**Grand Bargain Workstream on Transparency**

**Workshop on "The next step for Humanitarian Transparency - making IATI data more useful for decision-making" and technical pre-meeting on "Publishing better humanitarian data to IATI" The Hague 13–14 May 2019**

# Key takeaways

Organised by the World Bank Group and the Netherlands as the Co-conveners of the Transparency Workstream together with Development Initiatives (DI), the second Grand Bargain transparency workshop was held on 14 May 2019 at the Centre for Humanitarian Data in the Hague. Over 50 participants attended the workshop, representing government donors, multi-lateral agencies, aid organisations and academic institutes. The meeting built on the outcomes of the 2018 Transparency workshop which identified three key priorities for the workstream and four criteria for determining success, based on the transparency commitments.

The workshop in the Hague brought together colleagues working on transparency, information sharing and data at both technical and policy levels within Grand Bargain signatory organisations as well as the broader humanitarian and open-data communities in order to:
- Review overall progress in implementing the Grand Bargain transparency commitments and discuss the workstream's planned activities and next steps;
- Share learning and good practice on how data might be or is being used, including data responsibility in humanitarian action; and
- Begin developing a sustainable vision for humanitarian transparency beyond the Grand Bargain.

The workshop was preceded by a technical pre-meeting on 13 May 2019 that captured learning from the FTS-IATI pilot, which is supporting several Grand Bargain signatory organisations in reporting their funding to OCHA's Financial Tracking Service (FTS) using IATI data and explored what organisations can do to publish better data.

- *Transparency is not a goal in itself, nor is IATI*. As a community we are trying to build trust and confidence in the humanitarian system. There is no guarantee that by being transparent we will take better decisions – but sharing data and evidence about what we do and the impact of our response in a transparent manner can be an enabler.

- *There has been notable progress on publishing open data on humanitarian activities to the IATI standard* (see the May 2019 Infographic on Grand Bargain transparency workstream progress). However, challenges remain. These include a lack of consistent publication by organisations and donors (and hence a lack of comparable data) as well as a lack of coverage as not all signatory affiliates are publishing to IATI and many that do only publish what they are contractually required to.

- *Organisations need standardised approaches and guidance from donors on how to publish their humanitarian data to IATI to decrease their reporting burden.*

- *Data publication does not equal data use*. Making more data available does not automatically translate to better decision-making or more effective responses to humanitarian crises. Data needs to be accessible, useful, and used, which is why the workstream is focusing on data use as its core commitment in the next phase of the Grand Bargain leading up to 2021.

- *A significant number of Grand Bargain signatories are already using published IATI data and are aware of how to access the data.* Nevertheless, there are challenges associated with using the data for analysis linked to IATI's format, the complexity of the humanitarian financing chain and a lack of tools and services using IATI data that make the data useful, relevant and accessible, which the workstream is aiming to address.

- *Increasingly aid organisations and donors want to have a "single source of truth" for their data and are aiming for more streamlined reporting using IATI.* This can be for example with regard to OCHA's FTS the EU's EDRIS and the OECD-DAC's Creditor Reporting System (CRS), but also internally. Demonstrating good practice will incentivise others to take similar steps and harmonise data outputs.

- *Organisations need to incorporate responsible data management into their organisation-wide data policies.* There was a rich exchange among workshop participants on how they are using/would like to use IATI data while ensuring a "do no harm" approach. The Centre for Humanitarian Data shared a draft of its Data Responsibility Guidelines which can support organisations in the safe, ethical and effective management of data in humanitarian response.

- *IATI data from a number of donors, UN agencies and INGOs can be ingested into the FTS platform, although we are still far from a completely automated exchange.* Nevertheless, organisations are already seeing benefits in terms of increased feedback on data quality, improved data literacy and increased internal support for data production.

- *The workstream's planned work on data use prototyping on cash, localisation, earmarking and the humanitarian-development nexus provide a framework for the questions we need to answer and the data we want to collect as a community.* Publish What You Fund's in-country research to increase understanding of the information needs and challenges of humanitarian actors on the ground, in particular local and national responders, will also inform this process and encourage data providers to deliver the tools and services that users want.

- *The workstream's IATI Humanitarian Data Portal aims to build awareness of what information is being published to IATI by Grand Bargain signatories in order to drive and support subsequent data use.* It is hoped to go live in 2019.

- *Participants agreed that the main outcome of humanitarian transparency should be better-informed and faster decision-making, based on the needs of affected populations and informed by real-time, accessible and trustworthy data.* To support this process there needs to be an operational vision of the digital architecture required by the sector – building on existing systems and including the contribution that IATI can make – while identifying gaps and improvements.

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**Next steps**
- Begin a process for developing an operational vision of the digital architecture for the sector.
- Improve the interoperability of data management platforms, such as FTS and EDRIS with IATI.
- Increase the quality and coherence of IATI data and improve its use.
- Work with donors to harmonise guidance and approaches on IATI publishing requirements.
- Together with the Grand Bargain workstreams on cash, localisation, quality funding and the humanitarian-development nexus, refine the data use prototypes and explore opportunities and partnerships to take them to scale.
- Better identify data needs, including at country level.

# Annex 1: Detailed summary of the presentations, discussions and next steps

### 1. Grand Bargain Transparency Workstream progress to date – Liz Steele, DI

Copy of slides available [here](#)

In the Grand Bargain, greater transparency was identified as a prerequisite for the humanitarian sector to become more effective in assisting people affected by crises, and more efficient in the use of scarce resources. The transparency commitments negotiated by signatories marked a significant shift in the way that the sector is sharing and exchanging data on humanitarian financing as part of an open and non-proprietary system.

IATI is looking to help standardise and automate the exchange of data – it is not a 'system' or platform. It does not curate data, nor does it provide aggregation or analysis. It is a pool of open data, in machine-readable format, that others can contribute to and draw on in order to make the exchange of data more efficient. Existing data platforms such as OCHA's FTS and the EU's EDRIS can benefit from automated, standardised and structured data, reducing the requirement for manual collation, data entry and curation.

While there has been notable progress by Grand Bargain signatories on publication, making more data available does not automatically translate to better decision-making or more effective responses to humanitarian crises. Data needs to be useful, usable, and accessible, which is why the workstream is focusing on data use as its core commitment over the next phase of the Grand Bargain.

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**Next steps**
- Document and analyse existing data use and data users' needs at global, national and local levels, and the challenges/barriers to data use.
- Continue collaboration to support and expand the FTS-IATI project.
- Develop data use prototypes and corresponding visualisations that will make IATI data more accessible to the humanitarian community and show its potential.
- Evidence and share the value and uses of IATI data.
- Develop a new user-focused monitoring and learning tool and support a positive feedback loop to contribute to the publication of more useable humanitarian data and influence the type of tools and platforms that make the data accessible.

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### 2. Using humanitarian data: findings from the Grand Bargain data use survey – Lisa Walmsley, DI

Copy of slides available [here](#)

DI carried out a survey over the period March–May 2019, alongside desk research and key informant interviews, to find out how many Grand Bargain signatories are using the data that has been published to IATI and develop a baseline for the workstream's core commitment on data use. Key findings include:
- At least one-third of Grand Bargain signatory organisations (19 of 59, or 32%) are using IATI data and there are 25 evident and publicly accessible use cases among 19 GB signatories (or their affiliates), including examples of data use by donors (Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, UK, US and EU) as well as UN agencies (OCHA) and NGOs (Oxfam and the Dutch Relief Alliance). All have tools or platforms for using the data.
- 73% of survey respondents were aware of how to access IATI data, mainly via [d-portal](#), DFID's [Development Tracker](#) and the [IATI Registry](#), but nonetheless, there are challenges associated with using it for analysis: the format is difficult to use for many analysts, the financing chain is complex

and difficult to piece together if the decision-making process is not clear and there is a distinct lack of tools and services using IATI data that make the data useful, relevant and accessible.

- Government donors and Oxfam are using IATI in "trackers" and "landscaping" tools to provide accountability to citizens and provide some staff with data to assist with decision-making.
- Operational tools are beginning to emerge where partners are required to publish via IATI as part of their contract. IATI compliance creates a pool of 'relevant' data that all partners can benefit from using. Data quality improves as more people with context-specific knowledge are looking at the data.
- Comparability and consistency are issues for data users and a majority of respondents highlighted more timely, comprehensive and forward-looking data as well as better data on results, as being particularly beneficial. Some interviewees suggested that a way to build a body of comparable data might be for donors to coordinate on IATI reporting guidelines, which currently vary.
- Some INGO participants raised concerns about the ability of local organisations to publish and use IATI data, given we know little about the outcomes/value of IATI for people on the ground.

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**Next steps**
- As a community, think more carefully about who is responsible for ensuring accessibility and availability of quality data and how we might work together (as an "ecosystem") to consider what data is actually needed to improve both publication and use.

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3. **FTS-IATI pilot: the project so far – Nick Imboden, OCHA-FTS, and Steven Flower Coordinator FTS-IATI pilot and IATI TAG Chair**

Copy of slides available [here](here)

The Centre for Humanitarian Data is working with DI and OCHA's FTS to automate the way organisations publish humanitarian funding data. Five organisations are currently involved in the FTS-IATI pilot: DFID, International Rescue Committee (IRC), OCHA's Country-based Pooled Funds (CBPF), The Netherlands and USAID/OFDA. They highlighted the key drivers for their involvement in the pilot, which included more streamlined reporting using IATI as a "single source of truth" with regard to FTS and other data platforms but also internally; making their data more visible; reducing the reporting burden; providing more information to their partners. Key findings include:
- Data presented in the IATI format can be ingested into the FTS system and the systems work together efficiently. Data ingestion has led to some automation and the longer-term efficiencies have become more apparent.
- Organisations have made expected and unexpected improvements to their IATI data as a result of participating in the pilot. The pilot has underlined the importance of IATI publishers better understanding how their data is to be used by others.
- Nevertheless, IATI data differs between IATI publishers and it seems unrealistic to envisage automating IATI completely.
- Organisations already express the same data differently internally. For most organisations, FTS and IATI data is the responsibility of different teams or people so consensus is needed on what data is relevant.
- Humanitarian planning information does not always reflect operational data and there is often a disconnect between the data on projects and the data on delivery.
- Collaboration improves data literacy. The FTS team has a long-established set of relationships with a wide variety of humanitarian actors. Iteration and discussion between users can lead to a mutual understanding of needs.
- By the end of the third quarter, it is hoped that all five pilot organisations will be 'flowing' their IATI data into FTS, through automated or semi-automated processes. The long-term goal is for

organisations to use the IATI format to report on both their development and humanitarian spending.

Participants identified a number of key challenges: the need to protect sensitive implementing partners and location data; lack of support in identifying GLIDE and appeal codes; difficulties in identifying Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) codes and relating them to activities; difficulties in ensuring a more comprehensive and harmonised data publication internally between field staff and HQ and between staff responsible for FTS and IATI (and other) reporting.

> **Next steps**
> - Continue and expand the pilot. Interested organisations are invited to get in touch with the Centre for Humanitarian Data if they wish to get involved. Contact centrehumdata@un.org
> - Produce guidance materials on how organisations can replicate FTS reporting with IATI data.

4. **Publishing better humanitarian data: What data should organisations actually be publishing? Pelle Aardama, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Wendy Rogers, DI**

Pelle's slides available here and Wendy's slides available here

The Netherlands has developed IATI Publication Guidelines which are in use for all actors receiving Dutch government funding for all activities over EUR 250,000. This is to ensure a more harmonised approach to publication and to provide an insight into the roles of different organisations in the sector and the network of relationships between the field and HQ levels. Each organisation responsible for an activity publishes its own IATI data and linking data from different sources gives an insight into the transaction chain so that Dutch government partners know who is involved and where activities are taking place. The original guidelines have been updated in collaboration with OCHA-FTS with a draft addendum to include IATI's humanitarian elements, and are available on the MinBuza website as well as the IATI discuss forum as part of a consultation process.

> **Next steps**
> - Organisations are invited to provide feedback on the updated draft IATI Publication Guidelines.
> - Work with other donors to provide standardised guidance on how to publish their humanitarian data to IATI.

5. **A new monitoring and learning tool for the GB transparency workstream - Wendy Rogers, DI, and Siem Zimmerman, Z&Z**

Copy of slides available here

On behalf of the GB transparency workstream, DI is developing a new IATI Humanitarian Data Portal which aims to replace the Grand Bargain Transparency Dashboard. The new portal aims to:
- Build awareness of what information can be and is being published to IATI by GB signatories in order to drive and support subsequent data use;
- Incentivise and assist organisations to continue to improve the quality and usability of the data they publish; and
- Continue to enable GB signatories and the workstream in monitoring progress in implementing the transparency data publication commitment (at the aggregated level).

The new portal will not be based on a "scoring" methodology but will simply provide basic statistics about what elements ("fields") of the IATI Standard are, or are not, being used. Timeliness and coverage will, however, continue to be assessed. The site will be user-friendly, with lots of help text to enable users to better understand what the information is telling them and why it is important. The site is under development and is planned to go live in 2019

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**Next steps**
- Organisations will be invited to participate in a webinar once the new portal is available.

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6. **Data to take forward localisation: from the ground-up or top-down? Angus Urquhart, DI, and James Coe, Publish What You Fund (PWYF)**

Angus' slides available here and James' slides are available here

The session took two angles on data and data use to support localisation: DI's experience of providing data analysis of Grand Bargain commitments (mostly from the top-down) and Publish What You Fund's initial research on the data needs of local and national actors (from the ground up).

DI analysed the GB commitment on localisation *"Achieve by 2020 a global, aggregated target of at least 25% of humanitarian funding to local and national responders as directly as possible"* and found that in 2017 local and national responders received 2.9% of direct funding, as reported to OCHA-FTS. When analysing the 25% target at the country level in its research for Oxfam in Bangladesh and Uganda, DI found that 9.7% and 8% of humanitarian financing went to local and national responders (directly and indirectly). Challenges remain in reconciling data at different points in the transaction chain; in capturing varied funding streams at local level, given there are no national data platforms, and in gaining a better understanding of data needs at local level.

Upcoming in-country research by Publish What You Fund in collaboration with Ground Truth Solutions will help support an increased understanding of the information needs and challenges of humanitarian actors on the ground, in particular local and national responders. Research will be carried out in two protracted crises: Iraq and Bangladesh, with a final synthesis report published in February 2020.

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**Next steps**
- Organisations will be invited to participate in a webinar once research findings have been consolidated

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7. **Visualising the Grand Bargain Commitment to reduced earmarking – Elliott McBride, OCHA, and Wendy Rogers, DI**

Wendy's slides are available here and Elliott's slides are available here

DI is developing prototyping tools on behalf of the Grand Bargain Transparency Workstream to access and visualise IATI humanitarian data. This will also help identify information needs of the humanitarian community, determine what existing or new platform(s) would be best placed to meet these needs and incentivise the publication of better-quality data. The data use prototypes are being developed with an initial focus on earmarking and localisation and will be expanded to include cash and the humanitarian-development nexus.

> **Next steps**
> - Consult with relevant groups of stakeholders and GB workstreams to refine and review the prototypes.
> - Share the prototypes with the broader humanitarian community and explore the potential interest for their uptake by an existing platform or to take them to scale independently, requiring further investment.

**8. Data responsibility in humanitarian action – Stuart Campo and Jos Berens, Centre for Humanitarian Data**

Copies of slides available [here](#)

OCHA's Centre for Humanitarian Data provides policy advice and guidelines to OCHA staff and partners on data management, sharing and security. The Centre has developed a working draft of its Data Responsibility Guidelines which offer principles, practices, processes and tools for the safe, ethical and effective management of data in humanitarian response. They were released in early March 2019 for further testing, review and feedback.

The [Humanitarian Data Exchange](#) (HDX) is an open platform, managed by the Centre, which enables organisations to find, share and use a wide range of humanitarian operational and reporting data all in one place. The platform also shares and protects data in more nuanced ways, for example, the HDX Connect feature allows organisations to publish only metadata and release the underlying data by request. Supporting Statistical Disclosure Control (SDC) helps de-risk data before sharing.

> **Next steps**
> - Provide feedback to OCHA on the draft Data Responsibility Guidelines.
> - Organisations should consider how they incorporate a "Do No Harm" approach and data responsibility in their organisation-wide data policies and any IATI training on developing "exclusion policies".

**9. Developing a vision for humanitarian transparency beyond the Grand Bargain**

Participants were asked to work together in groups to discuss three key questions:

*In 10 years' time what would be the single most important outcome of humanitarian transparency a) for your organisation and b) for the humanitarian sector as a whole?*
- There was overall consensus by participants that the main outcome should be better-informed and faster decision-making based on needs that is informed by real time, accessible and trustworthy data.
- One group wanted to see greater "downwards" accountability towards affected populations.
- There was consensus on the need for more automation to support greater efficiency within organisations. Some INGOs stressed that this was less achievable for smaller organisations given the level of investment required, nevertheless they wanted to see less manual effort.

*What do you think are the policy, technical and operational changes that need to happen a) within organisations and b) as a sector to make our collective vision a reality?*

- Organisations agreed that the challenge in taking forward humanitarian transparency is about changing mindsets so that this is no longer about compliance or reporting but about developing a common understanding of how better data can support collective outcomes.
- At an organisational level, participants agreed on the need for better feedback mechanisms: publishing data, using it internally, carrying out M&E, understanding how it is driving decision-making, and then re-examining data quality so that it continuously improves.
- There was agreement on the need for a collective vision on transparency and humanitarian data which is not based on compliance but on better outcomes for affected populations.
- As a sector this means streamlining guidelines, sharing best practices, and improving data literacy and standardisation. One group stressed the need for data quality assurance mechanisms and smarter linking tools for publishers.

*Identifying and taking into consideration key global political, economic, social and environmental trends, what do you think should be the focus of humanitarian transparency post-Grand Bargain and why?*
- Groups agreed that there are growing uncertainties within the sector, with new actors engaging in humanitarian relief, population growth, climate change, and increasing innovation. This means that organisations will need to be more proactive, adaptive and able to act on change. They will need to invest in predicting trends and issues, while building on a needs-based approach.
- Participants recognised the need for a collective vision on transparency which can enable the sector to share learning and increase trust in the humanitarian system as a whole, while building on existing data management systems and supporting interoperability, including by taking forward the FTS-IATI pilot.

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**Next steps**
- Begin a process for developing an operational vision of the digital architecture for the sector; building on existing systems and including the contribution that IATI can make, while identifying gaps and improvements.

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