

Summary Note

“Making Gender Data Count: Tracking Gender Aid Flows in the International Aid Transparency Initiative”

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Background

As the U.S. government has made significant commitments over the last decade to strengthen open data resources and make foreign aid information more transparent, the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) standard has been used as a single format for reporting data, taken up by development organizations, non-profits, NGOs and other institutions.

On October 12, 2016, Data2X, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Development Gateway and the Center for Global Development co-hosted a working session on how gender data can be reported and used by the community of practice in IATI. The working session convened stakeholders involved in the design, implementation and advocacy of development initiatives focused on women and girls or gender integration, including representatives from the policy, gender, women and girls, research, development and non-profit sectors. Participants identified potential uses for sex-disaggregated data, discussed tools for sectors with a high need for these results, and explored ways the IATI structure and reporting mechanisms could be improved to better meet user needs.

Summary

Moderator Cindy Huang introduced the working session, describing existing collaborations between non-profits, government agencies and development organizations in leading work on increasing the availability and use of quality gender data. Mayra Buvinic, Senior Fellow at Data2X and the Center for Global Development, offered opening remarks on Data2X’s work on filling gender data gaps and ensuring policy makers use data effectively. Owen Barder, Senior Fellow at the Center for Global Development and an IATI co-founder, gave an overview of the IATI standard and opportunities for its use in gender data. Taryn Davis and Josh Powell of Development Gateway then presented on opportunities for IATI use in the agriculture sector, followed by a discussion session focused on user needs and current data uses among representatives in the policy, gender, girls and women, research, and development sectors. Development Gateway produced a report on aid project data in IATI in Indonesia, exploring what the sex-disaggregated data tell us about these programs, as well as lessons learned for similar projects in the future. Lona Stoll, Deputy Vice President of the Department of Compact Operations at Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), closed out the session by sharing why sex disaggregated data has been critical at MCC, reflections on MCC’s work to meet its commitment to report sex disaggregated data through IATI, core takeaways from the discussion (the value of common gender indicators through SDG5, the importance of reporting GIS, financial, and results data to make IATI sex disaggregated datasets more useful) and moonshot proposals for the community of practice’s future IATI use.

Attendees

Speakers:

- Cindy Huang, Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development
- Mayra Buvinic, Senior Fellow, Data2X and Center for Global Development
- Owen Barder, Vice President, Director of CGD Europe and Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development
- Taryn Davis, Senior Associate, Development Gateway
- Josh Powell, Director of Innovation, Development Gateway
- Lona Stoll, Deputy Vice President, Department of Compact Operations, Millennium Challenge Corporation

Attendees:

- Yeva Avakyan, Senior Advisor, Gender and Evaluation, World Vision US
- Melanie Gilbert, Office of Donor Engagement, USAID
- Laurel Bradley, AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, USAID
- Aria Grabowski, Policy Advisor, Accountable Development, Oxfam America
- Meagan Breidert, Office of U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources, State Department
- Nora O'Connell, Associate Vice President, Public Policy & Advocacy, Save the Children
- Erinn Kenney, Associate, Government Affairs, Glover Park Group
- Catherine Marschner, Open Data Specialist, Department of Administration and Finance, Millennium Challenge Corporation
- Katherine Vaughn, Gender and Social Inclusion, Millennium Challenge Corporation
- Algerlynn Gill, Department of Policy and Evaluation, Millennium Challenge Corporation
- Dominique Duval-Diop, Gender and Social Inclusion, Geospatial Information Advisor, Millennium Challenge Corporation
- Agnieszka Rawa, Managing Director, PEPFAR Partnership, Millennium Challenge Corporation
- Lisa Fillingame, Reporting Analyst, Millennium Challenge Corporation
- Charles Kenny, Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development
- Megan O'Donnell, Program Coordinator, Gender and Development, Center for Global Development
- Tanvi Jaluka, Gender and Development Intern, Center for Global Development
- Alba Bautista, Program Officer, Data2X
- Karolina Ramos, Coordinator, Data2X

Overview: What is IATI?

- IATI is an aid standard, a single data format designed to meet different user needs
 - Different intermediaries innovate to build tools that bring information to consumers in the way they want
 - Provides structured and comparable information on outputs and outcomes, and organizational data on project funding, activities and donor resources
- The vision is for donors to publish information once, and then different organizations use that information many times over
 - “Publish once, use often”

- Benefits at a glance:
 - Consistent, comprehensive, transparent
 - Potentially lower transaction costs for donors over time
 - Lower transaction costs for intermediary organizations
 - Ideally, IATI could be used for reporting across multiple donors, as opposed to providing multiple budget and narrative reports
 - Enables multiple organizations to provide information about the same project at different points along the aid flow chain
 - Data can be reported by sex
- Use:
 - 484 organizations currently reporting, covering 625,742 activities
 - The majority of these organizations are international NGOs

Reporting and Using Gender Data in IATI

Opportunities:

- Allows users to identify organization projects by issue area, including gender, with a gender policy marker
- Allows users to tag projects under multiple policy markers e.g. gender and the environment; gender and reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health; gender and trade development – although the utility of these markers is limited
- Indicators can be sex disaggregated, which is likely the most useful way to convey gender-specific data
- Sustainable Development Goal 5 work to develop indicators could be an opportunity to reach agreement on output and outcome indicators for gender
- The opportunity to enter sex-disaggregated results data is technically available, although its use by publishers is currently limited

Challenges:

Reporting and Use

- Most policymakers and senior leaders want transparency about results, but most organizations have not established a method to report this in a standard, open way
- Programs are not collecting outcome data, and outputs are more commonly reported than outcomes; fewer than 50,000 reported activities have results data
- The community still needs guidelines for reporting sex-disaggregated results data to better inform how it can be used, aggregated and compared
- The IATI gender marker is not as useful as it could be – e.g. of the 625,742 activities reported in one day, 16% were flagged with the gender marker, but without common definitions we cannot draw conclusions on what those projects are or how gender is incorporated into the work
- Most development partners are not publishing traceability to track the full aid flow, making it difficult to avoid double counting when using data. For the data to be most useful, it needs to be granular (geocoded), connected to results, and traceable to financial data. IATI has these capabilities, but almost no organizations are comprehensively reporting.

- This is not just a data-tech problem – it’s a challenge of organizations not publishing the information, not submitting robust enough information (including sex-disaggregated indicators), or possibly not collecting it
- The uptake and use of the data has not been as widespread as expected

Definitions and Standards

- Some organizations have standardized internally, but collectively, organizations haven’t standardized results indicators internationally
 - Many users need information that is comparable across organizations, not just internally. However, the IATI team have been clear that IATI will not become an “owner of indicator standards” and so the community of practice needs to chart its own way forward
- Some organizations track project results by country or region, not by sector – so this is a further process of disaggregation

Organizational Capacity and Ease of Use

- Small businesses, NGOs, and other organizations lacking staff capacity can struggle to navigate IATI and upload their data – and in some instances, there is misunderstanding among small and large organizations alike on the level of effort and expertise that IATI reporting requires
- Many users, including data analysts, are still are not familiar with IATI as a data source and do not use it
- Existing IATI technology and tools have not met the demand for easy access to IATI data, making it difficult to report to and to use IATI data
- Most reporting organizations do not use IATI’s funding traceability features, and therefore cannot be easily matched with data on funding, such as on the U.S. Foreign Assistance website
- Very few emerging economies are inputting data into IATI

Benefits of Using the IATI Standard

- The most successful uses of IATI have been to give aid agencies better, more comprehensive information on their work, e.g. DFID requires that program data be uploaded into IATI
- IATI maximizes development impact through increased data transparency, especially on funding, activities, donor resources, and project outcomes – ensuring aid recipients cannot charge the same activity to multiple donors
- Enables users to aggregate and analyze information from all reporting organizations
- Ideally, could be a “publish once, use often” system for implementing agencies’ reporting to multiple donors, replacing individual narrative and budget reports

Users need data that helps identify what other projects are taking place in their sector – and IATI could be a source for this. Development Gateway surveyed needs of users in the agriculture

sector, concluding that to be usable to the agricultural organizations surveyed, there are 20 priority IATI data fields that must be completed by IATI reporting organizations.

- E.g. if a number of organizations are working in maize in a given location, another organization might work in soy or another crop to boost nutrition and avoid duplicating efforts.
- E.g. if other donors are funding activities in cocoa in country X, and part of their model is giving away free trees, and another organization is building small-scale enterprises on tree nurseries, that's useful information for avoiding program implementation issues.
- E.g. organizations want to know lessons learned from other organizations' projects – their successes and challenges can inform project plans.

Challenges and Lessons for Organizations and Users in Accessing, Comparing and Using Gender Data in Development

- Aid figures do not always match from different sources, such as the U.S. Foreign Assistance website
- There is often a “lost opportunity” of sex-disaggregated data – that information is aggregated at the district level, sent up to the national level, but then not brought back to communities where it was initially collected
- It can be difficult to assess, simply based on the gender “marker,” whether international aid projects are gender-specific or gender-sensitive, and to what extent gender is incorporated as a focus of the work
- A lack of standardized definitions makes it difficult to compare data on an international level; e.g. “women’s empowerment” has different definitions and contexts by country (e.g. in some cases it may be ability to own property, in others it may be representation in parliament)
- Many organizations are still on the path toward changing internal processes to use data for decision-making

Additionally, organizations and aid beneficiaries alike report disparities between reported results and outcomes on the ground – and a lack of disaggregation, and unintended incentive structures, can obscure the impact of aid work. For example, MCC reported that in one farmer training program in Burkina Faso, contractors were compensated based on households served – but because MCC’s policy required sex-disaggregated data, it revealed that counting a household required that only one member of the household be trained, resulting in the training programs overwhelmingly serving men and not reaching women throughout the community. As a result, the incentive structures in the implementer’s contract were changed, leading to a substantial increase in the number of women participants in the training. There is a need among users for a deeper level of granularity in data at the global level.

IATI Going Forward – Future Uses and Goals for the Community of Practice

There is significant potential for IATI’s use in agriculture initiatives, as well as in women’s economic empowerment, tracking data on land rights and titles, access to financial services, gender wage gaps, and women’s access to information and communication technologies (ICTs). NGOs, small businesses and international development organizations note difficulty both

reporting in and using available information from IATI, and it is critical that both small and large organizations take advantage of technical assistance tools designed to ease the process of IATI reporting, such as websites with free data input services.

To make the data more useful, it has to be more detailed, linked to financial information, and based on standard definitions and indicators. The goal among the community of practice should be to make publicly available data a byproduct of internal processes which people complete in their normal work flows – ensuring that IATI data are naturally being produced, disaggregated, and reported.

Incentivizing IATI Use

- Contracting and procurement: Making IATI a procurement standard incentivizes its use when a contract is competitive, though noted that this will take time to pan out due to length of contracting process and project data collection.
- “Publish once, use often”: If organizations change reporting requests to take advantage of data that is reported to IATI, this will incentivize more use of the data and reduce reporting burdens.
- Providing free programs or services for smaller agencies in exchange for open data: Some organizations are exploring business models in which smaller country agencies report data in exchange for free website hosting or other tech services.
- Training for local partners on practical use (e.g. budget analysis): Better, more accessible information allows for more powerful use and could drive greater impact on the ground, but only if partners know how to use it. More transparent, comprehensive data can allow for greater comparability across sectors, but again, users benefit from training to fully make use of data.
- Incorporating gender considerations and sex-disaggregation in the initial phases of a project can be cost-effective or budget neutral: Organizations need a better understanding of the costs associated with collecting gender data before implementing and later reporting data on programs and initiatives. Prioritizing gender data and sex-disaggregation from the onset – rather than adding disaggregation as an additional expense towards the end of a project – can make gender data collection efforts more cost-effective.

Goals for the Community of Practice

- The development of a global public fund that supports program evaluation design and analysis for foreign assistance programs, given that funding for evaluations is limited and disaggregation of data requires larger sample sizes that would require additional funding.
- Possibly building a stronger intermediary system to facilitate the reporting of raw data by organizations at the country level.
- Prioritizing and building consensus around certain indicators to collect data on outcomes and impact in a standard way at the country-level with NSOs.
- Identifying a middle bar for how to recommend sex-disaggregation on anything being reported.