 

Partner Countries and the International Aid Transparency Initiative

Synthesis report from the 6 regional/sub-regional partner country consultations

prepared for the IATI Steering Committee on 30 September 2009

June – September 2009

1. Background: In the period June – September 2009, UNDP as a member of the IATI Secretariat mandated with outreach to partner countries organized 4 regional and 2 sub-regional consultations for partner countries on IATI. The consultations were funded by DFID. UNDP Country Offices (CO) also contributed monetarily by covering the travel and per diem costs for additional[[1]](#footnote-1) government representatives from their respective countries, as well as by providing in kind contribution in terms of coordinating and facilitating partner countries’ preparations and attendance.

The objectives of the partner country (PC) consultations were to:

* familiarize PC and other stakeholders with IATI and its goals as it relates to the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness;
* identify information needs of PC which are not currently being met, and make recommendations for areas to be included in the scope of the IATI standard, as well as recommendations with regard to the Code of Conduct;
* discuss how to take IATI forward at country, sub-regional, regional and global levels, incl. capacity development needs of partner country.
* facilitate peer exchange and learning on good practices, lessons learnt and challenges from the deployment of Aid Information Management Systems (AIMs), and how IATI can help to improve the effectiveness of such systems, as well as how best practices and experiences with country AIMs can feed into the development of an IATI standard.

The number of PC governments, which took part in the consultations is 74. Three governments, i.e. DRC, Malawi and Tanzania attended both sub-regional consultations in Africa, while being represented by different institutions/departments. In the latter case, their participation in Accra was entirely funded by UNDP CO. Table 1 on page 2 provides an overview per region/sub-region. The complete list of countries is provided in Annex 1. It should also be noted that for Africa, a number of countries chose whether to attend the Kigali or the Accra meeting.

The meetings were at the expert level, although some countries were represented at the deputy ministerial/ministerial level. Participants were mostly from ministries of planning, finance, and foreign affairs. The consultations were open as well to other stakeholder groups, such as parliamentarians, representatives from CSO, UNDP CO in the regions, as well as the donor community in the host countries. The only exception was the Accra meeting, which did not include representatives from the local donor community as decided by the Ghana Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. Development Initiatives Poverty Research also attended and presented the IATI Scoping Paper in Kigali, Bangkok, Amman and Accra. Representatives from Development Gateway Foundation and Synergy International Systems presented on AMP and DAD, respectively, and their support to country AIMs.

In Asia and the Pacific and in the Latin America and the Caribbean regions, virtual consultations preceded the face-to-face consultations and served as a preparatory stage.

Reports from the consultations can be accessed at: <http://aidtransparency.net/consultation-workshop-materials/> as they become available.

*Table 1:*

Fast Facts about the Partner Country Consultations:

Region/sub-region: Dates: Host Partner Country: Number of PC GoV\*:

*Eastern and*  29-30 June 2009 Rwanda 11

*Southern Africa*

*Europe and CIS* 6-7 July 2009 Montenegro 9

*Arab States* 12-13 August 2009 Jordan 9

*Asia and the Pacific* 27-28 August 2009 Thailand 17

*West and* 8-9 September 2009 Ghana 19\*\*

*Central Africa*

*Latin America and* 16-18 September 2009 Dominican Republic 12

*the Caribbean*

*Total Number of participating PC Governments: 74 + 3\*\**

*\* Number includes host country.*

*\*\* Three governments, i.e. DRC, Malawi and Tanzania attended both the Kigali and Accra meetings.*

1. Outcomes of the IATI regional/sub-regional PC consultations:
2. Sharing of knowledge: As illustrated above, the consultations have allowed government representatives from 77 countries to be briefed, in some cases, for the first time on the objectives of the initiative, the background research undertaken, and the political and technical process for the development of the IATI standard and the Code of Conduct. These also served as forums for peer exchange/learning on how developing governments manage aid information flows at the country level, national AIMs, and the challenges they face with regard to transparency, mutual accountability and other principles and commitments of the Paris Declaration and the AAA.
3. Broader support for IATI among PC: The consultations have also served as a driver for two of the host governments, i.e. Montenegro and the Dominican Republic, to endorse the initiative. A second group of countries have expressed interest to potentially endorse the 2008 IATI Accra Statement during the consultations, but this would require engagement with the political leadership.
4. Improved PC membership in IATI bodies: Following the demands made by PC for better representation, the IATI Secretariat has reached out to Colombia and the Dominican Republic (the only two countries from LAC, which have endorsed IATI and are not represented at the Steering Committee (SC)), as well as the two pilot countries, i.e. Burkina Faso and Malawi, to join the 30th of September 2009 meeting of the SC. The consultations have also served to identify government experts who are interested to contribute to the development of the standards and the Code of Conduct. As a result, the 2-3 September 2009 meeting of the TAG for the first time included representatives from PC governments, namely Colombia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal and SUPRO, a CSO from Bangladesh.
5. Findings and recommendations from the IATI regional/sub-regional PC consultations:
6. Space for PC in IATI: One of the consistent demands made by PC throughout the consultations has been for better PC representation in the SC and the TAG, as well as for better regional balance in the composition of these bodies. The IATI Secretariat has already taken steps in this regard (see point 3 above). Moreover, the Asia-Pacific region has put forward a proposal for the identification of a IATI pilot country. The issue of space for PC should be addressed in a way that is objective, sound and sustainable in light of an increasing number of PC likely to join IATI in the near future. The IATI Secretariat with UNDP’s lead and the Steering Committee need to define a strategy for PC outreach and engagement, which would address both demand for representation and the process of involvement. PC in Accra have also asked if CSO from the South could join the Steering Committee.
7. Process for the development of the IATI standard and the Code of Conduct: PC feel that there is a need for more consultations at the global, regional, but also at the country level. In Europe and CIS there was an explicit support for the UN to continue facilitating this process. The IATI partner country outreach should be brought to scale. Moreover, governments require more time to consult internally and also with local development partners on the technical proposals developed by the TAG. Having the documents translated in Arabic, French and Spanish would facilitate information sharing/outreach and provision of inputs from Arab-, French- and Spanish-speakers.
8. IATI & the broader aid effectiveness agenda and existing coordination mechanisms/calendar beyond 2009: PC have requested more clarity in this area, including how IATI fits into the agenda of the WP-EFF and its clusters, in particular cluster C. Also a calendar for IATI beyond 2009 would assist PC in their plans of cooperation with the initiative.
9. Donors-signatories to IATI: In all of the regional consultations there was a consensus that more OECD/DAC and non-DAC donors should sign up to IATI. There is a concern, which should not be underestimated, that a number of donors, some of them providers of large share of ODA, remain outside IATI. The same is valid for non-DAC donors. The IATI Secretariat and the Steering Committee need to define a strategy for engaging with the donor community similar to the one for PC.
10. Global & local commitment of donors: PC encourage development partners signatories to IATI to fully prepare their country representatives to cooperate in accordance with the IATI standards and the Code of Conduct. There are still cases where local development partners are not fully abreast of the initiative.
11. Commitment and constraints on the donors’ side: PC feel that donors at the country level do not prioritize sufficiently the provision of aid information to national authorities. This undermines efforts to put in place AIMs and to have reliable and up-to-date information available for decision-making purposes at the country level. PC have pointed to the constraints some local development partners face due to lack of authority to report directly to PC governments on aid they provide. For those cases, PC encourage devolution of authority. In other cases, national authorities face difficulties in obtaining timely information from non-resident donors or for aid that is directly managed from donors’ headquarters and for which local donor representatives have little or no information. Some development partners do not have human resources capacity to report and this has to be addressed. There are cases when the reporting task has been allocated to staff from finance/administration units who do not necessarily have knowledge about the programmes/projects and this leads to inaccurate or incomplete data. It has been suggested that donors nominate focal points who are responsible for provision of aid information to national authorities. In many countries, this is already happening, but needs reinforcement and systematization. There was a shared view that global and regional multilateral organizations, incl. the UN System also have to improve the information they make available to PC. Double counting of aid continues to be an issue at the country level.
12. An international standard and a Code of Conduct, but flexible enough: While PC acknowledge the need and value added of the IATI standard and the Code of Conduct, they also made it clear throughout the consultations that these should be flexible to allow adaptation to country contexts, national development priorities (e.g. results reporting), national systems (e.g. budget cycle/strengthening of local AIMs/frequency of reporting/type of information required from the government).
13. Compliance with the future IATI standard: PC remain skeptical as to their capacity to ensure compliance with a global standard at the country level, as well as donors’ compliance. The slow progress in the implementation of the Paris Declaration targets in countries is a case in point. Mutual accountability mechanisms are too weak; aid agenda continues to be donor-driven in many cases and governments of developing countries have few tools to ensure compliance. Aid data collection undertaken by developing partners produces mixed results in terms of timeliness, quality and compliance with national requirements (scope/reporting format). Peer pressure has worked in some cases, but has its limits. Some donors remain outside aid coordination mechanisms at the country level or engage insufficiently in the aid effectiveness dialogue.
14. Scope of the IATI standard: PC largely confirmed that the priority areas considered in the scope of the IATI standard, as defined in the IATI Scoping Paper[[2]](#footnote-2), meet their information needs. Timely, up-to-date and reliable information about *current* and *future* aid flows are considered to top the priority agenda. Information about future aid flows (forecasts of 3 to 5 years) are considered to be of significant importance in terms of budget planning and macro-economic management. Similarly, more detailed information about *where, when, how, on what* and *in which* sectors aid is spent on are important for the purposes of decision-making of PC governments. PC also stressed the need for better information that would allow them to monitor results and the impact of aid in their countries. Results should be aligned with the outcomes and outputs defined in national development strategies and plans. Better coverage of aid flows from a wider range of donors, including non-DAC donors, multilateral agencies, NGOs, foundations is also a priority. Resources that global funds are channeling to countries also need to be captured. Dialogue and information sharing with NGOs vary across countries, however, the general sense is that aid going through NGOs is largely not reported to the national authorities. Information pertaining to conditions, but also conditionalities was considered to be essential to PC. Lack of such information undermines PC ownership. A number of PC are already monitoring progress at the country level on the Paris Declaration targets and this was considered to be a useful part of the standard, as well as the possibility to map aid spending against commonly agreed gender and climate change indicators. The contract and procurement details were less important for PC compared to the other areas of the IATI standard. Non-statistical information (documents pertaining to donor’s strategy, policy, evaluations, etc.) was considered to be key as it pertained to setting the dialogue and cooperation framework between PC governments and development partners.
15. Other areas of aid information responding to PC needs: In some cases decentralized entities (e.g. cities/municipalities) provide assistance to decentralized entities in PC. Central governments are unable to capture this information in their AIMs. It was suggested that the scope of the standard covers these flows of aid. In the LAC region, capturing and having a common definition and methodology for monetarizing South-South cooperation was considered to be of importance.
16. Role of PC in providing aid information: PC also affirmed that they have a role to play in the provision of aid information. Such cases included all aid, which passes through national budgets or when goods or services are procured through national procurement systems; shared responsibility with donors when governments cost-share. Similarly, PC have the responsibility to report on results, linked to their national development plans or sector strategies.
17. The role of AIMs at the country level: PC in all regions are investing resources (human and financial) and time in the establishment and management of local AIMs. In many cases this is done with support from development partners. The reporting requirements vary from country to country, but broadly fall within the scope of the IATI standard. A lot of positive examples were given of the capacities of these systems to provide information on aid commitments and disbursements per sector, in monitoring progress towards national development goals, the MDGs or the Paris Declaration targets, etc. The concern, however, is that overall compliance with the national reporting requirements is low to moderate and that PC are unable to ensure full compliance. IATI should support such systems and reinforce reporting compliance at the country level.
18. The IATI Code of Conduct: PC consider the Code of Conduct to be a key instrument for ensuring transparency and accountability. The Code should be robust and consists of monitorable actions and indicators. It should also be flexible and allow to be tailored to the needs of PC governments (e.g. reporting frequency). In the Arab States and LAC consultations, some countries called for a legally binding instrument, while in the Asia and the Pacific there was a concern that the term “code of conduct” might be interpreted by some as requiring incorporation into law before signature. Despite these differences, there is an agreement that ensuring compliance with the IATI standards would be paramount if the initiative is to attain its objectives. In this regard, independent monitoring of compliance is the preferred option. Peer reviews are considered to be insufficient. There was a consensus as well that PC would need to play an important role in any monitoring mechanisms or processes that would be put in place. In the Asia and the Pacific, there was a proposal for establishing an independent body, other than the IATI Secretariat. The body could consist of representatives from PC, donor and CSOs, all of which would serve on a rotational basis. There was a concern as to how independent the reviews would be if those are commissioned by donors. Another point raised was what would be the consequences in case of non-compliance. PC also asked if the Code of Conduct would be signed by donors only or whether PC would also sign.
19. Capacity constraints and needs of PC in relation to IATI: PC are fully aware of their commitments to improve national systems. They are also fully aware of the constraints they face in meeting those commitments and in improving access to information, information flows, and transparency within governments, with parliaments, and citizens. There was an agreement that AIMs could serve this purpose, however, many participants, also called for providing information to parliamentarians, CSOs and citizens that would serve their particular needs and familiarity with aid terminology/jargon. In many of the regions, there was a realization and a desire for more regional information sharing and coordination among partner countries on aid effectiveness issues and IATI. While the Asia-Pacific has such a mechanism[[3]](#footnote-3), participants in Amman, Accra and Santo Domingo concurred that they also need regional platforms and have proposed to work with UNDP and other partners to support their establishment. Codification and sharing of experiences in aid information and management, coordination, etc. and different related tools/modalities were identified by participants, such as case studies, best practices, lessons learnt, peer learning and exchanges, etc. In Europe and CIS, there was a proposal for “roving experts” from the countries who could foster peer learning in the region. Another proposal for taking IATI forward at the country level is to have dedicated focal points in the government, as well as to hold country consultations around IATI (within government, between government and local donors, and with other stakeholders). In terms of capacity development needs, PC would welcome support from IATI in strengthening local capacities to analyze and use improved aid information in planning, budgeting and decision-making. Participants in Kigali have also suggested the establishment of a dedicated fund for PC support to cover skills development and infrastructure improvements for AIMs. In the Asia-Pacific there was a request for capacity development support targeting parliamentarians. Both in Montenegro and Accra participants called for broad outreach and communication to the general public. However, PC also requested more clarity from IATI on the capacity development support it would be able to offer.
20. Conflict and post-conflict countries: Participants who deliberated on the experiences of these countries have concurred that the aid information needs are not different, but rather exacerbated due to weak capacity of national institutions to collect and analyze data, as well as to ensure compliance with reporting requirements. Humanitarian assistance does have prominence in such contexts, as well as aid channeled through NGOs. The fragmentation of aid information is further aggravated since most aid does not come through the national budget, nor is on budget. Mutual accountability is hard to pursue in such contexts, therefore having the IATI standard and a robust Code of Conduct would be highly beneficial. A number of post-conflict countries are putting in place AIMs and this has proven positive, albeit the difficulties of operating these systems without full reporting compliance, adequate infrastructure and lack of trained personnel, among other constraints.
21. Next steps:

The list of next steps proposed below stems from the key concerns expressed by PC at the consultations. Members of the Steering Committee are invited to provide comments/suggestions in light of improving them and allowing the Secretariat to develop the proposals:

* 1. IATI Secretariat to prepare with UNDP’s lead, and IATI Steering Committee to endorse an outreach strategy for PC following the first round of regional consultations and the IATI Conference in The Hague.
	2. TAG with UNDP’s support to advance in defining capacity development strategy in response to PC needs in the implementation and use of the IATI standard and Code of Conduct at the country level.
	3. IATI Secretariat to prepare and IATI Steering Committee to endorse, a strategy for engagement with OECD/DAC and non-DAC donors.
	4. IATI Secretariat to prepare and Steering Committee to approve a calendar for IATI leading up to the HLF IV.

Annex 1 - List of Partner Countries governments, which took part in the IATI regional/sub-regional consultations:

Region/sub-region: Dates: Host Partner Country: Number of PC GoV:

*Eastern and*  29-30 June 2009 Rwanda 11

*Southern Africa*

1. Burundi
2. Comoros
3. Democratic Republic of Congo
4. Malawi
5. Mauritius
6. Namibia
7. Rwanda
8. South Sudan
9. Sudan
10. Swaziland
11. Tanzania

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1. Albania
2. Armenia
3. Bosnia and Herzegovina
4. Georgia
5. Kosovo 1244 RSC
6. Kyrgyzstan
7. Montenegro
8. Ukraine
9. Uzbekistan

*Arab States* 12-13 August 2009 Jordan 9

1. Algeria
2. Djibouti
3. Iraq
4. Jordan
5. Lebanon
6. Libya
7. Morocco
8. Somalia
9. Syria

*Asia and the Pacific* 27-28 August 2009 Thailand 17

1. Afghanistan
2. Bangladesh
3. Cambodia
4. India
5. Indonesia
6. Korea (Republic of)
7. Lao
8. Mongolia
9. Nepal
10. Pakistan
11. Papua New Guinea
12. Philippines
13. Solomon Islands
14. Sri Lanka
15. Thailand
16. Timor-Leste
17. Viet Nam

*West and* 8-9 September 2009 Ghana 19

*Central Africa*

1. Benin
2. Botswana
3. Burkina Faso
4. Cape Verde
5. Cote d’Ivoire
6. Congo (Republic of)
7. Democratic Republic of Congo\*
8. Ethiopia
9. The Gambia
10. Ghana
11. Guinea
12. Guinea Bissau
13. Liberia
14. Malawi\*
15. Niger
16. Senegal
17. Sierra Leone
18. Tanzania\*
19. Togo

*\*These countries took part both in the Kigali and Accra sub-regional consultations. The government participation in Accra was funded by UNDP CO.*

*Latin America and* 16-18 September 2009 Dominican Republic 12

*the Caribbean*

1. Bolivia
2. Colombia
3. Dominican Republic
4. Ecuador
5. El Salvador
6. Haiti
7. Mexico
8. Nicaragua
9. Panama
10. Paraguay
11. Peru
12. St. Vincent and the Grenadines
1. The budget estimates and funding received was based on 1 government representative per country per regional/sub-regional consultation. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Development Initiatives Poverty Research, IATI Scoping paper for consultation, March 2009. See in particular chapter entitled “Overview of gaps and opportunities”, pages 16-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Capacity Development Facility for Development Effectiveness: <http://www.aideffectiveness.org/portal/index.php?Itemid=41>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)