DIPR

On the path to transparency

A methodology for publishing IATI-compliant open data

15th July 2011

INTERNATIONAL AID TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE

CONTENTS

Overview

In July 2011, Development Initiatives Poverty Research (DIPR) published their first file of open data, in compliance with the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) Standard for providing data on aid flows. This initial publication covered data from the aidinfo programme and was published on the website at www.aidinfo.org/open.

This was just the first step in a wider move to opening up all data on the projects and activities of DI International Ltd, of which DIPR is the non-profit wing.

As the first NGO to publish IATI compliant data, DIPR hope that this document will serve to outline the process and decision making that took place around opening up the data, offering lessons learnt and recommendations for other organisations who are considering publishing their own data in compliance with the IATI Standard.

This document is not a definitive route to publishing IATI data, but should serve as guidance material to organisations hoping to start the process. The experiences of DIPR in publishing their data are used to illustrate the process, and start a peer learning process for other organisations.

Background

The International Aid Transparency Initiative aims to make information about aid spending easier to find, use and compare. It does this by laying out a recommended standard by which aid organisations can report their operational information. The Standard includes the data items which organisations should report, and a common electronic format it should be published in.

Agreed by a multi-stakeholder group of aid donors, developing country governments, and civil society organisations, the Standard is intended to apply to any organisation who works in the development sector. DIPR was the fourth organisation to publish, after the UK Department for International Development, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the World Bank.

There are currently several parallel processes housed within the IATI Technical Advisory Group (TAG) Secretariat, which are intended to work with non-traditional donor groups, including Foundations, Global Programmes and NGOs. The purpose of these processes is to find a suitable way of using the Standard in order that the business models of these different organisations are taken into account.

WHAT DATA ITEMS ARE INCLUDED IN THE IATI STANDARD?

The IATI standard recommends that organisations provide data at a project level, including items such as:

- Titles, descriptions and sectors
- Budgets and financial transactions
- National and sub-national geographic information
- Results and conditions
- Programme documents

Why is transparency important?

Better and more transparent information about aid projects is important for several reasons:

- Governments in developing countries need more information to manage aid resources more effectively as part of the national development planning;
- Parliamentarians and CSOs need better information to monitor performance of aid, to increase accountability and reduce the scope for corruption;

- Information being made accessible for citizens will form a basis from which to respond to media cricitism and public scepticism of aid;
- Citizens of donor countries can hold their governments to account for their tax money.

DIPR sees transparency of its own processes and activities as a small part of a larger movement towards greater transparency that we envisage will ensure that providers of aid are held to account for the services they provide and therefore to increase the effectiveness of aid projects worldwide and. Transparency is the first step in this process.

1. The decision to become open

*A **political or organisational decision** to agree to publishing open data is an essential starting point to the process. It is valuable to capture the reasons behind the decision, in order to create **clear lines of communication** within the organisation throughout the process of publishing. Generally, this decision will be made at **directorate or board-level**, depending on organisation structure.*

An important focus for the work of DIPR is on increasing access to information on development and aid flows. DIPR's work on this area has included:

- The Global Humanitarian Assistance Report, which brings together objective, unbiased data on humanitarian aid flows.
- The work of the aidinfo programme, which works to promote the transparency of information on aid flows, in order to improve the effectiveness of aid.
- DIPR's role in supporting the International Aid Transparency Initiative, as part of the Steering Committee, Secretariat and Technical Advisory Group Secretariat.

The directors saw it as a natural decision to begin publishing project information in line with the IATI Standard, since it was so well aligned with the priorities and values of DIPR. Further, the aidinfo programme, which was the first programme to publish its data, saw value in publishing from the perspective of understanding the challenges and experiences of implementing IATI themselves, since a proportion of its work involves supporting organisations to publish data.

Further, DIPR received a Programme Partnership Arrangement (PPA) from the UK Department of International Development (DFID) for 2011 – 2014, and in March 2011, DFID stipulated IATI compliance as one of the requirements for holding a PPA, from financial year 2012/2013.

2. Creating a cross-organisation working group

*Generating **cross-organisational buy-in** to publish new data can be difficult, but forming a representative working group from across all programmes and departments of an organisation helps to reduce this challenge.*

*Publishing data on projects is likely to impact on programme and support staff (including finance, IT, etc.) and it is important to bring the group together to explain the **possible implications** and any **operational changes** that might come about through publishing open information. It is also worth considering involving policy and advocacy staff in order to generate a good message for the organisation, especially for organisations who are advocating for greater transparency.*

Some organisations have expressed an interest in producing a feasibility assessment for publishing IATI data, in order to highlight any potential challenges. This could be a document produced by the working group and presented to decision makers in the organisation as a first step of working on implementation.

The working group comprised a member of staff from each programme in DIPR, finance staff, IT support staff and the HR manager. Initial meetings involved a briefing on the International Aid Transparency Initiative, and translating from this what implications it has on an organisation choosing to implement it.

Discussions in the working group involved looking at the possible risks of publishing data, and whether increasing the amount of data about the way we are spending our money would necessitate an increased communications effort. It also looked at the particular organisational challenges DIPR might face, in particular how our reporting might be impacted by the integration of a new financial management system.

Following a couple of meetings of the working group, it was agreed that, due to resource and time restrictions, the aidinfo programme would pilot publishing IATI data as the beginning of an incremental approach to the whole organisation doing it.

3. Internal Communication and Change Management

It is important to ensure that the principles of IATI are grasped and put into play throughout the whole organisation.

Publishing open data in an IATI compliant format goes ***beyond simply generating data****, it will have an impact on the work of those who manage projects, work in finance, and further to all staff working on projects. Publishing open data requires a* ***shift in mind-set*** *to ensure that all information about the project has to be recorded and reported in a way that is accessible to external stakeholders. This is particularly important when introducing additional items of data in to internal reporting mechanisms in order to report them through IATI.*

DFID have published their change management strategy on the iatistandard.org website (support.iati.standard.org). The amount of effort required by each organisation will likely depend on size and other factors like headquarter locations and existence of country offices.

Communicating with internal staff throughout the organisation is essential to ***ensuring buy-in and support*** *for the process of opening data in an organisation.*

DIPR staff were already aware of IATI and since accessibility of data is such a central concept to the organisation's aims, it was not a difficult process to communicate the importance of publishing open data. Further, a broad representation of staff had already been involved in the organisational working group.

Internal emails were circulated around staff to inform them of the progress made on IATI. More of an effort will be made to communicate internally when the rest of the organisation takes the step towards publishing open data.

The following areas are worth considering:

- **How operational data can be used to make work more effective**
  Data published in an IATI format can easily be re-used by an organisation for other types of reporting. DFID are feeding IATI data back into their project systems to provide information to programme officers. Further, the process of publishing open data can highlight areas where information management systems aren't working as effectively as they should be.
- **Mind shift to transparency**
  Ingraining the philosophy of quality and transparency in all activities and work by staff is an important step. By encouraging staff to begin thinking about transparency and open information when they do their work, the quality and accuracy of data produced initially is likely to increase.
- **Communicating transparency to country offices and partners**
  Ensuring that country-based staff and partners in developing countries understand IATI and the reasons for publishing open data is particularly important to ensure the principles of openness are filtered throughout an organisation and its practice.
- **Incentivising transparency and openness**
  Having a clear internal organisational message about why transparency and openness are so vital and the benefits they will have on the organisation and the work it does.

4. Structure of a publication team

The number of people involved in publishing data is dependent on the size and structure of the organisation. Specifying a project lead is particularly important in terms of increasing the efficiency of the team working to implement. The following tasks are particularly important, but it may not be necessary to have one person per task.

- *Project managing – to run the process of publishing data and coordinate with decision makers*
- *Technical support – to support in creating the data files (either manually or automatically)*
- *Data gathering – to collect and verify data ready for publication (from both financial and programme perspectives)*
- *Communications support – to publicise the effort on the website and to deal with increased volume of enquiries relating to the data at a later stage.*

The following staff were involved in publishing aidinfo's project data in an IATI Compliant format. The table below details their role in the process and the approximate number of hours it took. Please note this table is for information purposes and not necessarily indicative of the amount of time another organisation may take to publish IATI compliant data.

Staff[1]	Role in publication process	Number of hours
aidinfo Programme Officer	Project managing and data mapping and collection	Approx. 50 hours work over 6 weeks
aidinfo Business Analyst	Support in data mapping and converting information into an XML data file	Approx. 30 hours work over 6 weeks
DIPR Finance Officer	Supporting the Programme Officer in gathering data on financial information, including budgets and transactions	Approx. 3 hours work over 1 week
aidinfo Communications Officer	Generating blogs and content for the holding page for the data	Approx 10.5 hours work over 1 week
DIPR IT Advisor	Uploading the raw data file to the server and supporting website work	Approx. 1.5 hours work over 2 days

[1.] *In addition to the staff included in the table, occasional consultation was required with other aidinfo Programme staff, DIPR directors and funding institutions.*

Consultation with other organisations that have started publishing IATI compliant data has indicated that giving implementation a standard project structure enables it to work most effectively. The role of the Project Manager in bringing together the technical, policy and support staff is very important in this process.

It is envisaged that as DIPR publish more data, there will be less work for the Programme Officer in terms of mapping data elements with the IATI Standard and only slightly more time for gathering data. The initial publication required more work in terms of setting ground rules around exclusions, thresholds and securing agreement on these, therefore as the process becomes more systemised, the time required will certainly reduce. Furthermore, with plans for a new financial management system, it is hoped that data gathering will become more automated through improved coding and exporting processes.

Since we are only in the early stages of publishing IATI-compliant data, we haven't received a notable increase in the number of enquiries into our work. However, if this were to develop, we would envisage a slight increase of capacity necessary for the communications officer.

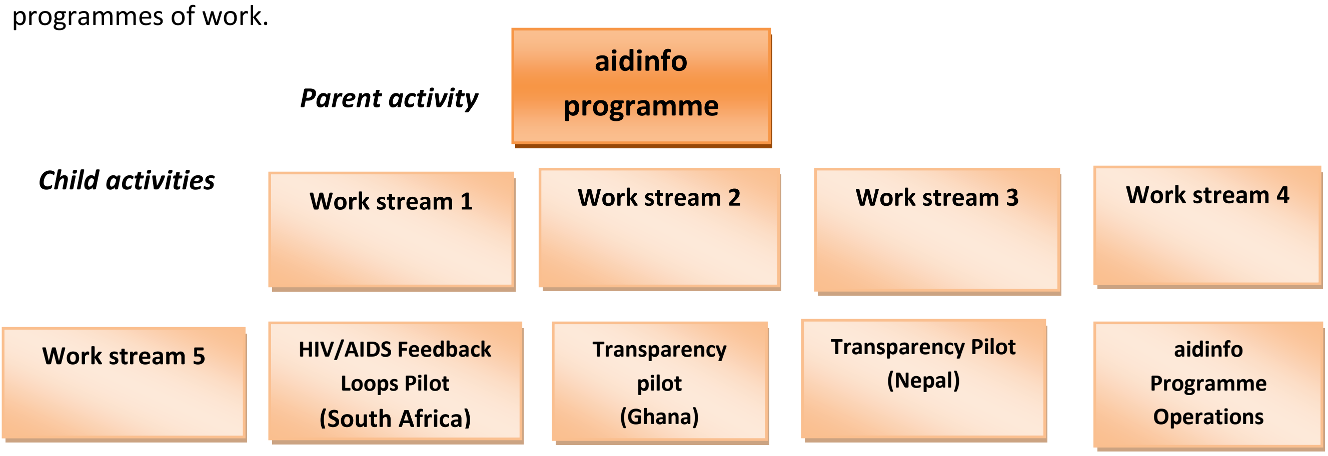
5. Mapping project structure and allocating activity units

IATI asks for data to be reported in units called "activities". These activities can be a project or programme, depending on the structure of the organisation, and the size and nature of the projects. It also allows for a hierarchy in "activities", meaning that an umbrella project can be reported at a parent level, with related sub-activities beneath it. The decision on how to allocate activity units is specific to each organisation.

Organisations are only responsible for reporting activities that they are managing. It is not the responsibility of an organisation to publish its partner's activities, though they may choose to stipulate reporting to IATI as a requirement for partner organisations.

It is important to spend some time exploring the structure of programmes or projects and conceptualising how best to communicate them to explain your work, and how they might sit in the hierarchy.

aidinfo is a relatively small programme, with eight staff working in its second phase, which has a budget of £1.1 million over eighteen months. The work is structured on a series of five work streams which are comprised of several different activities. In order to best conceptualise the work and communicate it more clearly, it was agreed that the aidinfo activities would be structured in parent-child hierarchy with the whole aidinfo programme standing as an activity in itself. This would firstly enable users of the data to get a clear over view of the programme and also make reporting the different activities of DIPR clearer when it came to publishing other programmes of work.



We decided to extract three discrete activities from the five work streams that we felt would generate more interest from users of data, since they were based in developing countries. We selected a pilot on feedback loops in the HIV/AIDS sector in South Africa, and two transparency 'proof of concept' pilots, showing the links between transparency and accountability, based in Ghana and Nepal.

As is the case with many NGOs, a considerable proportion of our funding is directed to operational costs and salaries. In order to clearly report against out activities, and to allow full traceability of our funds from donors, DIPR chose to report overheads and operational costs as a separate activity.

Some work was done ensuring that the titles of the work streams, reported as IATI activities, made sense to someone outside the programme and funder group. This meant that the short titles of the work streams were expanded slightly to express more about the work that was entailed within each. For example, in the project proposal for funding, work stream 1 is titled *"Promote resource transparency"*, but for the purposes of reporting against the IATI Standard, this was altered to *"Research, advocacy and communications to make the case for aid transparency."* Although this is not a requirement of IATI, DIPR felt that it was an essential piece of work to ensure that they were best communicating their work.

6. Data mapping between internal systems and the IATI Standard

The IATI standard (available at www.iatistandard.org) is a recommended list of data items that an organisation should report on to provide comprehensive information on its aid projects. It was agreed on following a series of consultations with data users and providers over two years, and is intended to be applicable to all types of organisation.

The standard is intentionally ambitious, and it is unlikely that an organisation will be producing all of the data fields, and some may be entirely irrelevant for the organisation. Therefore, a useful starting point is to carry out a mapping between the recommended fields laid down by the initiative and the data that is currently held in an organisation's own systems.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULES

Implementation schedules are documents published by signatories to IATI and other publishers of IATI compliant data.

They contextualise the data produced by an organisation, outlining data exclusions, timeframes for publication and reasons why data is or is not available.

For non-signatories, they are not obligatory; however they can be a useful tool in the implementation process and very valuable in providing context to data in relation to its organisation.

The DIPR implementation schedule is currently available at aidinfo.org/open and implementation schedules for IATI signatories can be seen at www.aidtransparency.net/implementation.

To map the data in their systems with the requirements of the IATI Standard, DIPR used an implementation schedule (see more details in the text box). This process involved identifying the data items in the Standard and matching them with relevant data being produced by DIPR. DIPR is a relatively small organisation and doesn't have an internal project management system. The majority of information on projects is stored in documents, with budgets being stored in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and the financial information on expenditures and income being captured in the SAGE accounting system.

Data Requirements

IATI does not stipulate a level of compliance for organisations to reach. Therefore, it is an organisation's decision as to how much detail they want to publish. It is possible that funding partners may lay out their own minimum compliance level, but IATI remains neutral on this stance, only requiring that plans for publishing data items are laid out clearly in an implementation schedule.

An example of some lines from the mapping exercise can be seen below in the table. Once complete, this was shared with the TAG Secretariat to discuss any issues or areas of concern.

IATI Data field	Publication Date	Exclusions and Thresholds	DIPR Definition	Publication notes
Recipient Country	July 2011			Only applicable to certain activities
IATI activity identifier	July 2011		IATI Activity Identifier + Companies House reg	
Activity Title (Agency language)	July 2011		Activity title	
Activity Title (Recipient language)	-	Not captured or relevant to project		
Sector (CRS)	July 2011		DAC Sector codes	
(OPTIONAL) Sub-national Geographic Location	2012 (date unspecified)			We hope to publish details on geographic location once the country pilots are further developed.
(OPTIONAL) Results data	-	Not captured		

7. Agreeing on exclusions and thresholds

Exclusions

The IATI standard does not require an organisation to publish all data items that are included. All organisations will face different challenges to publishing certain types of information. Reasons to exclude data may include:

- *Security*
- *Commercial interest*
- *Not relevant to the organisation*
- *Data protection and legal requirements*

IATI simply requires that the organisation in question is transparent about their exclusion policies. Details on these can be included in the implementation schedule and in the IATI registry organisation record.

Thresholds

Thresholds can be applied to financial transactions or whole activities. Depending on the size and structure of the organisation publishing, they may wish to set out minimum value thresholds, under which they only report aggregated activities or transactions.

Similarly to exclusions, IATI does not require every transaction or activity to be published in a disaggregated way, but does ask organisations to be transparent about any thresholds they set.

DIPR agreed that no exclusions were necessary on grounds of security or privacy; however certain data fields will not be included because they are not relevant to our organisation. Furthermore, there are data items that we have not published initially, but have included a date for when we hope to start reporting that data.

In terms of thresholds, we agreed to report all activities and all transactions, but that any transactions under a value of £100 would not include a description field. This information is all available in detail on the DIPR Implementation Schedule, which can be accessed from the www.aidinfo.org/open page.

The approval procedure on what would and would not be published was to check specific areas of concern with Project leaders, who also agreed on exclusion and threshold policies proposed by the publication team.

8. Collecting and Capturing Data

The process for data capture for IATI will depend on the structure of an organisation's information management systems. Since IATI data is meant to be operational data, rather than highly verified statistical information, the source of data to publish in an IATI compliant format is generally the information management system that is used for the regular planning and budgeting of the organisation. This could include:

- *A project management system*
- *A financial management or accounting system*
- *Budget or work plan spreadsheets and data bases*
- *Project documents*

The options for collecting the data can vary from a conversion tool built on to a current management system, to manual collection of data, and initial capture in a spreadsheet, which can be converted into the correct IATI data format. The IATI TAG Secretariat have a piece of ongoing work to create an online open source project data base, with a user friendly web entry form, for organisations with no existing project management systems. For more information on how this could be used to generate IATI data, see the text box below.

DIPR captured data in a spreadsheet form of the IATI Standard. This was a manual process, carried out by a Programme Officer. An example of the spreadsheet is shown below.

Data was drawn from the project budget, monthly spending breakdowns for the aidinfo programme and from work plans, and copied into the spreadsheet following the agreed activity structure.

We do not intend for the DIPR data collection process to remain manual, since it takes considerable time to manage the process. With ongoing discussion internally regarding a new financial management system, we are working with software suppliers to ensure that we implement a structure that will enable us to capture as much IATI data as possible, with a system in place to easily export the data to publish in an IATI compliant format.

Aggregating financial information

When publishing transaction level information for DIPR activities, it was agreed that transactions would initially be aggregated, to reduce the level of manual work. Transaction information was only provided on the child activity level, and was split into relevant groups of transactions, which aligned with where we were spending our money.

Web Entry Platform

The Web Entry Platform will be a piece of online, open source project management software that will enable organisations with a small number of projects (between 30 and 100 per year) to enter and store data on their projects.

Any organisation using the platform would own the data they were entering and would be able to edit and update the data stored there.

An option therefore, for smaller organisations wishing to publish IATI data, would be to store their data on the web entry platform, and opt to export the data they wished into a file of IATI data which they would be able to publish.

This would mean that the data capturing and publishing process could be closely aligned.

Please note this product is still under development.

Incoming funds are reported on a single transaction basis, but currently expenditure transactions are being reported aggregated by quarter. Ultimately DIPR intend to publish individual transactions over a minimum threshold, which would involve not only descriptions of the transactions, but also information about the transaction recipients. This would require considerable work to ensure that partners were happy with us publishing their information.

The transaction groupings we agreed to aggregate and report under the child activities were as follows:

- Incoming funds from programme donors
- Personnel costs - *including full time programme staff and financial staff, IT etc. support staff*
- Office costs – *Overhead costs, including internal meetings, telephone and internet, insurance, stationery, office rent etc.*
- Travel – *including travel expenses such as accommodation*
- Specific consultancy projects – *these included detailed descriptions of the pieces of work*
- Events – *costs for attending conferences*
- Work on the programme's planned aid information portal
- Workshops - *expenditure related to workshops during the country pilots*
- Monitoring and Evaluation – *expenditure related to M&E work for the country pilots*

Data capturing for financial information involved exporting quarterly expenditure figures from SAGE and coding them according to the transaction groupings above.

	A	B / C	D	E
1			aidinfo - DIPRA	programme operations - DIPRA1
2	File Header	IATI Version		
3	Record Header	Default language	en	en
4		Default currency	GBP	GBP
5		Data Updated		
6		hierarchy	1	2
7	Reporting Organisation	identifier	GB-COH-06368740	GB-COH-06368740
8		type	22	22
9		name	Development Initiatives Poverty Research	Development Initiatives Poverty Research
10	IATI activity identifier	IATI activity identification string	GB-COH-06368740-DIPRA	GB-COH-06368740-DIPRA1
11	Other activity identifiers	other organisation identifier	Funding organisation identifier US-EIN-941655673	Funding organisation identifier US-EIN-941655673
12		other organisation name	The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation	The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
13		other organisation activity identification string	US-EIN-941655673-25289	US-EIN-941655673-25289

Since the level of aggregation was quite high, DIPR chose to include quite detailed descriptions for each transaction, including details on the number of people in each pay bracket under the personnel expenditures, specific details of consultancy work, and the locations for travel. For any aggregated transactions that were below £100 we agreed to not include a transaction description.

Publishing Documents

Part of the IATI Standard asks for publication of and links to documents relating to the organisation and individual activities. DIPR plan to publish the some documents relating to the aidinfo programme in their second publication during September, once we have agreed with our funders that there is no content which may be sensitive. We intend to publish project funding proposals, theory of change chart, grant agreements, and reports to funders. This will be the first time that DIPR have published such documents in a public forum.

9. Converting data to the IATI format

One part of the agreed IATI standard for publishing data on aid flows is the electronic format in which to report the data.

The agreed format is XML (Extensible Markup Language), a set of codes which are machine-readable. An example of what XML looks like can be seen below. Among the codes, are a series of textual data which is readable by a human, without too much difficulty. The IATI Standard website (www.iatistandard.org) gives detailed examples of how each data field should be reported in XML format.

There are several methods for converting data into the XML format:

- *Manual – an XML specialist can type small volumes of data into XML format, however, this process is very time-consuming and **not a recommended method**.*
- *Excel conversion tools – the Technical Advisory Group are working on a conversion tool that will take data stored in an Excel spreadsheet and convert it into XML*
- *Web entry platform (see above) – this enables an automatic export of XML IATI data*
- *Programmatic output of XML – building a programme which automatically converts data from an existing project management system.*

Prior to DIPR publishing their data, the organisations who had implemented IATI had existing project management systems that enabled them to create conversion programmes to generate XML data (see example on the following page). DIPR, without an existing project management system, and without any of the conversion tools yet ready, did a manual conversion of the data gathered in the spreadsheet above.

This was a very time consuming process, and we do not envisage this process continuing. Rather, we would intend to use either the Excel conversion tool or the Web Entry Platform.


```xml
<activity-status code="2">Implementation</activity-status>
<activity-date type="start-actual" iso-date="2010-07-01"/>
<activity-date type="end-planned" iso-date="2011-12-31"/>
<contact-info>
<organisation>
aidinfo Programme - Development Initiatives Poverty Research
</organisation>
```


10. Data validation and verification

Validation and verification of data to ensure it is correct and does not include any data which the organisation would choose not to report, is a legitimate concern of organisations publishing open data. Prior to converting data into the IATI XML format, it is likely that an organisation will already have existing procedures that are sufficient, for example verifying financial transactions within departments, ensuring correct coding etc.

To validate the XML data, the IATI Technical Advisory Group are building a compliance tool, through which you put the XML file. It checks that the XML is valid and produces a report to highlight any errors in the code. This is being further developed to produce a report which highlights data fields that may not have been included, which are recommended.

The answer to the question of what level of verification data should go through before publication will depend on the focus of the organisation and whether the timeliness or the accuracy is most important. It is important to bear in mind that IATI data is operational and that consequently is rapidly changing, meaning that timely data can often be more useful than heavily verified data.

Existing verification processes

DIPR have existing verification processes on ensuring that financial transactions are applied to the correct activities, with the information being checked by the Finance Officer and Programme Officers and Administrators. The information on work plans and budgets is operational and thus subject to regular change, and therefore, doesn't have a specific verification or validation process.

Additional procedures for publishing IATI data

Before publishing the titles and descriptions of activities, these were all checked by the Programme leader and Directors to ensure that they reflected properly the work that we do. Further, during the data capture process, the programme officer verified decisions and information before entering it.

In addition to checking the data as it was collected, there was also a sense check and proof-read, prior to and after converting the data into the IATI format. In the future, as more data is being produced, we would hope to use an XML compliance tool rather than doing a human check.

11. Publishing IATI data and the registry

IATI is not creating a database of organisations' aid data. It simply requires an organisation to publish IATI data, in compliance with the standard, on its own organisation website, and to include a link to that data on the IATI registry (www.iatiregistry.org). The registry then serves as an index of locations where IATI data is stored - a convenient point of access for users to find the most recent data.

This means that publishing IATI data involves some thought about an organisation's website and the best location to publish such information:

- *Frequency*
- *Segmenting data files*
- *How to publish the XML file*
- *URL - /open ?*
- *Register your organisation and data with the IATI registry*
- *Content of the page – include information on IATI, reasons for publishing etc.*

Frequency

IATI recommends that organisations publish data either on a quarterly or monthly basis. Currently, whilst publication of IATI data by DIPR is carried out manually, the organisation has agreed on quarterly publication a quarter in arrears. This is to enable financial information to be inputted and captured appropriately. This means that in September, data will be published covering quarter one of the 2011/2012 financial year (April to June).

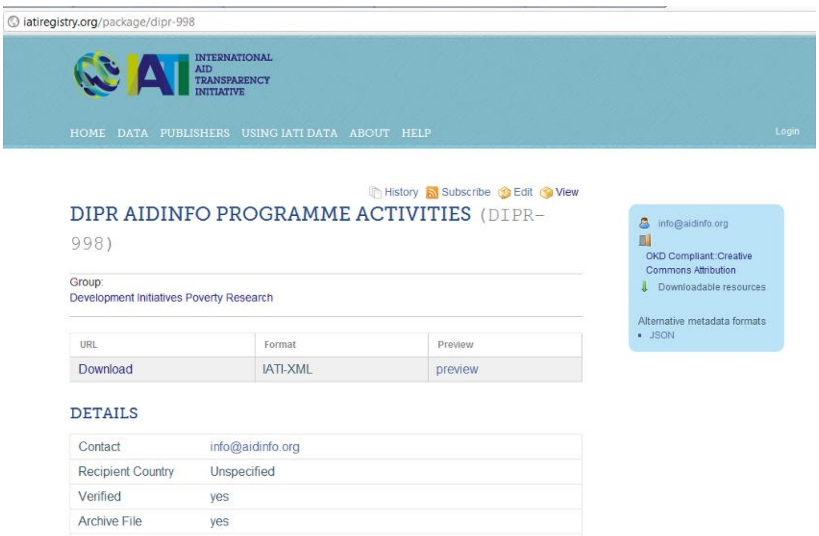
DIPR intends to increase the frequency to monthly and nearer real-time once they have implemented a new financial management system that would enable an automatic conversion of data and swifter capture of financial information.

Segmentation

Initially, it is important to decide on the segmentation of the organisation's XML files. Being a small organisation and only currently publishing information on aidinfo, DIPR only required one data file. However, larger organisations may want to consider breaking one very large file of activities into a series of more manageable ones. For example, DFID and the World Bank have segmented their data into country or regional files, with a further file for the organisation information. This makes the XML files easier to use for information intermediaries who might be repurposing the raw data.

Publishing the XML file

The key function of the /open page was to direct users of data to the XML file of aidinfo's operational data. Initially we attempted to upload the XML file like a standard document or image file through Wordpress, our website's content management system. However, we found that XML files cannot be uploaded in this way. After discussion with our IT staff, we agreed to upload the file to a place on the server with a unique URL, that we could then link to on the /open page, and include in the IATI registry.

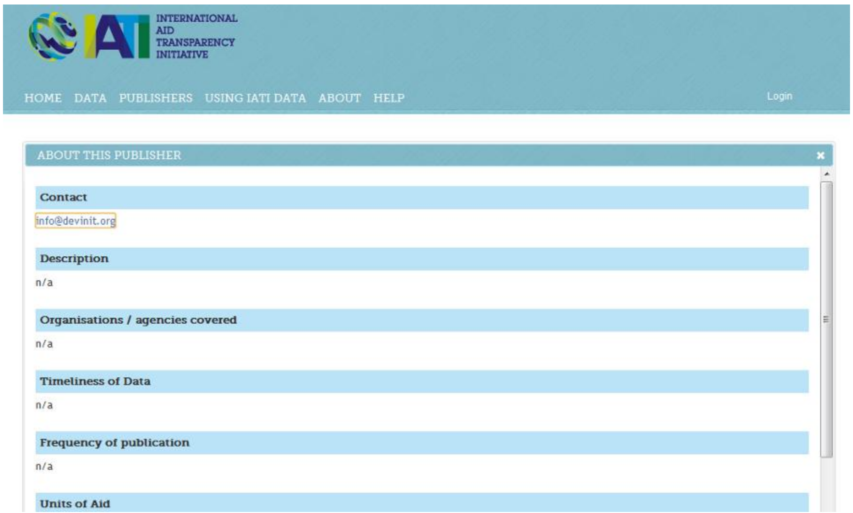


The chosen URL was http://www.aidinfo.org/iati-data/dipr-998.xml. This makes it part of the aidinfo website, and clearly marks it as 'iati-data'. The 'dipr-998' refers to the fact that this is a file of DIPR data covering the OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System's (CRS) country code 998 – bilateral unspecified. The URL was then registered on the IATI registry and included within the content of the www.aidinfo.org/open web page. See a view of the DIPR IATI registry record on the left.

Register on the IATI registry website

The IATI registry enables an organisation to create an account and link to their open data files by inputting a URL. This is available at http://iatiregistry.org/user/register. To add new data files, the organisation can then login and update the URL if necessary.

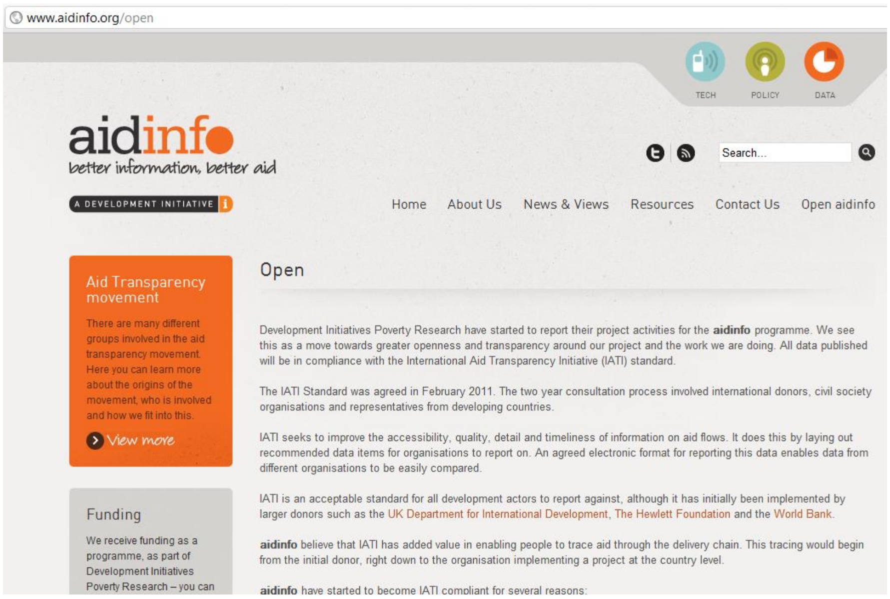
The registry also has space for a publisher record which gives contact details, exclusion information and some context to the data which is published. (See screen shot on the right)



URLs

When data from more than one DIPR programme is published, we will create a page on the www.devinit.org URL, however, with aidinfo being the only programme currently producing data, it was agreed that the data should be housed on a page on the aidinfo website.

It was agreed that the best URL for publishing the aidinfo data would be www.aidinfo.org/open (see screenshot below). /open (slash-open) URLs have been used by several organisations as a location for either publishing open data, or information about the open data policies. Examples include www.worldbank.org/open and www.whitehouse.gov/open. The Dutch development collaboration platform Open for Change are keen to promote the /open as a common practice among development organisations.



DIPR chose to use the /open URL for several reasons:

- We recognise the importance of standard practices among organisations when opening up data and would like to follow the lead of other organisations who are opening up their data
- We are keen that developers take their data and combine it and mash it up with other open data. We hope that the /open URL will ultimately serve as a place for developers and producers of open data to interact and communicate effectively.
- The /open URL is a self-explanatory and self-contained URL that clearly indicates what we are trying to do by publishing our operational data in a publically available, open and machine readable format.

Content of the webpage

The key function of the /open page is to contain a link to the XML file, however DIPR felt that it was important to contextualise the data we had produced, giving information on the following areas:

- Background on IATI
- aidinfo's position on IATI's added value in the aid data space
- Reasons for publishing IATI data
- Some basic information on the data we are and aren't publishing
- A link to the implementation schedule
- Information about and an example of XML

We also created a clear link to the open data page on our aidinfo homepage with an "Open aidinfo" link.

12. Licensing data

In February 2011, IATI Signatories agreed that data published in an open format should be published under one of two different licensing arrangements:

- *Attribution only – users of data can use the raw data, and attribute the original author*
- *Public domain - users of data can use the raw data, without any attribution to its original source*

An organisation can choose to create a license for their data under either of these categories. Details of the licensing arrangements are included on the IATI implementation schedules and on the publisher record on the IATI registry.

DIPR have agreed to have a public domain license for their data, but are in discussion with licensing specialists to ensure that they generate the most appropriate license. Once it is complete, it will be published as part of the IATI registry publisher record and also on the www.aidinfo.org/open page.

Larger organisations will often need to spend some time discussing the organisational options for licensing their IATI data with their legal departments.

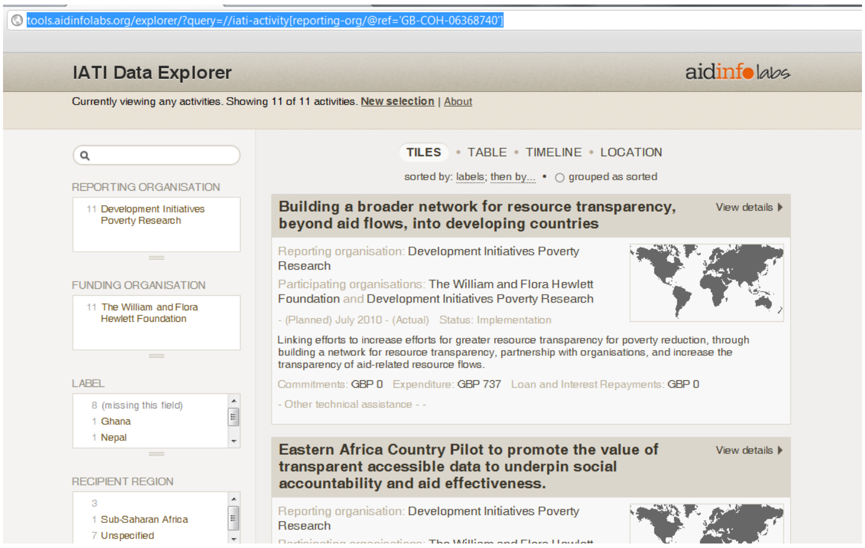
13. Accessibility of data

IATI's required XML raw data format is very useful for developers and information intermediaries who are able to build applications to visualise and mash up the data with other raw data. However, this XML format is not accessible to non-specialists and can seem very daunting.

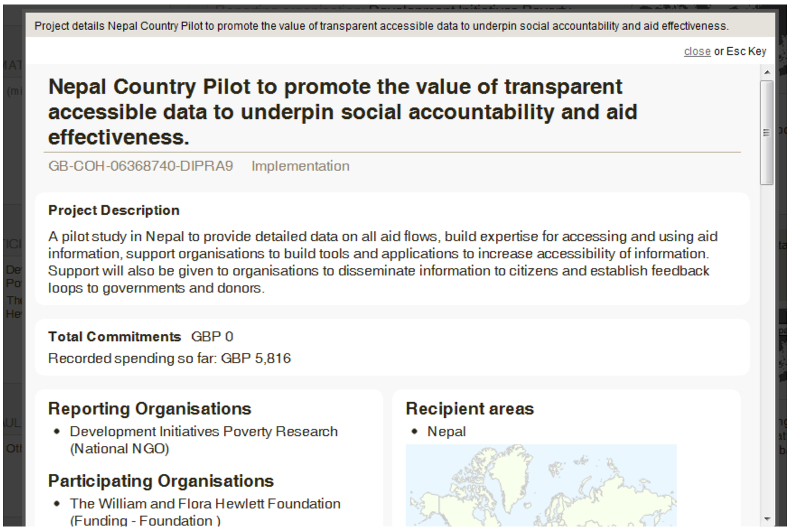
Organisations publishing IATI data are beginning to consider the options for creating user-friendly, human readable tools to enable users to browse their IATI data. Creating such tools is not a requirement of IATI, however, many organisations see this as a vital communications tool to their stakeholders.

There are many different possibilities for organisations creating tools, visualisations and user interfaces for their data, including maps, project viewers and simple databases. For some ideas, visit www.aidinfolabs.org

Without a large budget for creating a bespoke visualisation tool for their data, DIPR chose to use an existing open source tool from the aidinfolabs website. Working with a consultant, they created a particular view of the IATI Data Explorer (http://tools.aidinfolabs.org/explorer/), an application, which "allows you to explore small sets of aid activities in depth. " A link was created sending the user straight through to a view of aidinfo's activities in the IATI Data Explorer screen. N.B. There are limitations currently that prevent the IATI Data Explorer from working in Internet Explorer, but these are being addressed.



Users are then able to click on to individual projects to see more details about them, with options to export the data if necessary. A link to this tool is available on the aidinfo open data webpage.



DIPR have further plans to create tools that may be used as a proof of concept of traceability. aidinfo's main funder, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, are already publishing IATI data. We hope to create an application that enables us to trace the funds directly from the Hewlett Foundation through to DIPR for the aidinfo programme, and then out as our expenditure.

14. Communication and peer learning

Organisations that start publishing open data on their operations are likely to want to communicate their work to external stakeholders including funders, partners and potential users of their data. Blogs, tweeting, and online articles can be particularly effective in engaging with potential developers and users of open data.

Further, since IATI is a new method for publishing data, very few organisations have the experience and knowledge about what it entails. Blogs and websites about the processes and experiences from publishing organisations can be valuable sources for peer learning.

The implementation team worked with communications staff to prepare a blog announcing the first release of DIPR IATI data (http://www.aidinfo.org/aidinfo-open-their-data.html).

Peer support and learning was an important consideration for the aidinfo programme, in light of their role as the Secretariat of the IATI Technical Advisory Group. By documenting and sharing information on the process and experiences of implementation, DIPR were able to begin generating guidance and support materials for other organisations, with a clearer understanding of the organisational challenges. The intention is now to continue blogging as we develop and improve the data we are publishing, creating clear documentation of the progress and processes the organisation went through. To follow the aidinfo blog, please visit www.aidinfo.org/news .

Further, the IATI Secretariat is producing blogs and news stories on the www.aidtransparency.net website when new organisations are publishing. DIPR worked with the IATI Secretariat to create a blog for the IATI website, in order to generate more interest from NGOs, since we were the first NGO to publish IATI data. All blogs were then tweeted through the @IATI_aid and @aidinfo twitter accounts to generate some interest from potential users of data who follow #opendata and #iati hashtags.

15. Next Steps

Publishing IATI data can initially require a lot of effort, but as the process becomes more automated and regular, the resources are likely to reduce.

The majority of organisations are initially publishing information that they are already currently capturing, with a plan to produce more detailed, less aggregated information at a later date as laid out in the implementation schedules.

This approach is welcomed by IATI, as long as the plans for improving compliance with the Standard are transparent.

DIPR are viewing their publication of IATI as a progressive step towards full compliance, in line with the diagram below outlining an incremental approach to publishing open data.

DIPR's next steps for open data are on several dimensions:

i) **Increase the coverage of data**

Currently we are only publishing data from one programme of DIPR, and in early 2012, we hope to be publishing some data from all DIPR programmes and projects.

ii) **Improve the amount of data**

Although DIPR attempted to be quite ambitious in its initial publication, there are several fields that we see as very important, but as yet, are not capturing data on: sub-national geographic information, results data, and documents. It is likely that some of these items will take some months to develop, however, DIPR are keen to state their intention to publish these items when it becomes possible, and where it is relevant.

iii) **Decrease the aggregation of data**

Particularly in relation to the expenditure transactions, DIPR intends to publish these at the most disaggregated levels possible, and include details of the recipients of the transactions.

iv) **Increased regularity and timeliness of publishing**

Currently DIPR is publishing IATI compliant data quarterly, a quarter in arrears. We ultimately hope to publish monthly information, a month in arrears, but this will most likely happen when we are able to automate the process.