker>](#) elements. Neither of these options are recommended.

If you require help in using SDG data published in these elements, please contact: support@iatistandard.org. Please do also get in contact with the organisation and ask them to consider changing their publishing.

If you are building a data use tool, IATI advises that you should only include SDG data published in the [<tag>](#) and indicator [<reference>](#) elements.

2.2 Combining Goals, Targets and Indicators

There are three levels to the Sustainable Development Goals:

X) Goals

There are 17 Goals, these are broad aspirations.

E.g. 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

X.X) Targets

Each Goal is broken down into multiple aspects called Targets. There is a total of 169 Targets.

E.g. 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

X.X.X) Indicators

Indicators are used to monitor the progress towards the SDG Targets and corresponding Goals.

There are over 200 hundred Indicators.

E.g. 1.1.1 Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural).

The SDGs have a numbering system which allows you to work out which Target and Goal an Indicator belongs to. For example:

Indicator 1.1.1,
Belongs to Target 1.1
Which belongs to Goal 1.

Organisations can tag their IATI activities and results with a mixture of Goals, Targets and Indicators. This can make it harder to aggregate IATI SDG data.

However, you can transform Indicators into Targets and Targets into Goals. If an activity is tagged with Indicator 1.1.1, you know that the activity is targeting Goal 1: Ending poverty in all its forms. Using this method will allow you to aggregate and analyse SDG data from multiple publishers.

2.3 Data use tips

IATI recommends that SDG Indicator codes are presented in the format 1.1.1. This allows each code to be attributed to a specific SDG Target. A handful of SDG Indicators are repeated across different SDG Targets. A list of duplicated SDG Indicators can be found [here](#).

A conversion to SDG Indicators in the format CO10101 can be found by downloading the excel files [here](#).

IATI recommends that if a publisher's internal indicators do not directly match any SDG Indicator, they should choose one SDG Indicator that their internal result's indicator best relates or contributes to. Note that a publisher's result's indicator may contribute to multiple SDG Indicators. If you are looking to see which IATI activities contribute to a specific SDG Indicator, you are advised to first check the [<tag>](#) element to see which activities have specified the particular SDG Goal or Target as well conducting a free word search of the activity's narrative elements.

Annex B: References to IATI and transparency in global policy agendas

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld> recognises the importance of open data to support efforts to achieve the sustainable development agenda:

- (Paragraph 48) “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).

IATI Strategic Plan 2020-2025

<https://iatistandard.org/en/news/iati-strategic-plan-2020-2025-approved-at-annual-members-assembly/> contains multiple references to Agenda 2030.

Addis Ababa Action Agenda

https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2051AAAA_Outcome.pdf

- Paragraph 128: “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.”

Financing for Development follow-up

The implementation of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda is reviewed annually by the [ECOSOC Forum on Financing for Development \(FfD Forum\)](#). Successive follow-up reports developed by the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development have recognised the important contribution IATI has made to improving transparency of resources used to deliver the SDGs:

- [Inaugural Report 2016: Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development](#)
- [Financing for Development: Progress and Prospects 2017](#) (Annex [Data, monitoring and Follow-up](#))
- [Financing for Development: Progress and Prospects 2018](#)
- [2019 Financing for Sustainable Development Report](#)

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