



# Has the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative been a success? Identifying and evaluating EITI goals



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## ABSTRACT

Launched in 2003, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) has become a global standard for transparency in extractive sectors. Yet, there remains much debate over the success of the EITI. In this article, we establish a conceptual categorization of goals for organizations like the EITI, systematically identify the various goals associated with the EITI, and then examine empirical evidence to evaluate its specific achievements. We find that the EITI has been most successful in reaching its institutional goals, notably by becoming a recognized brand and consolidating transparency as a global norm. The EITI has been fairly successful in reaching some of the operational goals, such as setting up standards for auditing, reporting, and civil society involvement in multi-stakeholder groups. Whether the EITI has had an impact on developmental goals remains an open question as it is challenging to identify the correct measurements for impact and many evaluations assess goals that are over-inflated compared to what the initiative formally seeks to achieve. We conclude that any evaluation of the EITI needs to be clear about which type of objective it is measuring, and that an evaluation should not deem the EITI *in general* as a success or failure based on evaluating only one or two aspects of the initiative.

## 1. Introduction

Conceived in the late 1990s and launched in June 2003, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) has been a hallmark of international resource governance efforts. Initially designed as a voluntary process of extractive sector revenue disclosure for payments between companies and governments, the EITI has evolved into a broad instrument seeking to improve transparency and accountability along the whole natural resource management value chain, including corporate beneficiary ownership (EITI, 2016).

The EITI is generally considered as a success story, given the large number of resource dependent governments that have committed to it and the vast support it has received from donors, non-governmental organizations, and extractive industry companies. Yet, after more than a decade of implementation, many researchers, practitioners, donors, and decision-makers alike are asking to what extent the EITI is working.

Although the question of EITI's success seems simple, it is difficult to answer. A comprehensive evaluation of EITI's performance requires

identifying its goals, interventions, and the causal mechanisms linking EITI interventions to outcomes. Furthermore, assessing many of the EITI's purported impacts require clear and measurable indicators that can be evaluated over time and specifically attributed to the EITI, and not to other factors, a notoriously difficult endeavor for any social science impact evaluation.

To start to answer where the EITI potentially has made an impact so far, we first identified EITI goals by analyzing EITI documents such as the EITI Principles and the EITI Requirements, as well as assessments attributing goals to the EITI that may not be directly stated by official EITI documents. Based on this review of this material, we identified three broad categories of goals for an organization like the EITI, encompassing a total of 11 specific goals for the EITI.<sup>1</sup> *Institutional goals* are about establishing the organization and consolidating its position and its view of thinking or functioning. In the case of the EITI, these include branding, recognition, and diffusion of transparency. *Operational goals* refer to a set of goals about what the organization is to produce. For the EITI, these comprise immediate EITI outputs and outcomes such as establishing the EITI Standard,

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<sup>1</sup> We use the term 'organization' here in the broad sense of an 'organized body of people with a particular purpose'. The EITI currently defines itself as "a global Standard to promote the open and accountable management of natural resources", rather than as an organization pursuing such goal (see <https://eiti.org/about/who-we-are>, accessed 11 October 2016).

publishing the annual national EITI reports, and ensuring civil society participation. *Developmental goals* contain the broader and more long-term outcomes of meeting the needs of the society. For the EITI, these include the goals of reducing corruption, improving governance, and promoting inclusive forms of social and economic development.

After having identified the EITI goals, we then systematically reviewed academic articles, reports, and evaluations – including peer-reviewed studies, independent but non-peer-reviewed assessments, and those commissioned by the EITI – seeking to answer the question whether the EITI is making a difference or not. The review is complemented by additional data analysis and stakeholder interviews and observations at EITI events including Global Conferences directly conducted by the authors.

From our analysis of this material, we conclude that assessments of the EITI need to be clear about the types of goals being evaluated, and whether it is realistic to expect the EITI to have an impact on such a goal on its own, especially within the time span the EITI has been active globally and in the specific implementing country. Our study indicates that the EITI has been most successful in reaching its institutional goals and fairly successful in reaching some of its operational goals. Whether the EITI has had an impact on developmental goals is an open question and difficult to measure, especially because the underlying mechanisms linking the EITI outputs to the long-term outcomes have not been clearly defined. So far, the EITI International Secretariat has been reluctant to specify a theory of change that would establish the causal change from the transparency the EITI promotes to broader goals, arguing that it is more important for the stakeholders to agree on smaller, actionable issues, than to aim for large overarching long term goals that might seem unachievable (Rich and Moberg, 2015).

This article proceeds as follows. We first briefly present existing frameworks for evaluating goals, develop a conceptual categorization of goals for an organization like the EITI, and establish what the EITI itself and the literature see as the main EITI goals. This is followed by an evaluation of EITI's performance in attaining the different goals discussing the institutional, operational, and development objectives in turn. We conclude by discussing what could be considered as success for the EITI.

## 2. Defining goals

Goals matter. Not only do goals set the stage for an organization's planning and development, but goals also establish the foundation for appraising an organization's progress and performance. As Hall (1999, p. 29) notes, “[t]he entire subject of organizational analysis cannot be understood apart from goals”. Consequently, goals are central in the evaluation literature, which situates them within a downward hierarchy generally defined through ‘mission’, ‘goals’, ‘objectives’, and ‘outcomes’, with each level becoming in turn more specific and measurable.<sup>2</sup>

The theory of change (ToC) literature typically uses the same concepts (Stein and Valters, 2012), but explicitly links them through processes and defines intermediate outcomes that can be measured. In contrast with impact assessment processes seeking to estimate the potential outcomes of a defined set of activities, these types of goal-oriented processes start with identifying the long-term outcomes (often also called goals or outcome targets) and then work backwards to identify the needed project interventions and the short-term and medium term outcomes that need to be made or achieved in order to attain the long-term goals. The interventions (or the outputs) are the project products that are deemed to be necessary to attain the

mediating outcomes. In this line of thinking, each outcome is to be defined so precisely that it can be measured by an indicator. Interventions, outcomes, and goals are frequently categorized according to time criteria (e.g. early, medium, long term). Thus, the change process, and the assumptions behind it, can be evaluated throughout the duration of the project (e.g. through assessing medium term outcome achievements), and not only at the end of the project.

A complementary way to evaluate an organization is to distinguish between the different types of goals an organization can have. These can be, as commonly in ToC literature, differentiated by the time (early-, medium-, and long-term goals), but also along more conceptual criteria. The goals can, for example, relate to an organization's objectives of i) establishing itself and consolidating its position among other organizations and actors; ii) establishing its view of thinking or functioning as a model for other organizations and actors; iii) attaining its internal objectives of how it operates (e.g., manufacturing products efficiently and with as little waste as possible); or iv) meeting the needs of society (e.g., by providing services or goods).

As the basis for identifying the EITI goals we used the EITI Principles, the EITI Articles of Association, the EITI Requirements, the Overview of Validation, and the protocol on participation of civil society, all of which are included in the EITI Standard 2016 (EITI, 2016). The *EITI Principles* were agreed by a group of countries, companies, and civil society organizations at the Lancaster House Conference in 2003 and are considered as the cornerstone of EITI. The *EITI Articles of Association* can be seen as the constitution of the EITI and describe the responsibilities of the actors and the undertaking of the EITI. The *EITI Requirements* include the steps, stipulations, and timelines that a country must adhere to in order to become EITI compliant.<sup>3</sup> The *Protocol on civil society participation* outlines the minimum condition that the civil society must enjoy with regard to participation in natural resource governance management in an EITI implementing country.

Going beyond the goals formulated within these official documents, we also identify the goals that have been *ascribed* to the initiative by previous analyses seeking to evaluate the EITI. This allows us not simply to assess the EITI on its own criteria, but also on external expectations that, as we will suggest below, help to explain in part some of the ‘failure’ verdicts reached by a number of assessment studies. The goals we identified are summarized in Fig. 1.

In the case of the EITI, defining a ToC for the transparency process would require identifying and sequencing the steps from initial ones such as a policy commitment to revenue transparency, to final outcomes such as improved living standards. These would include short-term outcomes such as setting up a system to collect the required information, medium-term outcomes such as increased public engagement in natural resource management, and more long-term outcomes such as increased revenue reaching populations. Many EITI goals that we identified fall within such a linear, temporal processes. Within these goals, there are goals that the EITI itself is to produce (e.g., the clear standards and increased public understanding) and goals for which the success is dependent on other changes in society (e.g., sustainable development). Other goals, however, clearly falls outside such a linear, temporal process and rather describe goals that EITI has set for itself as an institution and that to a certain degree are independent of its success of producing the ultimate outcomes.

Thus, based on the material, we distinguish between three conceptual categories of goals for an organization like EITI: institutional, operational and developmental, which respectively refer to the goals of (i) establishing an organization and consolidating its position and its view of thinking or functioning among the competitors; (ii) attaining its internal objectives of how it operates and what it is to produce (e.g.,

<sup>2</sup> Often a ‘mission statement’ states the organization's overarching ‘guiding principles’, ‘goals’ and ‘objectives’ describe the intended purposes and expected results of the organization's activities, and ‘outcomes’ state the desired, tangible result, for example, the quarterly production target.

<sup>3</sup> Countries that are either EITI candidates or EITI compliant are considered as implementing countries.

<u>Institutional goals</u>	<u>Operational goals</u>	<u>Development goals</u>
<b>Goal I-1:</b> Brand EITI globally and nationally	<b>Goal O-1:</b> Establish clear and credible EITI standards	<b>Goal D-1:</b> Increasing revenues that are returned to the society through reduced corruption
<b>Goal I-2:</b> Establish (EITI) transparency as a norm globally and nationally	<b>Goal O-2:</b> Increase state capacity to implement the EITI standard and report in timely and comprehensible manner	<b>Goal D-2:</b> Improve investment climate, increase aid flows, and promote fairer government share of revenues
<b>Goal I-3:</b> Increase EITI participation, compliance, and support from governments	<b>Goal O-3:</b> Increase public understanding, debate, and influence of natural resource management	<b>Goal D-3:</b> Promote good governance, sustainable development, and improved living standards
<b>Goal I-4:</b> Establish multi-stakeholder groups as the organizational basis and promote multi-stakeholder model of governance	<b>Goal O-4:</b> Ensure civil society's effective participation in multi-stakeholder groups	

Fig. 1. The EITI goals.

process and system goals); and (iii) fulfilling the needs of society relating to the organization.

*Institutional goals* refer to an organization's, often medium-term, goals of how it seeks to establish itself in terms of both reputation and influence in the eyes of the others, a goal that often is reflected in the organization's mission statement, and its objectives regarding its own organizational structure. *Operational goals* refer to set goals about what the organization is to produce (outputs) and thus has direct control over, as well as the process and procedures that support the production of these outputs. These are what in the Theory of Change literature are often considered as the short and medium term outputs and outcomes. The operational goals can include aspects such as the type and quality of support systems that facilitate achieving these goals, including administrative procedures to support broader outcomes. *Developmental goals* relate to the 'ultimate outcomes' that the organization seeks to achieve or have impact on, but for which they also depend on contribution from other actors and processes and which generally are long-term goals.

With respect to the EITI, these three broad goal categories reflect specific paradigms, and most notably the 'resource curse' paradigm arguing that resource wealth is unlikely to deliver broad development without sound revenue management policies and robust institutions able to counteract a high risk of corruption, conflicts over resource ownership, and preferences for short-term spending (Auty, 2002; Humphreys et al., 2007; Ross, 1999; Le Billon, 2013; Collier, 2016). The *Institutional* and *Operational* goals also reflect broader paradigms of 'good governance', including on the importance of transparency in bringing accountability and improving revenue management (see Kaufmann (2002), Hood and Heald (2006)), as well the need for a 'shift from government to governance' to create more effective institutions through tri-partite governance models involving governments, companies, and civil society (see Weiss (2000), Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2011)). *Developmental* goals reflect the broad tenets of neoliberal development models, including on the detrimental effects of corruption on a broad range of socio-economic dimensions (Bardhan, 1997; Leite and Weidmann, 1999), the benefits of foreign direct investment for economic growth (see Chowdhury and Mavrotas (2006), Goldsbrough and Landell-Mills (1985)), and the importance of 'inclusive development' approaches to improve living standards (Spence, 2008).

### 2.1. Institutional goals

The institutional goals of EITI are mainly stated in the EITI Articles

of Association and EITI Principles. Article 2.2 of the EITI Articles of Association states: "The objective of the EITI Association is to make the EITI Principles and EITI requirements the *internationally accepted standard for transparency* in the oil, gas and mining sector" (EITI, 2016, p. 48, our emphasis). This echoes and expands the Overview of Validation document stating that validation "...safeguards the integrity of the EITI by holding all EITI implementing countries to the same global standard (EITI, 2016, p. 39). These statements thus suggest that the EITI aims at building a globally recognized institutional norm around transparency in natural resource management.<sup>4</sup>

*Goal I-1: Brand the EITI globally and nationally*

*Goal I-2: Establish (EITI) transparency as a norm globally and nationally*

The branding and spread of EITI standards is mostly pursued through the process of state-level participation in the initiative. As such a core institutional goal of the EITI, and more specifically of the EITI International Secretariat has been to "encourag[e] countries to implement the EITI", notably through increasing financial and diplomatic support from donor countries (EITI, 2014a). Thus, the EITI aims at having a substantial number of countries that either are implementing the EITI standard or that support the EITI.<sup>5</sup>

*Goal I-3: Increase EITI participation, compliance, and support from governments*

The creation of multi-stakeholder groups (MSG) as the organizational basis and governing structure of the EITI Association and the national EITIs is embedded in the core EITI documents throughout with the justification that "In seeking solutions, [EITI] believe[s] that all stakeholders have important and relevant contributions to make" (Principle 12; EITI, 2016, p. 10). Establishing a MSG is one of the key requirements in order to be accepted as an EITI implementing country. Beyond the case of the EITI itself, and its own MSG components, the EITI is often given the goal of promoting a multi-stakeholder model of governance and demonstrating its relevance and viability for complex governance issues where trust in government is low, the participation of businesses is key, and the role of civil society is deemed important (Rich and Moberg, 2015).

*Goal I-4: Establish multi-stakeholder groups as the organizational basis and promote multi-stakeholder model of governance*

<sup>4</sup> A senior officer of the EITI International Secretariat, however, specifies that the goal is to promote transparency as a norm, but not specifically an EITI transparency norm. Interview with the authors, Lima, February 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Supporting governments are not implementing the EITI, but endorse the EITI and its objectives as well as provide it with funding or other forms of assistance.

## 2.2. Operational goals

A clear and credible EITI standard is a cornerstone operational goal that contributes to achieving the institutional goals (discussed in the previous section), and that works towards the other operational goals, in particular to ensure the national level implementation of EITI and to promote public participation in natural resource management. According to the EITI Principle 10, the EITI seeks to establish “...a broadly consistent and workable approach to the disclosure of payments and revenues ... which is simple to undertake and to use” (EITI, 2016, p. 10).

### Goal O-1: Establish a clear and credible EITI standard

As the EITI Standards note “[a] primary motivation for the adoption of the EITI Standard was the desire to produce more relevant, more reliable and more usable information” (EITI, 2016, p. 41) in a timely fashion. However, many of the implementing countries lack both the human and financial capacity to implement the EITI requirements and to produce the information within the stipulated timeframes and disseminate it effectively and in a comprehensible manner to the wider public. Therefore, the EITI International Secretariat, EITI supporting governments, and other international community actors provide considerable assistance to increase the member states’ capacity to implement the EITI requirements through bilateral schemes and the EITI Multi-Donor Trust Fund managed by the World Bank.

### Goal O-2: Increase state capacity to implement the EITI standard and report in timely and comprehensible manner

Increasing public understanding of, debate about, and influence in natural resource management is a key EITI goal, and directly linked to development goals in the EITI core documents: “We recognize that a public understanding of government revenues and expenditure over time could help public debate and inform choice of appropriate and realistic options for sustainable development” (Principle 4; EITI, 2016, p. 10). In fact, all EITI Requirements evoke ‘public’ directly or as part of ‘all stakeholders’ as the key audience for the increased information on natural resource management emphasizing ‘understanding’ of the issues, ‘assessment’ and ‘debate’ of and ‘dialogue’ about the management as the crucial contributions to increased transparency (EITI, 2016) and as the underlying condition for that “the transparency created by the EITI leads to greater accountability” (p. 41).

### Goal O-3: Increase public understanding, debate, and influence of natural resource management

The final core operational goal we identified for the EITI is related to MSGs: “The EITI requires effective multi-stakeholder oversight, including a functioning multi-stakeholder group that involves the government, companies, and the full, independent, active and effective participation of civil society” (Requirement 1; EITI, 2016, p. 12).<sup>6</sup> The EITI Requirements put particular emphasis on the participation of the civil society in MSG (EITI, 2016, p. 14). These requirements for the inclusion and independent status of the civil society are further elaborated in a separate section on civil society in the EITI Standard 2016, namely in the protocol on civil society participation (EITI, 2016, p. 41).

### Goal O-4: Ensure civil society's effective participation in multi-stakeholder groups

## 2.3. Developmental goals

EITI's development goals are in the medium term linked to increased revenues. The EITI Principles and Articles of Association evoke two ways that are likely to increase government revenues from natural resource extraction: reduction in corruption and increased

domestic and foreign investment (EITI, 2016). The latter is expected from EITI implementation as signaling improved investment climate (including through requirements by International Financial Institutions for EITI implementation to provide support) and government commitment to greater transparency. Further, it is also expected that the recommendations based on discrepancies and poor management strategies uncovered during compilation of the annual reports will increase the government share of revenues from extractive sector (EITI, 2016). Increasing aid, although not being a stated EITI goal, is frequently mentioned as an incentive to adopt EITI (e.g., David-Barrett and Okamura, 2016).

### Goal D-1: Increasing revenues that are returned to the society through reduced corruption

### Goal D-2: Improve investment climate, increase aid flows, and promote fairer government share of revenues

The long-term of EITI goals or the *ultimate goals* can also be found in the EITI Principles and EITI Articles of Association. The very first EITI Principle states: “We share a belief that the prudent use of natural resource wealth should be an important engine for *sustainable economic growth* that contributes to *sustainable development* and *poverty reduction*” (EITI, 2016, p. 10, our emphasis). Further, the Article 2.2 of the EITI Articles of Association states: “the revenues from extractive industry can *transform economies, reduce poverty* and *raise the living standard* of entire populations” (EITI, 2016, p. 48, our emphasis). Principle 9 of the EITI Principles also states that EITI encourages “...high standards of transparency and accountability in public life, government operations and in business” (EITI, 2016, p. 10), thus promoting – through the example of the EITI – improved governance practices in general.

### Goal D-3: Promote good governance, sustainable development, and improved living standards

## 3. Meta-study material

To evaluate the EITI goals identified above, we reviewed studies (published as academic articles or reports), either independent and commissioned by the EITI, as long as they clearly assessed one or several of the goals.<sup>7</sup> Table 1 summarizes the findings from the 45 studies included in this meta-study. Findings are characterized as either success, mixed (i.e. diverse outcomes within study sample), or failure. We also note when the study noted that the analysis was ‘too early’ to strongly conclude on the findings. The Appendix provides a detailed summary of study characteristics according to methods, sample, time period, as well as the full list of studies and individual study arguments about findings.)

Table 1 clearly indicates that the institutional goals have been the most successful, where 72% of the relevant studies view the EITI as a success. The evidence for the success in attaining the operational goals is more mixed while evaluations of development goals point to a 50% rate of failure and only 23% success rate, although 5 studies out of 30 indicate that the analysis was too early to adequately assess EITI developmental effects.

<sup>7</sup> The literature review is based on literature search in Google Scholar, Web of Science, and Scopus using EITI and Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative as the search words. Further literature was identified through these articles’ reference lists. The annual EITI progress reports provide crucial information on a series of ‘key performance indicators’ related to ‘agency effectiveness’ (e.g. level and allocation of budget, number of meetings) and ‘attributable outcomes’ (e.g. number of published EITI country reports); yet they are not counted here as specific *evaluation* exercises since they report rather than evaluate, and do not seem to observe ‘failures’ (a review of a third of the reports yielded only two ‘mixed results’, the rest being described as ‘successes’): the large number of annual reports would thus have brought a positive bias into this meta-study. In contrast, the two specific evaluation studies commissioned by the EITI (Rainbow Insight, 2009; Scanteam, 2011) are included in the sample. As we mention in the conclusion, further research could tap into the often-detailed country-level EITI reports, which occasionally include assessments of relative successes and failures, and consider some of their potential causes.

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted, however, that EITI stipulations on civil society’s space, freedom, and ability to express themselves and participate refer only to debates about natural resource governance, but not to other issues that civil society may wish to promote, such as human rights.

**Table 1**  
Overview of assessment studies.

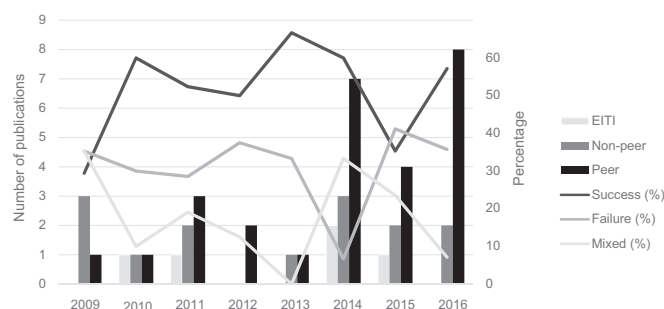
Goals	Success	Mixed	Failure	Too early	Total	Success
<b>Institutional</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>72%</b>
Goal I-1, EITI brand	1	0	0	0	1	100%
Goal I-2, Transparency norm and government participation	17	1	1	0	19	89%
Goal I-3, Support, participation and compliance by governments	14	8	3	0	25	56%
Goal I-4, Multi-stakeholder governance model	6	0	2	0	8	75%
<b>Operational</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>44%</b>
Goal O-1, Standards	6	1	0	0	7	86%
Goal O-2, National capacity and reporting	11	4	0	0	15	73%
Goal O-3, Public understanding	2	4	8	0	14	14%
Goal O-4, Civil society's participation in MSG	6	7	8	0	21	29%
<b>Developmental</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>23%</b>
Goal D-1, Increase natural resource revenues	2	1	8	2	13	15%
Goal D-2, Increase investments	5	0	1	1	7	71%
Goal D-3, Governance, sustainable development, and living standards	0	1	7	2	10	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>50%</b>

**Table 2**  
The success rate of attaining the EITI goals by the assessment type.

Goal categories	Success rate		
	Peer-reviewed	Non peer-reviewed	EITI commissioned
Institutional	65%	79%	100%
Operational	53%	32%	50%
Developmental	25%	25%	100%
Total	52%	48%	73%

The meta-study material consists of peer-reviewed studies (59%), non-peer-reviewed but independent studies (30%) and EITI-commissioned studies (11%). We compare success rates across these three categories to identify possible biases, and find EITI-commissioned studies report a higher overall success rate than the peer-reviewed articles and other non-peer-reviewed evaluations, while independent studies whether peer-reviewed or not have relatively similar success rate evaluations (Table 2). We also identified the studies through broad categories of methods: quantitative (e.g. multivariate statistical analyses and opinion polls), qualitative (e.g. single or comparative country case studies), and other types (e.g. conceptual analyses including limited anecdotal evidence). Comparing findings across these three methods, we find that the overall success rate is approximately 50% for qualitative studies, and slightly higher for quantitative studies (62%) and other types of methods (63%) (see Appendix for further details).

In general, there is an increasing number of evaluations over time, and in particular, the number of peer-reviewed articles (Fig. 2). We also observe a growing use of quantitative approaches corresponding in part to longer time period and larger number of data points allowing for this type of statistical approach. Overall trends regarding the relative proportion of successes, mixed outcomes, or failures are not particularly strong, but seems to possibly indicate a slight rise in the proportion of successes, no overall rate change for failures, and a



**Fig. 2.** Time trends of type of literature and success and failures.

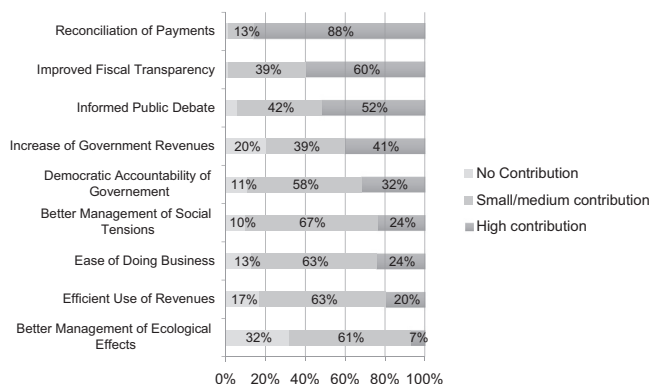
slight decline in mixed outcomes. This remains a short period of time and limited number of studies to assess robust trends.

#### 4. Institutional goals

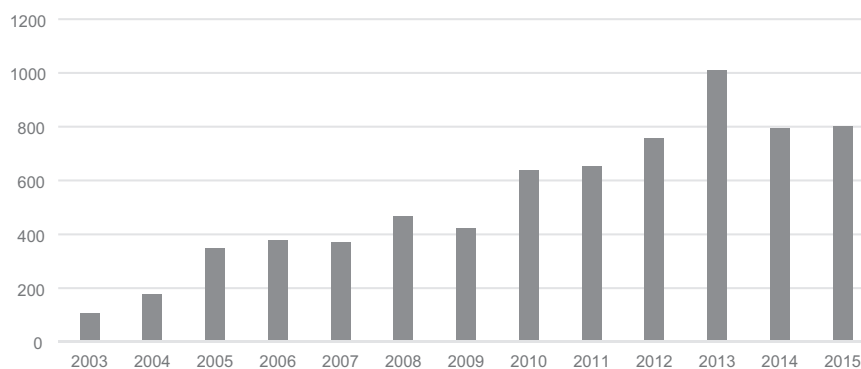
The institutional goals refer to EITI's objectives to establish itself as a key transparency institution and initiative, spreading transparency as a global norm, and promoting multi-stakeholder organizational structure as the optimal form for these types of initiatives. In its extensive assessment of the EITI, Scanteam (2011, p. 4) argues that “[o]ne of [EITI’s] most impressive achievements is the virtually universal acceptance and support EITI has mobilized from the international community, private sector, and civil society.” This view is widely shared by other assessment studies, with an overall success rate of 75% for institutional goals among the studies evaluating the EITI in terms of meeting at least some institutional success. As discussed below, many indicators indeed lend credit to the idea of institutional success, but a few assessments do point at mixed outcomes. An opinion survey conducted in early 2016 of 108 individuals closely related to the EITI confirmed a positive view of the initiative and its achievements (see Fig. 3.), with even more positive opinion level about the future likely impacts of the EITI (Neumann et al., 2016).

##### 4.1. Branding the EITI at global and national levels (Goal I-1)

A first criterion of institutional success can be measured through the ‘branding’ of the EITI and indicators of its reach, notably within policy circles. There has been no study assessing the recognition of the EITI ‘brand’ at the international level, but several indicators suggest that it has achieved a relatively high level of recognition. The EITI



**Fig. 3.** Perceptions on EITI's contributions and achievements. Source: Online opinion survey conducted by Neumann et al. (2016) among 108 individuals closely related to the EITI.



**Fig. 4.** Worldwide number of English language media reports on EITI. Note: Source for data is Factiva database, accessed on 7 March 2016. Search words: “EITI AND transparency”. The search includes translations of some foreign media into English.

returns about 10 million hits on Google, about twenty times more than that Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and thirty times more than the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) against ‘conflict diamonds’ created at about the same time as the EITI. The EITI has been endorsed once by the UN General Assembly, at least three times by the G20, and ten times by the G7/G8. Press media reporting reached a total of 6,914 articles between 2003 and 2015, with a peak in 2013 (see Fig. 4).<sup>8</sup>

The success of EITI branding at the national level is more difficult to assess, but many efforts have been devoted by the national EITIs to getting the EITI better known and having revenue information more frequently accessed by local populations. Among the few assessments of public awareness, a survey conducted in 2008 in Liberia – the year following its candidacy status being accepted by the EITI International Secretariat – found 41.5% of respondents claiming to have heard or read about LEITI, with 28.3% having a minimum knowledge of the initiative (Randall and Blamo, 2011). In contrast, a 2014 survey in the extractive regions of Albania – which became compliant in 2013 – found “minimum level of awareness” of the EITI among 500 respondents (Albania EITI, 2014).

The relative branding success of the EITI is not without criticisms. A first one is that institutional success has been celebrated for its own sake. The first evaluation requested by the EITI, for example, stated that “EITI is seen as a success *simply* by the fact that it exists, with its infrastructure, processes, policies and procedures having now been established” (Rainbow Insight, 2009, p. 4, emphasis added). A second, and related criticism, is that the EITI may have focused too much efforts on the wrong issue. Building on a review of the resource curse literature, and finding that greater transparency (as measured through ‘press freedom’) does not improve resource-dependent economic growth, Kolstad and Wiig (2009) argue that “it is not immediately apparent that transparency reform should receive priority. At the very least, the effectiveness of improving transparency should be more systematically evaluated vis-à-vis other policy options” (p. 529). Going further, Sovacool et al. (2016) suggest that “EITI has not served the discussion well through its simplistic focus on revenues and transparency” (p. 11).

#### 4.2. Diffuse transparency norm through and outside the EITI (Goal I-2)

As David-Barrett and Okamura (2016) argue, “EITI serves as a reputational intermediary, whereby reformers can signal good intentions and international actors can reward achievement. International and domestic actors thus utilize EITI to diffuse the norm of resource transparency” (p. 227). More broadly, the EITI has made normative

<sup>8</sup> The 2013 peak relates in part to the 2013 EITI Global Conference in Sydney and the US and UK joining the EITI as implementing countries.

contributions to the advancement of the transparency agenda through its definition of disclosure standards and its prominence in public debates, policy and press reports, as well as industry narratives. In turn, as Haufler (2010) observed, the institutional success of the EITI was “significantly helped by the existence of intersecting transnational networks with complementary global norms... and the broader corporate accountability movement within which [its leaders and supporters] were embedded” (p. 70).

Although the EITI contributed to, and benefited from the consolidation of a broad policy community around the diffusion of transparency norms in governance, some critics point at the deflecting effect that the EITI, as a voluntary initiative, may have had on mandatory ones. Although such mandatory approaches have emerged, such as the EU Transparency and Accounting Directives, or are supposed to, as in the case of 1504 Dodd Frank still awaiting SEC regulation by the early 2016, the EITI may have delayed these processes, notably by focalizing the attention of the policy community on this voluntary initiative and ‘softening’ the position of civil society organizations. Further, it has provided an argument to those opposing mandatory disclosure that the issue was already being addressed and that a ‘constructive’, voluntary and tripartite approach was best suited to the issues at stake (interviews with oil executives by one of the authors, EITI Global Conference, Paris, 2011).

#### 4.3. Increase EITI support and participation by governments (Goal I-3)

By early 2016, the number of implementing countries – with either candidate or compliant status – had grown to 51, from 15 a decade earlier (see Fig. 5.). The adoption of the EITI has spread from mostly low-income and aid-dependent African countries to middle-income countries across all four major continents, including several high-income countries such as Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Reaching compliance proved to be a major challenge up until 2009, the process then rapidly improved over the next five years, though the participation growth rate slowed down since 2011.

Despite such positive trend in participation, several evaluations consider the EITI either a failure or a mixed outcome in terms of country participation by pointing at the lack of adoption by many of the most resource-rich (and corrupt) countries.<sup>9</sup> They suggest that institutional adoption is mostly driven by incentives or external pressures – such as foreign aid dependence or the need for diplomatic and security support; factors that would have little influence over some of the oil-

<sup>9</sup> A snapshot based on data for 2013 confirms that among countries with resource dependence over 20% of GDP, 60% of those with per capita resource rents below \$1000 were EITI members, in contrast to only 33% among those above this resource abundance threshold. Authors’ calculation, based on the World Bank Indicators and EITI country profiles. For evidence of the negative effects of point resource export revenues on transparency, see Williams (2011).

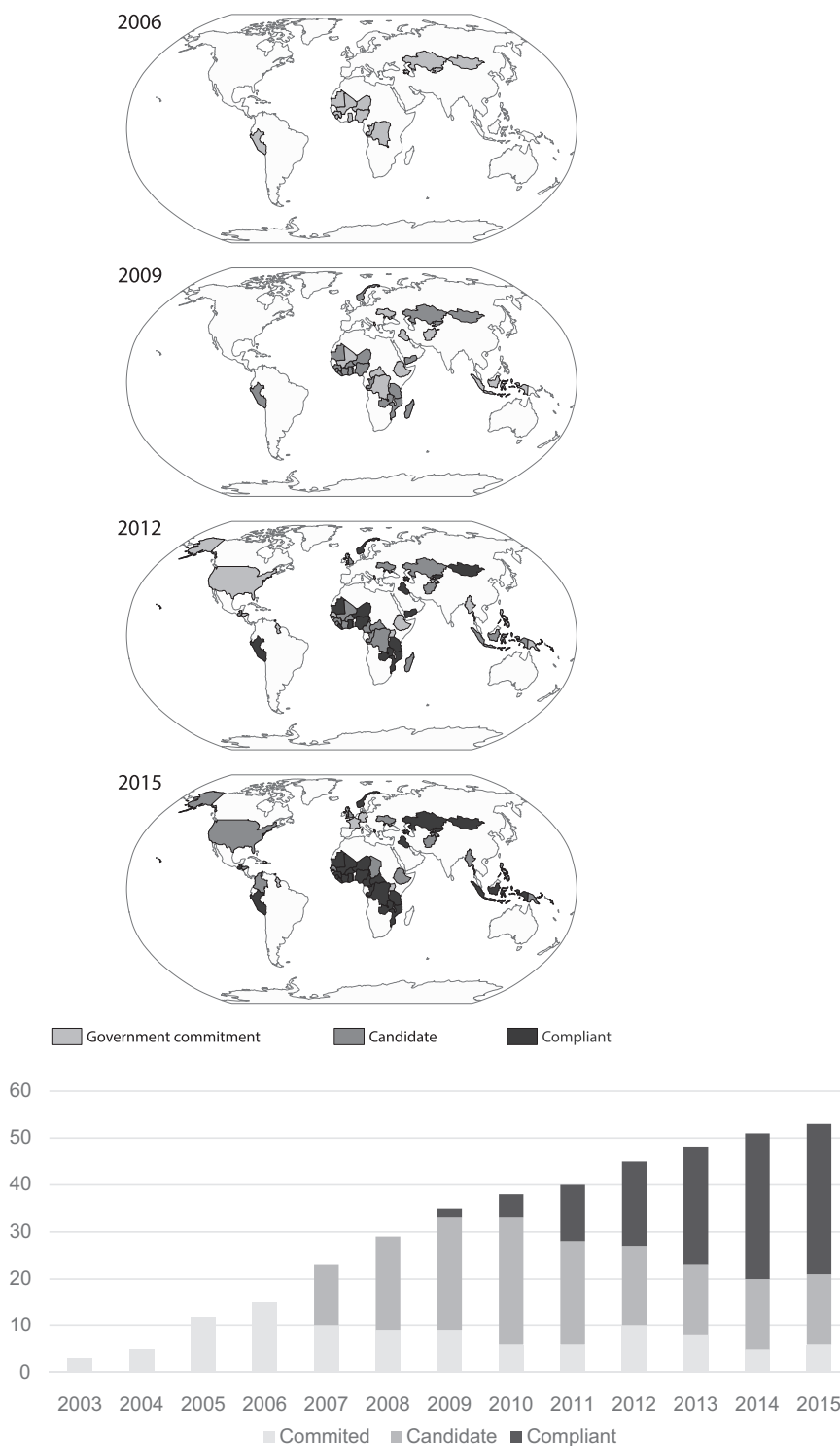


Fig. 5. (a, b) The map shows the distribution of EITI candidate and compliant countries in 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2015, and the figure the number and status of EITI countries between 2003 and 2015. Source: EITI country profiles.

rich countries most ‘in need’ of the EITI (Ölcer, 2009; Shaxson, 2009). These evaluations point to the case of the Angolan government, whose lack of transparency originally motivated Global Witness to campaign for an international transparency instrument in 1998, but which still had not adopted the EITI by early 2016 - though its domestic financial institutions did increase public reporting of some resource-based revenue flows. Similarly, none of the petro-states in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have adopted the EITI, with the exception of Iraq (compliant status) and Yemen (suspended status),

both of which had closer and more dependent relations towards western governments, including in terms of security concerns. Testing for these relations, David-Barrett and Okamura (2016) statistically confirm that resource-rich and highly corrupt countries demonstrate less interest in implementing the EITI. In contrast, aid-dependent countries are among the most interested to join, as the reputational gains obtained through implementing the EITI appears to translate into high levels of foreign aid.

Some evaluations also point at the ability of many governments to

delay the actual implementation of the EITI, noting that the average time between commitment and candidacy was 2.8 years, and 4.3 years between candidacy and compliance. Despite having officially expressed its intention to adopt the EITI in 2008, the Government of Uganda still had not yet become a candidate country by early 2016. Such delays have notably been attributed to a lack of political will to actually adopt the standards, disinterest of government agencies in charge of implementing them, delays on the part of companies to provide information, and unconstitutional government changes resulting in the suspension of country (Andrews, 2016; Sturesson and Zobel, 2015).

Overall, the goal of increasing EITI country participation has largely been met given the current number of candidate or compliant countries. Yet many evaluations have qualified this success, first with the argument that many governments seem to have participated in the EITI with the objective of improving their international reputational rather than genuinely achieve reforms, and second, and more importantly, with the observation that many of the countries arguably most in need of greater transparency and accountability over extractive sector revenues have not been participating in the EITI.

In terms of support, the EITI has been relatively successful. Initially supported mostly by the British and Norwegian governments, the EITI has seen its budget, at the international level, growing from US\$0.8 million in 2007 to a plateau of about US\$5 million per year in 2011–14.<sup>10</sup> The EITI also receives off-budget funding for the EITI Global Conference held every three years with a budget of about US\$1.2 million, as well as in-kind support for national-level activities. This funding model, however, is coming under increased strains as the reach and breadth of the initiative have grown, signs of donor fatigue become more evident, commodity prices have sharply declined, and there is still no self-financing scheme in place by implementing countries for the core EITI international activities budget. Furthermore, the total budget of the national organizations, as well as the expenditures of the various organizations engaged with the EITI are not known, making it difficult to assess its cost-effectiveness.

#### 4.4. Institutionalization of multi-stakeholder governance mechanism (Goal I-4)

An indirect institutional contribution of the EITI has been to refine multi-stakeholder governance that came to prominence in the 1990s as a result of the ‘good governance’ agenda and the formal opening of international governance instruments to industry and civil society organizations (Hemmati, 2002). In this respect, the EITI has frequently been touted as a novel and effective model of ‘tripartite’ governance between governments, companies, and CSOs, but also one that combines voluntary participation, mandatory implementation, and independent validation approaches (Scanteam, 2011; Short, 2014; Wilson and Van Alestine, 2014). Yet, as Rich and Moberg (2015) – the deputy-director and head of the EITI International Secretariat – repeatedly caution in their own evaluation of the institutional value of this model: this is a slow and incremental mode of governance resting on a consensus-based approach that often requires a focus on the smallest common denominator.

## 5. Operational goals

Operational goals consist of intermediate measures deemed necessary for the EITI to attain broader developmental goals. Operational goals involve concrete steps both within the EITI itself (establishing EITI standards) and within the broad diversity of political and bureaucratic contexts specific to countries implementing the initiative. Yet,

<sup>10</sup> The 2011–14 budgets were covered for about 62% by supporting governments and development agencies, 25% by oil and gas companies, 12% by mining companies, and 1% by investors and non-extractive companies, see <https://eiti.org/document/accounts>.

operational goals still relate to aspects that the EITI can directly produce or influence, in contrast to developmental goals which often involve many dimensions outside the institutional or operational realm of the EITI. As Table 1 indicates, the assessments reviewed generally point to more failures with respect to EITI operational goals compared to institutional goals.

#### 5.1. Establish clear and credible EITI standards (Goal O-1)

The definition and implementation of transparency standards have been a major objective and operating mode for the EITI. First set in 2003 through the EITI Principles, the standards have regularly evolved, with greater clarity of definitions and processes, and a broadening of the requirements. The credibility of the standards has rested on third party verification, mostly third-party auditing via consultancies, and assessments by the elected EITI Board at key junctures – such as for changes of compliance status, suspension, or delisting. No external evaluation study has yet specifically examined the issue of standards clarity and credibility. However, the scope of the requirements was repeatedly criticized in the EITI’s early years for the data requirements being not detailed enough and for the EITI’s narrow focus on revenues flowing from companies to government (Gillies and Heuty, 2011; Kolstad and Wiig, 2009; Ölcer 2009).

The EITI Standard has since evolved to cover several other aspects of the natural resource value chain (EITI, 2016). It now requires the implementing countries to disclose revenue flows disaggregated by company and government entity, and to be provided at sub-national level when revenues from companies go to sub-national government units. It includes requirements to make publicly available information about the exploration activities, licenses and contracts, beneficial owners,<sup>11</sup> rules that govern the management of the extractive sector, the fiscal regime the country has adapted for handling the natural resource revenues, production and export volumes and values (by commodity type and region), and how the revenues are spent. Finally, the standard requires the multi-stakeholder group “to take steps to act upon lessons learnt; to identify, investigate and address the causes of any discrepancies; and to consider the recommendations resulting from EITI reporting” and to follow-up the progress in addressing the recommendations.

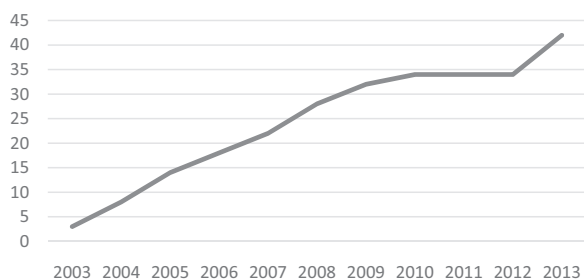
Although the revised 2016 EITI Standards clearly attempt to address issues the EITI has been criticized for, the broader scope and more stringent validation process raise concerns of rising implementation costs and greater risk of losing compliant status, which could raise frustrations among participating countries (Bickham, 2015; interview with EITI International Secretariat Official, Lima (2016)).

#### 5.2. National implementation of EITI standard (Goal O-2)

The disclosure of revenues in the annual EITI reports has so far been at the core of the EITI activity, with publication often being valued for its own sake rather than for what reports contained during early phases of EITI candidacy as a willingness for public disclosure was considered a priority (Rich and Moberg, 2015). As the EITI 2014 progress report claims, “A reason to why the EITI has been so successful in many countries is that it has had this clear focus that implementation leads to real and measurable results: in each country and each year, government agencies and companies have disclosed payment data, which are then reconciled and published.” (EITI, 2014b, p. 8). The success of disclosure, for its own, is illustrated by the rising number of reports published each year between 2003 and 2010 (Fig. 6).

<sup>11</sup> Beneficial ownership requirement is to be implemented in the implementing countries by 2020. It requires that a public register with the identities (name, nationality, country of residence) of the persons who ultimately own the benefiting companies is set up. For publicly listed companies, the register needs to disclose the name of the stock exchange (EITI, 2016, p. 20).





**Fig. 6.** Number of countries that have disclosed data per year, 2003–2013. Note: The figure shows how many countries have disclosed data in an EITI annual report for the specific year. In some cases, one report can cover more than one year. In those cases, each of the years are included in the figure. Source: EITI's online Summary data from EITI Reports as of October 2016 (<https://eiti.org/summary-data>).

Several countries have not yet submitted their annual report for the years 2011–2013 (Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, Mali, Central Africa Republic, Gabon, Madagascar, and Yemen) which explains the downward turn in the figure.<sup>12</sup>

Overall, EITI seems to have increased timely reporting on revenues, and thus has been successful in achieving this goal and many of the studies argue that the EITI has improved or at least partly improved transparency through the reporting (Neumann et al., 2016; Ölcer, 2009; Rich and Warner, 2012; Sovacool and Andrews, 2015). For example, Nigeria which was one of the EITI pilot countries has been seen as one of EITI's success stories: “[NEITI's] periodic audits have opened up, widely, a hitherto opaque industry to public scrutiny” (EITI, 2010, p. 7). However, as in the case of Nigeria, increased information has not necessarily led to improved accountability; An independent study by Shaxson (2009) found that although the NEITI reports produced for the period 1999–2004 were quite successful and showed great prospect, the EITI process stalled in Nigeria after 2004. Both Shaxson (2009) and Keblusek (2010) conclude that NEITI did not drive the reforms, but were piggybacking on already happening reforms and that President Obasanjo used the EITI to increase good will from the West towards his government.

### 5.3. Public participation (Goal O-3)

Only few of the reviewed studies (2 out of 14) found that the EITI has been successful in promoting public debate about and action for better natural resource governance. As Gillies and Heuty (2011) argue, the ‘public’ should not only be educated about the revenues and state of natural resource management in their country, but also empowered to be able to use the information so that they can hold governments and companies accountable.

Although there are a few cases of the general public contributing to transparency and accountability in EITI implementing countries, mostly through the work of civil society organizations, there is little general evidence of EITI being able to promote better governance through public participation (Aaronsen and Brinkerhoff, 2011; Epremian et al., 2016; Keblusek, 2010; Lujala and Epremian, 2016; Neumann et al., 2016; Ofori and Lujala, 2015; Scanteam, 2011; Smith et al., 2012; Søreide and Truex, 2013; Sovacool and Andrews, 2015; Sovacool et al., 2016; Wilson and Van Alestine, 2014). The evaluations name several reasons for this, with the key reasoning being that the civil society, or the ‘public’, is a diverse entity with diverse, and often conflicting, objectives and expectations with regard to natural resource governance, and not least, with regard to how resource revenues should be distributed and invested. A further reason is that the EITI has to a large extent been a national level

initiative, with possibly little relevance for the general public's needs when it comes to information and changes to natural resource governance that are likely to focus on local level management rather than national level natural resource governance. Another frequently mentioned reason is about what the general public can do or engage in, when faced by high levels of repression, or coercive forms of influence, exerted by the central and local government, and in some cases, by traditional leaders.

### 5.4. Civil society's participation in multi-stakeholder groups (Goal O-4)

While the EITI seems not to have succeeded in engaging the general public, it has had better success in engaging civil society through the MSGs. In order to comply with the EITI Standard, the government is dependent on the collaboration of both the extractive companies and the civil society, as the establishment of a MSG is a requirement to become a candidate country. In particular, MSG is to give the civil society a seat at the table and a voice to fully participate in a genuine partnership with the other stakeholders. Sometimes governments may assume that the issues at hand are too complex for the civil society and that it is thus ‘safe’ for the government to sign on to the EITI and include the civil society in the MSG (Rich and Moberg, 2015). However, in many cases the civil society MSG members mature with the task and start to demand clearer reporting, improving the overall standard of EITI implementation in the country.

Several evaluations have looked at the MSGs, and especially the civil society's role in it. In some countries there seems to have been a genuine progress in including the civil society and ensuring its ‘voice’ in the process. The 2011 Scanteam report, for example, concluded that the multi-stakeholder groups had become legitimate arenas for dialogue in Nigeria, Gabon, and Mongolia. In other countries, like in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and Ghana, the civil society's participation in MSG has been seriously curtailed (Andrews, 2016; Furstenberg, 2015; Sovacool et al., 2016).

In some cases, the civil society can find it difficult to speak with ‘one voice’ as it is difficult for one or a few persons to represent the views and opinions in such a wide spectrum of civil society organizations, and in some cases the individuals within the civil society can be motivated by personal gain for getting involved in the process (Aaronsen and Brinkerhoff, 2011; Smith et al., 2012; Søreide and Truex, 2013; Sovacool et al., 2016). This can undermine other relevant voices in the civil society and can lead to manipulation by and of stakeholders, which is not helping to improve accountability but rather increase the likelihood of mismanagement. In fact, incompatibilities within group can prevent to effectively address the real issues (Rich and Moberg, 2015; Søreide and Truex, 2013). Sovacool et al. (2016) go as far as to argue that the inclusion of civil society in the process has been the EITI's biggest setback, not because it is a bad strategy, but because the partnerships between the civil society stakeholders are not as genuine as it should be.

It is clear that the EITI has been successful in establishing the MSGs in the implementing countries and that MSGs often provide one of the very first opportunities for many civil society organizations to directly discuss natural resource governance with the government and extractive industry. However, to what degree MSGs are filling the governance gap is questioned as the civil society in many cases represent MSG's weakest part, and have very little power to influence the other stakeholders (Ölcer, 2009).

## 6. Developmental goals

Developmental goals are, by nature, more long-term than the operational goals. They are also, at least partially, beyond EITI's direct reach. In Fig. 1 we group these goals in three main categories: increased revenues through (1) decreasing corruption; (2) increased

<sup>12</sup> Central Africa Republic and Yemen are currently suspended from the EITI.

FDI and aid flows to the country as well as the host country getting increasingly 'fairer' share of the revenues; and (3) the 'ultimate goals' comprising sustainable development economic transformation, improved governance, reduced poverty and improved living conditions.

### 6.1. Increase natural resource revenues through reduced corruption (Goal D-1)

Reducing corruption has arguably been the foundational goal of the EITI and the one with the highest public profile; even if the EITI has refrained from using the term corruption itself, notably in order to entice governments to join. In that respect, Ölcner (2009), Öge (2016a, 2016b), and Kasekende et al. (2016) conclude that even though the EITI has been successful in providing transparency by directing attention towards discrepancies in the revenues coming from the extractive industry, it has not contributed to a reduction of corruption. Papyrakis et al. (2016), in contrast, finds evidence EITI membership positively mediates the level of corruption in resource rich countries, while Etter (2014) reports that there has been a significant reduction in corruption in Peru after joining the EITI, but not in Mali; which he suggests relates from the relative absence of a "functioning civil society" in place prior to EITI implementation in Mali compared to Peru, and to the voluntary nature of the initiative, with the Peruvian government being more genuinely interested to carry out the initiative than Mali. Overall, there is some evidence that the EITI may have had a positive impact on reducing corruption in some countries, but most studies (8 out of 13) find no support for this. The anti-corruption impact of the EITI thus seem to be context-dependent, and involve dimensions that the EITI *in itself* cannot address. Measuring anti-corruption effects within more directly EITI-related processes may help to draw more specific conclusions with regard to the impact of the EITI in this domain (see Le Billon (2011)).

### 6.2. Improve investment climate, increase aid flows, and promote fairer government share of revenues (Goal D-2)

EITI implementation is thought to send out a signal to the investors that these countries are safer investment climates, thus, being an EITI country should increase the inflow of FDI. Implementation of the EITI is also a requirement for receiving funding support from some international financial institutions, thus enticing governments and extractive companies to join the initiative. All studies that have looked at this, find support for it (Neumann et al., 2016; Scanteam, 2011; Schmaljohann, 2013; Sovacool et al., 2016). Further, David-Barrett and Okamura (2016) show that countries get more aid the longer they have been part of the EITI, and argue that EITI membership serves as an aid-conditionality for aid donors, and thus could motive countries to join for the sake of accessing more international aid. If most studies find a positive association between increased FDI and aid flows, not study has yet been conducted to determine whether the EITI increases the amount of natural resource revenues accruing to the government. While increased FDI would suggest that this is probably the case, the public revenue effects of FDI vary according to the fiscal policies in place; with disclosure through EITI potentially helping to demonstrate that corruption may not be the main issue but rather unfavorable contractual terms drastically reducing host government revenues, and thereby supporting the need for reforms in mineral taxation (Hilson and Maconachie, 2009).

### 6.3. Governance, sustainable development, and improved living conditions (Goal D-3)

Several studies have tested whether the EITI membership has had a positive effect on governance indicators after joining the EITI, but none of them have found any improvement (Corrigan, 2014; Phillips and

Whiting, 2016; Sovacool and Andrews, 2015; Sovacool et al., 2016).<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, Sovacool and Andrews (2015) find that Liberia and Azerbaijan seemed to be doing slightly better in the period prior to achieving EITI compliance than afterwards. Sovacool and Andrews point at the fact that in the period before 2009 the countries' international reputation was at stake if they were not able to live up to the expectations of EITI compliance. Once compliance status was achieved in 2009 this incentive decreased, as the chance of delisting was low since the EITI was also very eager to increase institutional success through increasing compliant country numbers, and positive developments in both countries halted. Sovacool et al. (2016) confirms a lack of governance improvement across a range of indicators through a large-N analysis.

While the EITI does not make strong claims about contributing to societal development such as poverty reduction and improved living standards (Scanteam, 2011), it is clear from the EITI Principles and the EITI Articles of Association that this is a long-term goal. However, very few studies test societal measures, in fact the only one we could find was the Scanteam report, which tests indicators related to health and education and find no difference between candidate countries, compliant countries, and non-EITI countries (p. 33).

A few studies found that the EITI membership may moderate the negative effect of resource abundance on GDP per capita (Corrigan, 2014; Sovacool et al., 2016), a positive indication, even if the authors recognize that it might be too early to make any firm conclusion on the EITI performance based on these analyses. Further, it is difficult to prove that it is the EITI process that is the causal factor in improving the GDP and not another, ongoing process, which the EITI becomes a part or sign of, as in the example of Nigeria (Keblusek, 2010; Shaxson, 2009).

## 7. Conclusion: what is success for the EITI?

In this article we have assessed what the literature has so far concluded on the performance of the EITI. We categorized the EITI goals into three categories: institutional, operational and developmental objectives. The meta-study material included 45 studies using quantitative, qualitative or conceptual research methods, and including peer-reviewed, non-peer-reviewed independent studies as well as EITI-commissioned evaluations. We did not find obvious evaluation biases within any type of assessment or method, with the exception of a possible positive bias among EITI-commissioned evaluations.

Overall, we find that studies assess the EITI to have succeeded in reaching its institutional goals and some of its operational goals. The early goal of increasing revenue transparency through publicly available annual reports has been reached, while the key goal of engaging the public has been evaluated as only partially successful, with a relative success in terms of civil society groups participation in the MSG but a relative failure in terms of empowering the public to hold accountable the governments and companies.

The conclusions drawn in the different evaluations reviewed for this article vary to a great extent when it comes to scientific rigor, and not least, what they expect 'success' to be for the EITI. Thus, a question we need to ask is whether the current evaluations are using the right criteria to measure the success of the EITI. Assessing the broad developmental goals of the EITI remains a worthy enterprise, especially in light of the EITI's own Principles. Yet, given the broad scope of expectations associated with EITI developmental goals, and the strong of likelihood of seeing these goals being affected by variables indepen-

<sup>13</sup> Using data from the World Bank 'Doing Business project', Neumann et al. (2016) observe that companies operating within EITI member countries, whether candidate or compliant, tend to spend more "time to prepare and pay taxes", than in other jurisdictions. This likely relates to EITI reporting requirements, but its effects on the level of revenue received by the government, notably through a reduction of tax avoidance by companies, is not yet determined.

dent from the EITI, developmental goals evaluations are also the ones most likely to deem the EITI as a failure. Seen from an EITI perspective, the evaluations on the developmental goals may say little about the achievements of the EITI that it can have through its *own* influence. Along the same lines, the then EITI Board Chair Clare Short stated at a World Bank workshop in November 2015 that “it is more helpful that evaluations look into what the EITI actually achieve rather than large overarching developmental goals”.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond what may pass for more realistic assessments, Rich and Moberg (2015) also argue that focusing on the smaller achievements, or what they call ‘small wins’, can better inform analyses of collective forms of governance, which rarely follow a linear and predetermined process - as a grand theory of change would suggest. Evaluations examining what is going on within the MSGs, for example, could focus on such ‘small wins’ and the processes involved in achieving them, with precise definitions of sub-goals for that particular operational goal. Evaluations of more detailed sub-goals might be a more constructive way of evaluating the EITI, and yield a more appropriate and accurate reflection of the successes and failures of the EITI. Yet, as long as the EITI is also claiming to have long term developmental effects, independent reports and academic studies will continue to evaluate performance on that criteria. In turn, assessing broader developmental goals will still require a clear, detailed theory of change that can be tested and potentially validated or falsified. As such, several studies have continued to express a need for a more detailed theory of change to better understand and improve the EITI process (Gillies and Heuty, 2011; Neumann et al., 2016; Scanteam, 2011; Sovacool and Andrews, 2015).

We therefore conclude, that any evaluation of the EITI needs to be clear about which type of objective it is measuring; whether the EITI can achieve the goal on its own or only with the help of other, simultaneous changes in governance and society; and that an evaluation should not deem EITI a success or failure based on evaluating one or two aspects of the EITI. Furthermore, future evaluations should thrive for multi-scalar approaches, most notably by comparing and consolidating the wealth of evidence collected at the level of individual countries within the three categories of goals we have identified, and building a testable theory of change both for developmental goals and for ‘small wins’ to more systematically evaluate what works and what does not in *specific* contexts. Such further research will help to identify the specific mechanisms through which successes have been attained and what factors have contributed to failures. In this way, more robust policy recommendations can be formulated to address some of the remaining shortcomings of the EITI.

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## Appendix. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the

online version at doi:10.1016/j.resourpol.2016.12.004.

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