



Use of IATI in Country Systems

Final Report of 2015-2016 Program

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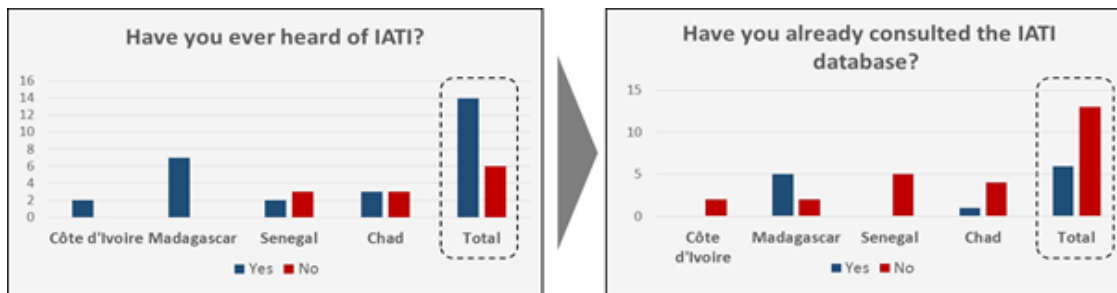
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Executive Summary

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. This version of the paper incorporates feedback gathered through responses to this paper and from a number of IATI Members Assembly members.

During the [first phase](#) of the program, the team assessed data quality for the largest IATI publishers in each of the focus countries. The second phase, detailed in this paper, focused on importing IATI data into country systems. In the process, we documented our learning about country awareness, concerns, challenges, and opportunities for using IATI data. DG 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. After a delay due to political circumstances, DG worked with the Government of Burkina Faso in early 2016 to implement the IATI-AIMS Import Tool. Surveys about IATI data use were administered to participating government staff in Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Madagascar, and Senegal before and after DG’s activities, and complementary interviews were performed during the process. We aim to inform the IATI community on country knowledge of and attitude toward IATI as a data source. In total, 20 participants from government aid coordination units responded to the pre- and post-surveys. Pre-surveys found low levels of awareness and limited use of IATI – primarily for the purpose of cross-referencing AIMS data.



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

Beyond a lack of awareness, reasons for limited use of IATI were identified as

- i) Most data are only provided in English;
- ii) Lack of trust in IATI data collection and publication processes;
- iii) Lack of timely (at least quarterly) publication; and,
- iv) Challenges in working with xml and csv data formats.

¹ Note that the term “IATI database” was used for functional clarity

² In Madagascar, imports are being done directly by the Government. At the time of writing, DG has

After consultation with government staff, a sub-set of data from IATI publishers was selected for import into the AMPs. The resulting imports (to-date) are detailed below.

Total Disbursements Imported				
	Gates Foundation	GAVI	Global Fund	Total
Chad	\$4,259,022	\$23,499,635		\$27,758,657
Cote d'Ivoire	\$5,252,421	\$61,325,088	\$312,648,344	\$379,225,853
Madagascar²	TBC	TBC	TBC	TBC
Senegal	\$31,527,771	\$46,941,295		\$78,469,066
Total	\$41,039,214	\$131,766,018	\$312,648,344	

Table 1: Overview of Total Imports Performed Through Program

Despite gains in IATI awareness and knowledge, levels of comfort in using IATI data remained low at the end of the DG program, presenting needs for future efforts from DG and the IATI community. In particular, we see needs for:

- i) Online tutorials for using IATI data,
- ii) Continuous hands-on training,
- iii) Improved tools for accessing raw IATI data in user-friendly,
- iv) Continued improvement in data quality; and,
- v) Data made available in official government languages.

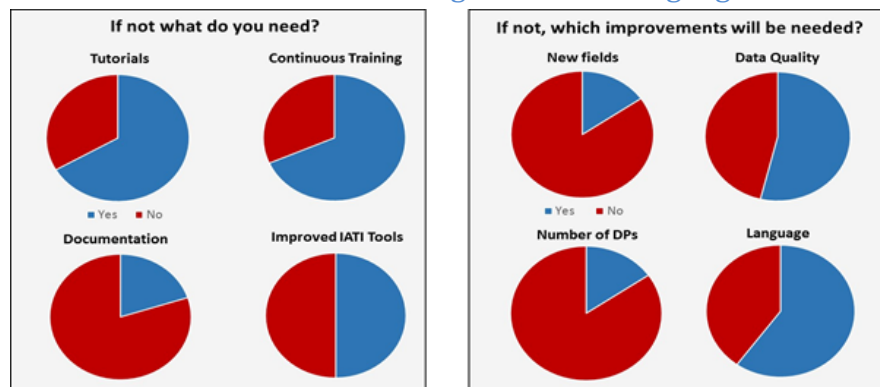


Figure 5: Outstanding Perceived Needs for Partner Country Use³

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. Raise awareness within DP country offices of IATI publication process;

² In Madagascar, imports are being done directly by the Government. At the time of writing, DG has not yet received confirmation on the amount of funding imported by GoM.

³ Among respondents who answered “No” to “Are you now comfortable with the use of IATI standards and tools to update AMP data?”

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;
8. Investments in longer-term, hands-on support to government staff in using IATI data.

We also note some key design weaknesses in the DG program to inform future programming:

1. Insufficient engagement with DP country office staff;
2. Insufficient time spent working directly with government staff, due to budget limitations for travel costs; and
3. Need for additional materials (tutorials, training modules, user guides) for refresher training by government staff.

Background⁴

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, imports largely focused 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). Other DPs showed more funding in IATI than was recorded in country AMPs; these were tentatively selected for import consideration by each government. However, government staff raised concerns about double counting of funding – particularly of multilateral DPs – due to difficulties in determining initial funding source for multi-donor trust funds and core support to MDBs. This challenge, combined with the perception of limited “value added” of replacing already-high quality bilateral data through local reporting with IATI data, ultimately resulted in the selection of the DPs listed above.

Methodology of Phase II

Based upon the initial set of DPs identified for each country, DG worked with the governments of Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, and Senegal⁵ to institutionalize the integration of IATI data with country systems. Each engagement aimed to:

- 1) Understand prior awareness of IATI, both as an initiative and as 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 public IATI tools (e.g. datastore, d-portal) and data quality assessment;
- 4) Identify an initial set of publishers for import, help governments decide which data should be imported, and conduct the import;
- 5) Provide training on the IATI-AIMS Import Tool;
- 6) Discuss updates to the country data management plan⁶ to sustainably 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 identify steps to increase data use.

The key results and learning from these activities are detailed below.

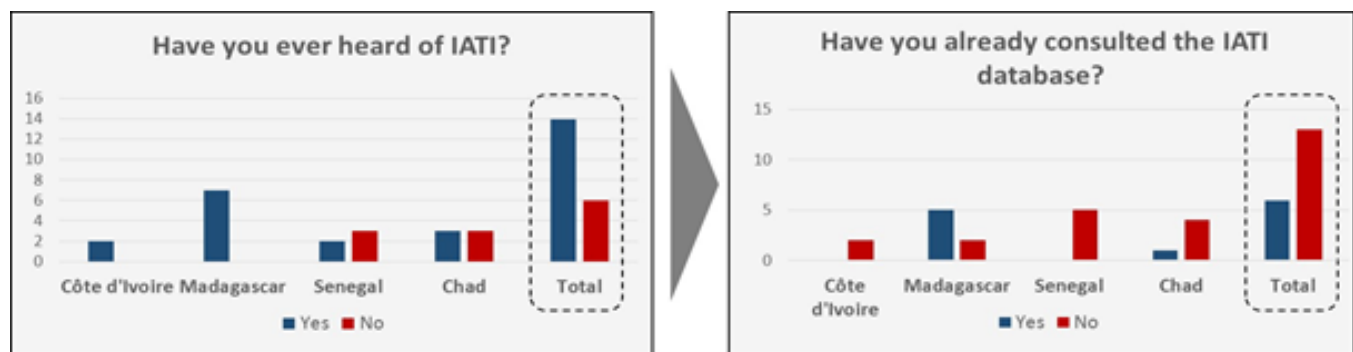
⁴ The program is generously supported by the French Foreign Ministry. All viewpoints are the responsibility of DG and do not represent the official views of the French government.

⁵ 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 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.

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. 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) while Chad had simply reviewed IATI data in an informational manner.



⁷Figure 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.* 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 unified in-country reporting timelines are typically agreed to between government and DPs, IATI data are published with different times and frequencies across publishers.

⁷ Note that the term “IATI database” was used for functional clarity

- **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 (due to a lack of awareness of how to properly open in Excel). Respondents expressed a strong preference for xls(x) formats, although training on csv could hopefully offset this gap.⁸

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 more than 10 countries: Chad, Cote d’Ivoire, Kosovo, Madagascar, Senegal, Moldova, and Malawi. As the tool is now becoming part of the standard AMP upgrade process, this will quickly grow to roughly 20 countries. The tool relies on a set of API endpoints for integration, meaning that, with modifications it could be integrated to *any* AIMS (not just AMP). 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, incorporating feedback from partner countries after each trip. A wizard design is used to guide users through a step-by-step process to match IATI and AIMS fields and then import IATI data. Currently, the tool supports IATI versions 1.03, 1.04, 1.05, 2.01, and 2.02.

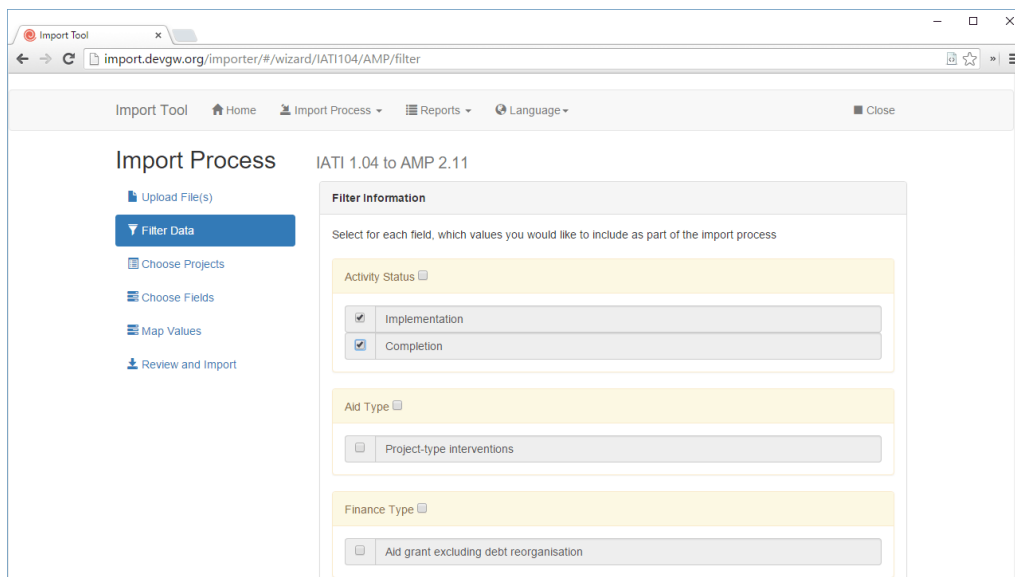


Figure 2: Screenshot of IATI-AIMS Import Tool Showing Value Mapping Process

⁸ 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.

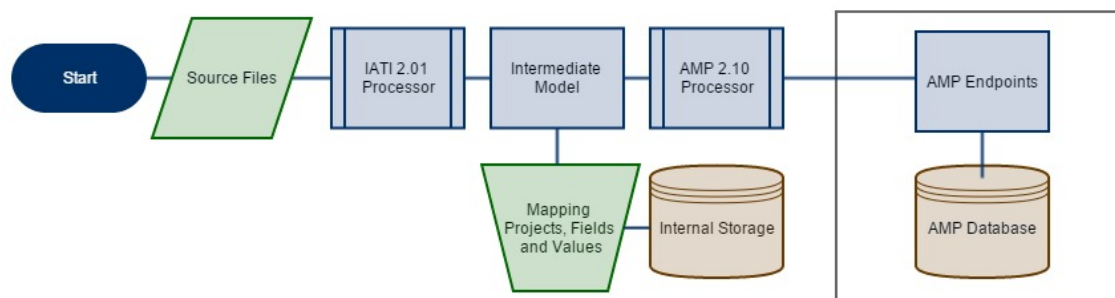


Figure 3: Workflow for Importing IATI Data Into AIMS Using DG Tool

Step 3: Importing IATI Data into AIMS

To-date, the program has resulted in the import of more than 80 new activities with \$485,453,576 in total disbursements into the Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Madagascar, and Senegal AMPs (see Table 1 below). Except for the case of Madagascar, these imports were performed by DG staff remotely, due to (1) delays in finalizing the IATI-AIMS integration tool and (2) the need for ongoing training and support to government staff in performing subsequent imports (see recommendations and weaknesses section below). 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, where feasible) with key government staff. We aim to co-implement the next set of data imports and ensure that these can be performed sustainably in the future for selected funders.

After import, the data are reviewed 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 Foundation contributions to 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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Table 1: Overview of Total Imports Performed Through Program

⁹ In Madagascar, imports are being done directly by the Government. At the time of writing, DG has not yet received confirmation on the amount of funding imported by GoM.

Beyond the initial imports, future goals should include two tracks: i) quarterly update of data from the IATI publishers listed below (or as frequently as IATI data are published), and ii) expansion of IATI import to more publishers. These goals, however, may require additional investment in government skills and processes. Updates to already-imported publishers will be made easier by the IATI-AIMS Import Tool's capability to save existing mappings, meaning that new commitments/disbursements 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 laborious for government partners right now, but is under consideration for upcoming efforts¹⁰.

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 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. However, in most cases (75%) these increases were small. Interviews suggested 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).*

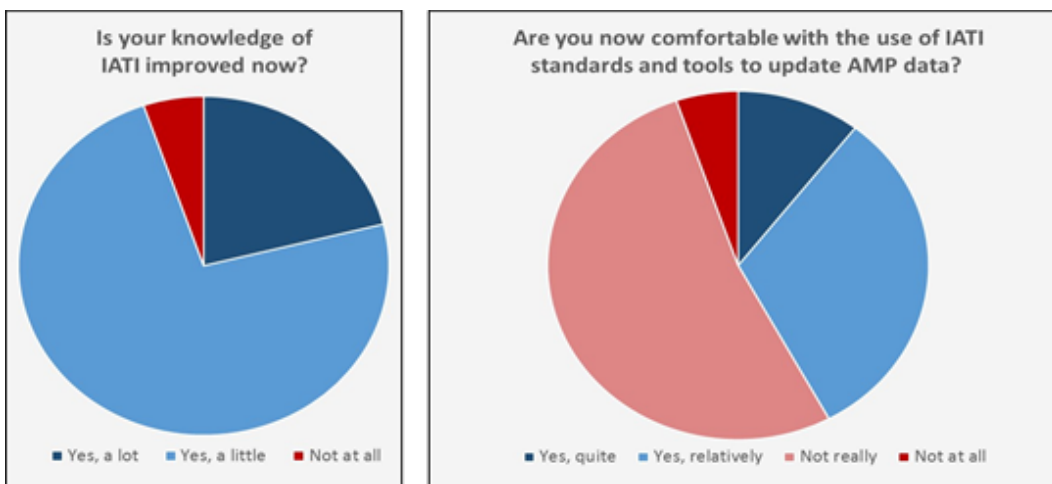


Figure 4: Changes in Perception and Intended Use Among Program Participants

¹⁰ Where existing data provision from DP country offices is strong, it was found that government incentives to import IATI data are reduced due to reduced value-add of IATI over AMP data.

Two subsequent questions aimed to understand the reasons for the remaining discomfort. First, we asked 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 for analyzing IATI data for quality and content 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.

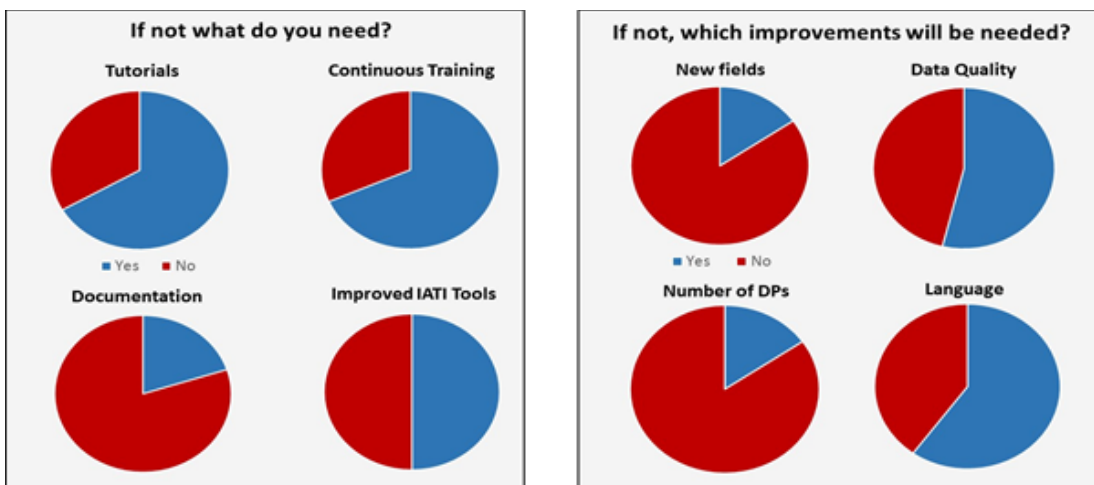


Figure 5: Outstanding Perceived Needs for Partner Country Use¹¹

¹¹ Among respondents who answered “No” to “Are you now comfortable with the use of IATI standards and tools to update AMP data?”

Conclusion: Assessing Opportunities for IATI in Country Systems

Many participants felt that IATI presents 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 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 because they do not maintain offices in-country. Data from these funders have been imported into 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 more to be done in 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 quality, and ultimately better data for government and DP decision-makers at country level.

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.¹² 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. *At minimum, publishers should*

¹² 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.

immediately move to publishing in 2.01+ with numeric codes, and should publish project titles in the local language to facilitate matching of IATI activities with AMP.

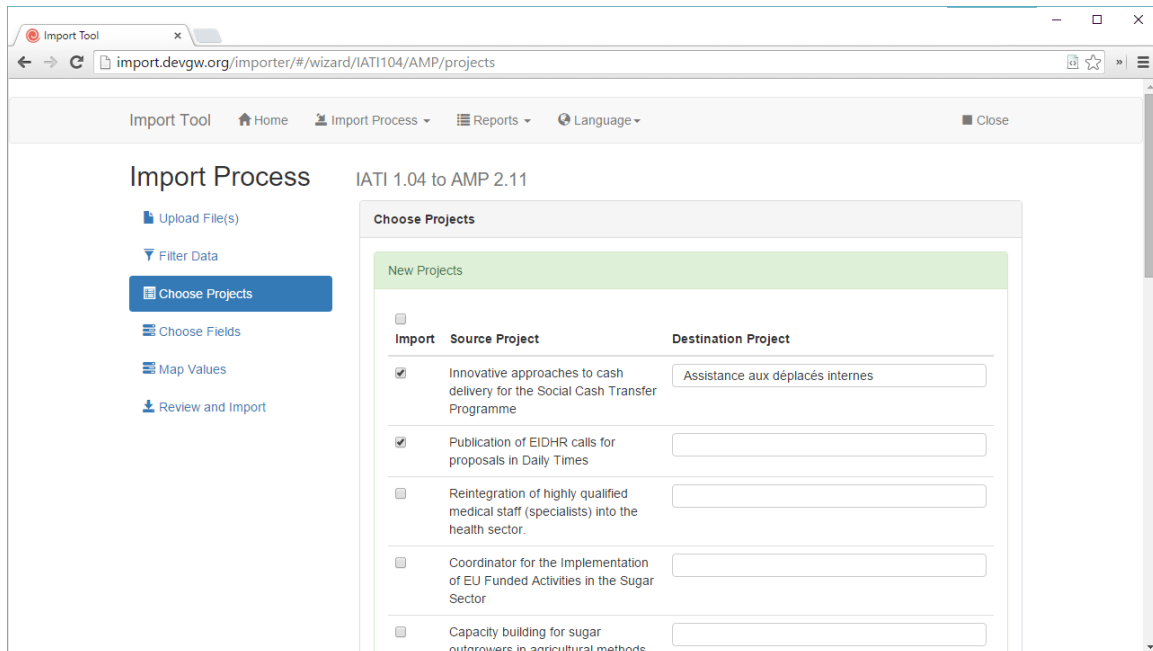


Figure 6: Interface for Mapping of English Project Titles (IATI - Left) to French (AMP - Right)

- ***Publication should occur at 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.
- 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.
 - ***Additionally – frequent bugs and gaps in data obtained through the IATI Data Store presented a significant challenge throughout the project. It is recommended that the IATI Secretariat invest heavily in the Data Store (or an alternative application) as the primary data source for IATI import tools.***
- 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 IATI data. They prefer to rely on data provided locally as a result of face-to-face discussions and locally-agreed processes¹³.
 - 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.¹⁴
 - 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.¹⁵
- ***Publishers should identify ways in which they can directly contribute to supporting aid coordination units in using IATI data*** (e.g. technical assistance, how-to guide development, etc.)

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.
- 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.
- Continued work 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.

¹³ *The DG team acknowledges intensive DP engagement through UNDP's support to the Government of Bangladesh, and looks forward to learning from the Bangladesh context being shared.*

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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.

Annex A: Updates to June Working Paper Recommendations¹⁶

- 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

¹⁶ See: <http://www.developmentgateway.org/2015/05/21/iati-and-country-systems-dg-working-paper/>