# Results: Make the quality of evidence behind IATI results data transparent

**Note:** This suggestion addresses Principle 3 from a consultation driven by Monitoring and Evaluation experts from UK CSOs Jan – Mar 2017 – see <http://discuss.iatistandard.org/t/results-discussion-space-and-tag-2016-17-path/502/> (specific text relating to Principle 3 copied below as justification). Technical suggestions were devised by technology specialists at the Nethope Athens conference March 2017.

Technical suggestion:

1. Add indicator lists to the *IndicatorVocabulary* codelist, such as those in the Appendix
2. Pending discussion at the IATI TAG conference 1330-1430 Wednesday 8th March, the following is suggested to address the primary concern of Principle 3 (quality of data, per below and original Bond document: <https://www.bond.org.uk/resources/publishing-results-to-iati>):

add a *confidence* element to

* 1. result/indicator/
  2. result/indicator/baseline
  3. result/indicator/period/target
  4. result/indicator/period/actual

with attributes:

1. vocabulary – *ConfidenceVocabulary* codelist, including code “99” for organisation defined. Consultation would be required for any other standardised confidence vocabularies.
2. vocabulary-uri – URI where this internal vocabulary is defined.
3. code – value that must be on the specified vocabulary
4. To address other provenance indicator information a significant cross-stakeholder consultation would be required before individual additional elements/attributes could be recommended. If additional items are discovered they could be included via:

* Preferred suggestion:

Add additional types to the *resultNarrativeType* codelist – see suggested modification <http://discuss.iatistandard.org/t/results-use-of-narrative-elements/746>

* Alternative suggestion a:

Provide guidance document to encourage organisations to build their indicator protocols (linked via result/indicator/reference ) using best practice.

* Alternative suggestion b: (If modification <http://discuss.iatistandard.org/t/results-use-of-narrative-elements/746> is not accepted)

Information to be included directly as part of existing *narrative* elements.

Justification:

* **Issue:** At the moment there is no way to tell the provenance in which an IATI results indicator has been designed just from looking at IATI data, for example the: information source, intended accuracy, purpose or methodology that is used to produce the data.
* **Why is this a problem?:** In the absence of indicator provenance, both results producers and consumers have often unnecessarily assumed that IATI results must be of absolute quality. While absolute quality is ideal for simple reporting and analysis, in practice, generating these results can be so technically and financially demanding that it would undermine the purpose of the initiative and provide poor value for money. <https://www.bond.org.uk/resources/publishing-results-to-iati> “At the level of outcomes and impacts … [there are also] very active debates in academic circles about the best ways to generate reliable information about the contribution of interventions to observed results.” Further, “one of the main reasons given to Bond for NGOs not currently publishing results information is that they are concerned that the quality of their evidence – particularly about outcomes and impacts – is not good enough. … Using evidence that’s quality is unknown is risky and potentially harmful. If the quality of results information published to IATI is perceived as poor or just uncertain, it will not enhance learning or accountability.”
* **Suggestions:** In practice, we design results to serve the specific purpose they are intended for. For example: results from a clinical research trial that are to be used to inform subsequent activities are design to be of much higher quality than that of an advocacy activity using proxy data to roughly determine effect on communities.

A small fraction of results can be represented using standardised indicators. These indicators can be incredibly valuable as they permit a common language to understand projects, provide a means to aggregate data and demonstrate progress towards common goals such as the SDGs. While some standardised indicators can be linked to in the existing IATI results standard there are a number omitted (see Appendix 2 for suggested additions, notably the SDG indicators). There should also be an optional means to describe the provenance of the indicators within these standardised lists as this is not always apparent from the links used in the IATI results standard (although it is understood that IATI should not be expected to maintain this information).

The vast majority results are not amenable to standardised indicators. For example, they may be designed for a specific purpose only applicable for the project they are concerning. There must therefore be an optional means to describe the provenance of these non-standardised indicators in addition to the standardised indicators discussed above. The exact fields should be the subject of further consultation, but the following are suggested as a starting point (Per DFID’s Aid Match indicator protocol <https://assets.digital.cabinet-office.gov.uk/media/565efda0e5274a74e6000009/Indicator-Protocol.doc> and <http://blog.devresults.com/proposed-indicator-definition-schema/> (the latter is in turn based loosely on USAID's Performance Indicator Reference Sheets: <http://usaidprojectstarter.org/content/pmp-performance-indicator-reference-sheet> ):

* + **Purpose:** narrative describing the purpose for the indicator (as already included in the IATI results standard within the indicator description – see Section 2)
  + **Method:** methodology followed to create the information, including any standard approaches (e.g. statistical methods, or Bond Evidence Principles <https://www.bond.org.uk/effectiveness/monitoring-and-evaluation#evidence_principles> , OECD DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation <http://www.oecd.org/development/evaluation/qualitystandards.pdf> or DFID’s How to Note: Assessing the Strength of Evidence <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/291982/HTN-strength-evidence-march2014.pdf> )
  + **Sources:** Who/what will provide the data
  + **Limitations:** What the known and potential limitations for producing the information
  + **Assessments:** How any estimates are generated, what data quality assessments / audits / evaluations are conducted and whether these are performed by the organisation or externally (e.g. how frequent, what process)
  + **Audience:** Are the results only intended to be relevant to a project? To support qualitative results? For internal performance monitoring? For the Sector?
  + **Confidence rating:** level of confidence in the values, choosing from an option of:
    - Low confidence – rough figures to give ball-park estimates only
    - Medium confidence – partially verified to within an order of magnitude
    - High confidence – rigorously created numbers with strong evidence to back claims

For further discussion:

* <http://discuss.iatistandard.org/t/activity-results-and-objectives/172/6>:

Appendix: Potential additional indicator lists

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| Name | Category | URL |
| UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Indicators |  | <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-IAEG-SDGs-Rev1-E.pdf> |
| Bond’s Impact Builder indicators |  | <https://my.bond.org.uk/impact-builder> |
| Department for International Development (DFID) standard indicators |  | <https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/88400/standard-indicators.xls> |
| WHO/ UNICEF Joint monitoring Programme (JMP) | **WASH** | <https://www.wssinfo.org/> |
| Everyday Peace Indicators |  | <http://everydaypeaceindicators.org/> |
| Women Stats |  | <http://www.womanstats.org/new/codebook/> |
| Gap Minder |  | <https://www.gapminder.org/data/> |
| SDSN |  | <http://indicators.report/> |
| Open 17 |  | <http://openseventeen.org/> |
| Deliver 2030 |  | <http://deliver2030.org/?page_id=6059> |
| SDG16 Data Initiative |  | <http://www.sdg16.org/map/> |
| Dutch Development Results |  | <http://www.dutchdevelopmentresults.nl/> |
| Health Equity Monitor |  | <http://www.who.int/gho/health_equity/outcomes/health_equity_compendium.pdf?ua=1> |
| mWater indicator library |  | <https://portal.mwater.co/#/indicators> |