



Strengthening the Capacity to use IATI in AIMS: Madagascar

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Using IATI data for AIMS reporting in Madagascar

BACKGROUND

In the program between UNICEF, Development Gateway (DG), and Development Initiatives (DI) to support the use of IATI data in reporting to the Government of Madagascar's Aid Management Platform (AMP), Madagascar was selected as a Pilot Country. AMP Madagascar was implemented in 2008, following the Government's decision to implement the international commitment on aid management efficiency as stated in both the Paris Declaration and the Forum of Accra. To date, data has been prepared, uploaded manually by focal points, uploaded into the platforms, and validated by AMP team members based at the Permanent Technical Secretariat for the Coordination of Aid (STPCA) of the Prime Ministry. In order to avoid double counting, this manual operation includes removing funds that are reported by donors for organizations that already receive funds and are only implementing activities.

Using UNICEF's IATI data for reporting would replace a manual process where UNICEF enters data into a spreadsheet and then sends it to STPCA. Additionally, it opens up the possibility of adding more detail and information to AMP. UNICEF Headquarters pursued this effort in order to reduce the reporting burden for UNICEF Madagascar staff.

METHODOLOGY AND EXPECTED RESULTS

DG hired an IATI-AIMS Fellow (IAF) to work directly with STP and UNICEF Madagascar, in order to help liaise between STP, UNICEF Headquarters (HQ), and DG. The fellowship model had been previously used by DG to support geospatial data use. DG and DI conducted training of the Madagascar-based IAF along with the Senegal-based IAF. They utilized a training curriculum aimed to introduce the Fellows to IATI, provided them with hands-on practice for using and reviewing IATI data, and provided instruction on using the IATI-AIMS Import Tool developed by DG. The Madagascar IAF was embedded in STP offices for a period of 3 months.

The same curriculum was then adapted in order to introduce UNICEF Madagascar and STP staff to IATI and AMP, as well as to begin a review of the UNICEF Madagascar IATI data. This three-day training included 4 staff from UNICEF Madagascar and 3 staff from STP, in addition to the IAF and a DG staff member. The review process of UNICEF Madagascar IATI data continued for the duration of the project, and determined the following:

- How IATI activities compared to UNICEF Madagascar AMP projects;
- The terminology used across UNICEF, IATI, and AMP systems, and how they mapped across systems;
- Necessary improvements and changes within the UNICEF IATI file;
- Improvements to data that UNICEF Madagascar could provide;
- What data could be imported from the IATI file into AMP;
- What data would still need to be entered manually;

- What projects would be imported from the IATI file;
- Whether any other barriers to importing the IATI data existed, and if so, how they would be resolved.

CHALLENGES

Timeline Challenges

One of the largest challenges encountered was that this effort took place during the summer months, at the height of staff summer vacations. Activities undertaken necessitated the availability of key UNICEF staff to provide insight into how data had been reported to AMP; however, the absence of staff members slowed project progress.

In addition, an unforeseen strike by the company hosting the Madagascar AMP meant that the AMP was unavailable for over a month, making comparison analysis between IATI and AMP data difficult, and further slowing down the project.

Data Format Challenges

Another challenge was that UNICEF Madagascar had been reporting transactions from UNICEF systems to AMP differently than UNICEF HQ had been reporting them to IATI (see table below). Therefore, once data was replaced by IATI, disbursements would also appear differently, having come from a different source than data prior to IATI reporting had. Parties agreed that they would continue utilizing the new IATI definition and would note each occurrence of differences in historical and IATI data.

| Based on UNICEF HQ explanation | Based on UNICEF Madagascar explanation |
|---|--|
| UNICEF Allocation = Incoming funds = commitment on IATI | UNICEF Allocation = Actual commitment on AMP |
| UNICEF Output planned = planned disbursement on IATI | UNICEF Output planned = Planned disbursement on AMP |
| UNICEF Commitment = Disbursement on IATI | UNICEF Utilized(Commitment + Actual) = Actual Disbursement on AMP |
| UNICEF Expense = Expense on IATI | UNICEF Actual = Expenses on AMP |

A challenge with mainstreaming all the reporting involved importing sub-national location information. AMP requires the estimation of percentages of funding going to each location, down to the Admin 3 level. There were two barriers to being able to import this information from IATI:

1. The IATI schema does not allow users to add percentages of funding to sub-national location data, nor does it allow for location to be added to transactions;
2. Even if this was possible in IATI, many questions about how to divide up funding information for UNICEF Madagascar remained. Specifically, users questioned how they would go about dividing funding by location. UNICEF Madagascar provided the following table, outlining the issues they faced in assigning funding percentages to sub-national locations:

| Type of support | Remarks |
|-----------------------|---|
| Direct Cash Transfer | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For funds sent directly at regional (sub-national) level, work should be done manually. For funds sent at the central level with implementation in the regions, details should be taken from the budget and the amount per region should be pulled manually. |
| Supply | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are materials purchased at the central level and sent at the regional level (ex. consumable, flyer, vaccine, etc.) considered « funding going to region »? Orders are combined in only one lot in the system. To get the amount per region, the distribution per region should be taken from other documents, and prices should be calculated. For prepositioning orders (emergency), the distribution per region depends on needs, and information should be taken from technical documents. |
| Technical Assistance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The names of staff members based at specified regions should be extracted from country office data, but if names are not in the system, gathering them requires manual operation. |
| Individual Contract | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The names of staff member based at specified regions should be extracted from mission data, but if names are not in the system, gathering them requires manual operation. |
| Institutional Support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should Consultants cost for the regional level (ex. rehabilitation, construction, forage, puits, HACT, material transportation, etc.) as « funding going to region »? The data is not in the system; however, every contract should be considered manually in order to get the corresponding amount of each lot per region. |
| Support Trip | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should Staff technical support at the regional level (ex. workshop, monitoring, field visit, capacity strengthening, etc.) be considered « funding going to region » ? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ To extract trip data, some tasks should be done manually. ⇒ It is difficult to estimate the cost of trip support per region if the mission is done in multiple regions (otherwise, the TOR and mission report should be verified manually). |
| Operational Cost | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are regional level, operational costs (ex. car maintenance and fuel) considered « funding going to region »? If so, the associated car assigned to each region needs to be manually selected. |

DATA REVIEW

Sources of Data

Various data sources and tools were employed to review UNICEF data. Doing so helped us understand where the data came from, and proved essential for the processes and review that are explained throughout the rest of this report.

| Data Source | Tool | Notes |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Aid Management Platform | Aid Management Platform data visualization tools (reports, maps, dashboards) | This data was reported by UNICEF Madagascar to STP through a spreadsheet. The data came from UNICEF’s VISION SAP system. |
| VISION | VISION and -inSight | VISION is UNICEF’s Internal SAP system. Country offices can report to and pull data from VISION and inSight - the organization’s performance management system. |
| IATI | D-Portal, UNICEF Transparency Portal, IATI Registry (XML and CSV), IATI Query Builder | The IATI field was created using data from UNICEF’s inSight system. |

Comparing What a “Project” Is

The first step in determining how to import data from IATI into AMP was comparing what a “project” in IATI vs. a “Project” in AMP was. UNICEF HQ published IATI data at the “outcome” level, meanwhile UNICEF Madagascar reported to AMP at the “sector” level. Therefore, we found that a single UNICEF AMP project would appear broken up into several IATI “outcomes.” For example, the AMP project “Health” was made up of 17 IATI outcomes. In addition, the “Health” project had been used since AMP was implemented in early 2009, and had not been not split up by year to account for the various agreements made since original implementation. Additionally, IATI data for UNICEF is only available starting from 2012 – the year that UNICEF’s SAP system, VISION, was instated. Therefore, transactions occurring before 2012 would need to be separated and saved in a project on AMP since they couldn’t be replaced by IATI data.

The IAF worked with UNICEF, with help from UNICEF’s Transparency Portal, to compare each IATI and AMP project. In addition, the IAF separated the transactions prior to 2012 that wouldn’t appear in the IATI file. It was determined that the best method for saving this data was to remove all transactions from 2012 to 2017 from the current AMP projects. These transactions would then be maintained to track historical data. The IATI Import would then add new projects for each outcome, replacing the transaction data that had been removed, and adding additional details and information.

Mapping Terminology

It was important for everyone to be on the same page regarding what specific terminology *means*, especially terminology regarding transactions. The IAF worked with STP, UNICEF Madagascar, and UNICEF HQ to put together a terminology guide outlining how terms from UNICEF Systems corresponded to IATI terms, and how IATI terms corresponded to AMP terms. Throughout this process, it was found that the way UNICEF HQ reported IATI Disbursements, which would be used for AMP Disbursements, was different than how UNICEF Madagascar had been reporting disbursements to the AMP (see the above “Challenges” section). The IATI Import Tool guides the user through mapping fields between IATI to AMP, but in order to be able to complete the final mapping in the Import tool, UNICEF Madagascar staff had to first understand how UNICEF Terminology corresponded to IATI terminology.

Reviewing How Data is Reported to IATI

In reviewing the data that UNICEF had been reporting to IATI, areas that needed to be changed were highlighted. It was found that UNICEF had been using the same field in their internal system, VISION, to report both Title and Description. However, pulling from different fields allowed UNICEF Madagascar to begin entering better descriptions, as well as keep titles shorter yet still descriptive.

In addition, it was found that UNICEF disbursements were reported as a single transaction, aggregated each month, and the data was then updated to the latest month. This was inconsistent with what AMP needed, which was that transactions be split up individually or at least quarterly. This allows AMP to track disbursements historically and understand when they were made and how they compared against planned disbursements. In order to resolve this issue, UNICEF agreed to publish individual transactions in their IATI file. The other main addition to the IATI data included adding the provider organization to the disbursements. Doing so would allow users to select whether or not they want to import transactions from specific provider organizations. This proved especially important in Madagascar, where UNICEF is responsible for reporting commitments and disbursements for some organizations when it receives co-funding, but is not responsible for reporting for all of them. For example, USAID and Canada report their own commitments and disbursements, so these organizations need to be removed from the IATI import – otherwise there would be double counting in the system.

What Data Was Added by IATI

While UNICEF Madagascar was reporting good financial information, the IATI data would provide much more information regarding the projects. For example, this information would include better titles and descriptions regarding activities. Year after year, UNICEF Madagascar had previously used sectors as project titles – such as “Health,” – with no description. Meanwhile, UNICEF IATI data broke this down into Outputs, giving more description and detail on what the activities actually consisted of. It also provided start and end data, and broke down sector and funding information, for each outcome. These improvements made it worthwhile to use IATI data for reporting to the Madagascar AMP.

PREPARING AMP

One simple step in making the import process seamless was to make the “Tag” sector field in AMP non-mandatory, since it was not a field that could be mapped to from IATI and was not critical for STP to have. This meant that less manual work would need to be done in order for projects to be submitted after an IATI import.

In addition, since UNICEF’s projects in AMP had been aggregated by sector since 2009, but IATI data only started in 2012 when UNICEF implemented the VISION system, some manual work had to be done. Since UNICEF Madagascar had been reporting disbursements differently than how they were reported to IATI (as noted in the “Challenges” section), it was decided that all transaction data from 2012 onward should be replaced by IATI data, to make the change as seamless as possible and to avoid any chance of double counting in the case of transactions being aggregated/reported differently. In order to save historical data prior to 2012, transactions starting from 2012 to the present had to be manually deleted. Afterward, the data could be imported from IATI without risk of duplicating in AMP, and would set up the system for use of IATI in reporting moving forward.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE IATI IMPORT TOOL

Based on what we learned from the data review process, we noted a number of additional fields and necessary improvements to the IATI Import Tool in order for IATI data to truly replace manual reporting to the Madagascar AMP. These include:

New Fields to be added to the IATI Import:

- Provider Organization
- Activity Scope
- Location
- Planned Start Date
- Planned Completion Date
- Accountable Organization
- Extending Organization
- Implementing Organization

Other new features:

- Improvements to avoid time out issues;
- Allowing users to pick which provider organizations to import transactions from;
- Allowing users to choose to replace all transaction data, update with new transaction data, update transaction data only for listed Donors;
- Bug fixing improvements, such as allowing saved mappings to be updated instead of having to save as a new mapping.

These new features are now available on Madagascar's AMP installation of the IATI Import tool.

LESSONS LEARNED

Plan for When Your PoCs Will Be Available

The fact that key UNICEF Madagascar staff members were unavailable for a major portion of the project's timeline made completing the tasks in a timely manner difficult. Identifying the key personnel in-country and checking their availability is an important lesson learned.

Success Takes Everyone's Involvement

As detailed throughout the report, it took effort from the Government of Madagascar, UNICEF Madagascar, UNICEF HQ, and DG, with the support of DI, to review the data and make changes in the various tools and data being used to drive the process.

Data Processes are Unique in Each Country

Madagascar's unique reporting setup for multi-donor funded projects meant that we needed to find an additional, unexpected technical solution. Each country has a unique data reporting processes and requirements. Thus, it must be expected that the approach for each country will vary.

RESULTS

In the end, the 118 projects imported into the AMP provided more granular data to AMP, and was successful in moving the process of reducing the level of effort needed by UNICEF Madagascar to report data to AMP moving forward. The following process was agreed upon between the major parties:

| | Activity | Frequency | Responsible |
|---|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Updating IATI file | At least Quarterly | UNICEF HQ |
| 3 | Importing IATI data on AMP and providing summary report, adding off/on budget information, and splitting location percentages equally for now. | Quarterly | AMP Team |
| 4 | Data review & validation | Quarterly | UNICEF Madagascar |

In addition, now that UNICEF Madagascar has been connected with UNICEF HQ, questions or issues about the data can be discussed and resolved together.

The Government of Madagascar felt that using IATI data meant that “the data quality will be strengthened because imported data into AMP-Madagascar will be verified and validated by both UNICEF Madagascar and UNICEF HQ.” Additionally, the Government was appreciative of the fact that using IATI meant “the [UNICEF] data in AMP will be identical to all international platforms and databases based on IATI (UNICEF’s transparency portal – open.unicef.org, D-Portal, etc.)”

The Government of Madagascar has already begun to reach out to other development partners, including USAID, UNDP, and AfDB to support their beginning to adopt use of IATI data for reporting to the AMP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations to UNICEF Madagascar

1. **Improve project descriptions:** Continue to improve project descriptions in order to provide a better narrative on what the project activities and goals are.
2. **Add Locations:** Add locations to systems to be included in IATI file, and:
 - a. Determine how funding percentages going to each location will be provided.

Recommendations to the Government of Madagascar

1. **Outreach to other organizations:** Continue to reach out to other organizations that might be interested in using IATI data for importing, in addition to the organizations they have already reached out to, such as USAID, UNDP, and AfDB.

- a. Provide training to interested organizations, by using the IATI-AIMS Import Training Guide developed by DG and DI.
 - b. Go through a similar review process as described above to prepare IATI data and AMP data for importing an additional organization's IATI data.
 - c. Collect suggestions from users of the IATI data and module, and share them with the IATI steering committee.
2. **Outreach to AMP users:** update the AMP management protocol and organize sensitization sessions for all users (Ministries, Donor, Executing Agency, etc.) so that they become acquainted with the process.
 3. **Outreach to other countries:** Share experiences using the IATI data and Import Tool with other countries interested in doing the same.

Recommendations for IATI's Governing Board & Technical Advisory Group

1. **Make it easier to locate and understand field terminology:** The IATI Standard and Codelist is not easily navigable and should be more integrated with the different definitions, as well as made clearer on the website what the field definitions are. This is important for country level staff and government who are new to IATI and trying to understand how the data matches terms they are familiar with.
2. **Add On and Off Budget to IATI:** Many AIMS track both on and off government budget projects and differentiate between the two within the AIMS. This is important for monitoring what funding should be managed by government agencies, and in understanding what funding is not going through government systems. If IATI is to be used to fully replace all manual reporting to AIMS, IATI should include a field to denote whether a project is on or off government budget.
3. **Allow for adding funding percentages to locations and/or add sub-national locations to transactions:** Most of the AMPs track locations at least at the various Admin Levels and assign the percent of funding going to each selected location. This is often a mandatory field. In order for IATI data to fully replace manual data, percentage of funding at the sub-national location level must be assigned, or individual sub-national locations must be added to transactions.
4. **Provide IATI Documentation in French:** Currently, the IATI standard and codelist are only available in English. Translating key information into French and making the French translations easily available would be helpful for Francophone countries trying to undertake these tasks.

Recommendations and Next Steps for DG's IATI Import Tool

While we made many improvements to the IATI Import Tool during this project, there is still room for improvement. Here is our "wish list" of changes we would like to make to the Import Tool next:

1. **Add Results Data:** Being able to import results data is one of the next things we hope to expand the IATI Import tool's capabilities to cover.
2. **Automatically sync IATI data:** Right now, the IATI Import tool is designed so that users need to manually upload their IATI XML file. We hope to be able to make this link more automated;

however, the tools out there are not currently reliable enough, nor are they built in a way that allows us to use them for our tool.

3. **Add budget and planned disbursements:** Since these projects are not transactions in IATI, they need additional work to be able to map to fields in the AMP that are seen as transactions. This is something we hope to take on in the future.
4. **Preview IATI Data during Import:** Right now, the tool does not provide a preview of the IATI data as it is being imported. Adding this functionality could make it easier to identify data quality issues and help with mapping. Additionally, doing so could help avoid a two-step process of having to review the data in another format such as in a large excel file, on D-portal, or looking at the XML itself to identify what the data is – all of which can be a bit difficult when trying to look at transactions specifically.
5. **Allow multiple destinations for the same source field:** An example of this is that we would like to be able to map Sector in IATI to Sectors and National Plan in AMP. Adding this functionality ended up not fitting within the time frame for this project.
6. **Add Tool Tips with Definitions:** Especially during the mapping phase, we would like to be able to add tooltips with the IATI field definitions, and have editable tooltips for the AMP fields so that it is easier to know how the fields should map with each other during the process.