



# From Data to Development: Exploring the Emerging Impacts of Open Data in Developing Countries

*3rd Interim Report*

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**Country/Region:** Latin America (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay); Africa (Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, South Africa), Asia (India, Philippines, Nepal, Indonesia)

## Synthesis:

The Exploring the Emerging Impacts of Open Data in Developing Countries (ODDC) project has built a global research network to generate evidence on the efficacy of open data, and to inform government, donor and civil society strategies in pursuing or responding to open data agendas in developing countries. The project has been divided into two phases, the first funding 17 independent case studies, and the second working on synthesis of findings and turning research into action. We are currently completing the first phase, and moving into the second. All of the funded case studies are on track to produce final reports, and a number are already published with national dissemination events scheduled or already completed. An initial synthesis of policy messages arising from the cases has been published, and a research sharing event held, and work is ongoing to connect findings to the project research framework, and produce an overarching report.

There are clear impacts of the project on building local open data capacity, and a strong engagement from Phase I partners wishing to be involved in the design and development of Phase II activities. Phase II activities will commence from the end August onwards up until the end of the project.

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## The research problem:

The overall objective of the ODDC research project is to establish practical and actionable knowledge about effective strategies for employing open data as a means to achieve greater quality of openness in government, to support citizens' rights, and to promote more inclusive development in developing countries. Open data, it is argued, can support significant gains in transparency and accountability, innovation and economic growth, and enable more inclusive models of governance. This research is motivated by a recognition that a focus on access to open data has rapidly become a significant part of the policy landscape in governance discussions, yet little is understood about how open data can or will drive change in practice, nor about how open data interventions should be contextualised in light of different legal, political, economic and social contexts around the world.

The first half of 2014 has seen continued growth in donor and government focus on open data in developing countries, building on the trends noted in the previous report. New open data initiatives have been launched in Nigeria, the Philippines and Burkina Faso to name just a few. Many of these initiatives are supported by World Bank investments, either directly, or through the Open Data Institute and Open Knowledge Foundation co-ordinated Partnership for Open Data (POD). The 2014 UN E-Government Survey also recognised open data as an emerging core element of e-government, assessing all UN states for evidence of open data policies. Arguments for the benefits of open data have increasingly emphasised the economic returns that data can bring, with a recent Omidyar commissioned study for the G20 suggesting that half of the G20 countries 2% growth target could be met through open data<sup>1</sup>. In this environment, there is a continued and urgent need for evidence of how open data operates in practice, and for critical analysis of how different approaches to implementing open data initiatives affect the outcomes that greater openness can bring.

In light of the strong demand for an open data evidence base, the four main research goals of the project remain current:

1. To explore how open data improve governance, support citizens' rights, and promote more inclusive development in developing countries;
2. To support knowledge sharing, policy learning and evaluation based on, and feeding into, the developing research findings;
3. To develop and test common methods for assessing the context, and the strengths and weaknesses, of open data initiatives over time;
4. To identify how global standards, platforms and infrastructures for open data impact upon the

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<sup>1</sup> Gruen, N., Houghton, J., & Tooth, R. (2014). *Open for Business: How Open Data Can Help Achieve the G20 Growth Target*. Sydney, Australia.

use of open data in developing countries;

As noted in the previous report, outputs from the first phase contribute to these objectives by in particular:

- Understanding theories of change for open data impacts, and common barriers or points-of-failure preventing the move from input, to output, outcome and impacts of open data. This contributes to addressing research goal 1.
- Exploring different theoretical understandings of openness and open data in different countries - including the relationship of open data and Right to Information, and the cultural specificity of notions of openness. This feeds into address research goals 2 and 4.
- Understanding the flow of data from open data initiatives, to potential users, through a range of technical and social intermediaries. Additionally, ODDC case study partners are working towards a greater theorisation of the idea of intermediaries.
- Understanding how the wider context affects the potential of an open data initiative.

In addition, reflection on our process evaluation (Appendix 2) and discussions with supported cases has drawn our attention more clearly to the role that research has played as a general open data capacity building mechanism. In particular, a number of ODDC partners have established local research groups on open data, and are working with students to explore open data issues regularly, as well as getting involved in local and national open data implementations - bringing to this an independent critical understanding of open data, rather than being reliant on external experts. As a result, for the second part of the project we propose to add as an explicit goal:

- To support research-driven in-country capacity building around implementation and critical assessment of open data activities.

We are finalising designs for Phase II activities which will contribute to the cross-cutting objectives of:

- Understanding how global standards, platforms, infrastructure and 'eco-systems' of open data affect local contexts.
- Understanding the distribution of benefits from open data initiatives.

## Research findings:

The specific objectives set out in the grant agreement are:

- 1) To generate strong foundations of academic work on the emerging impacts of open data interventions, and the factors that affect those impacts;
- 2) To generate relevant policy and practice findings that can inform both local and global debates;

- 3) To build the capacity of researchers across the world to explore the emerging impacts of open data and related issues;

As of the end of July 2014 we have published a [policy-focussed 'emerging insights' report](#) summarising fifteen-key findings from across the case studies<sup>2</sup>. These are listed below:

- (1) There are many gaps to overcome before open data availability, can lead to widespread effective use and impact.
- (2) There is a frequent mismatch between open data supply and demand in developing countries.
- (3) Open data initiatives can create new spaces for civil society to pursue government accountability and effectiveness.
- (4) Working on open data projects can change how government creates, prepares and uses its own data.
- (5) Intermediaries are vital to both the supply and the use of open data.
- (6) Digital divides create data divides in both the supply and use of data.
- (7) Where information is already available and used, the shift to open data involves data evolution rather than data revolution.
- (8) Officials' fears about the integrity of data are a barrier to more machine-readable data being made available.
- (9) Very few datasets are clearly openly licensed, and there is low understanding of what open licenses entail.
- (10) Privacy issues are not on the radar of most developing country open data projects, although commercial confidentiality does arise as a reason preventing greater data transparency.
- (11) There is more to open data than policies and portals.
- (12) Open data advocacy should be aware of, and build upon, existing policy foundations in specific countries and sectors.

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<sup>2</sup> Available from <http://www.opendataresearch.org/content/2014/704/open-data-developing-countries-emerging-insights-phase-i>

(13) Open data is not just a central government issue: local government data, city data, and data from the judicial and legislative branches are all important.

(14) Flexibility is needed in the application of definitions of open data to allow locally relevant and effective open data debates and advocacy to emerge.

(15) There are many different models for an open data initiative: including top-down, bottom-up and sector-specific.

Work to synthesise these findings into the overall research framework is ongoing, although initial discussions have already suggested modifications to the framework to: (a) replace the idea of 'specific governance settings' with the idea of studying the context of 'sectors, localities or issues' and identifying existing resources for disclosure and open data, as well as needs, in these contexts; (b) placing these 'sectors, localities or issues' at the top of the model; and (c) reframing components on 'supply of open data' to focus on 'supply and openness of data', highlighting the important finding that data ecosystems in developing countries possess varying levels of openness in their different components, and so allowing openness to be considered as a spectrum, rather than a binary concept, is important.

## Project implementation and management:

Over the reporting period we have:

- Completed an independent evaluation of the research process, and started an independent evaluation of Phase I outcomes and impacts for partners;
- Worked with projects to finalise their case studies, with all projects due to submit final case study reports by the end of August, and most having already completed first or final drafts. A full list of reports to date is available at <http://www.opendataresearch.org/reports> and outputs from each project are detailed in Appendix 1.
- Supported the preparation of research posters on 15 of the 17 supported case studies
- Hosted a full network workshop in Berlin as a fringe event to the 2014 Open Knowledge Festival, including a public research sharing event, and two network-member organised sessions in the main Open Knowledge Festival programme (on Transparent Cities, and Ground Up Open Data Intermediaries);
- Gathered video footage and developed a range of communications plans to support dissemination of case study findings;
- Hosted a series of network Web Meetings, including one with the IDRC Library and Zenodo on open access research and research data archival;
- Co-hosted a meeting on [Common Assessment Methods for Open Data](#) with the GovLab at New York University, involving representatives from the UN, IDRC, ILDA, OECD and the Open Data Institute. This resulted in a draft 'Common Assessment Methods Framework' and has led to an

- ongoing working group being formed<sup>3</sup>;
- Started a process of updating the Open Data Research Network bibliography through a project in partnership with the Partnership for Open Data, recruiting a new research assistant based on Nairobi, Kenya to work on this;
- Commissioned field research for the 2014 Open Data Barometer report;
- Continued to refine Phase II proposals;

We remain within the overall project budget, with some anticipated Phase I underspend to be allocated towards Phase II activities due to case studies and mentors underspending their allocated budgets.

Based on feedback from partners we instituted a per-diem system for participation at the Berlin network meeting.

## Project outputs and dissemination:

In the last period the overall project published two reports

- [Open Data in Developing Countries - Emerging Insights from Phase I](#)
- [Towards common methods for assessing open data: workshop report & draft framework](#)

The project also held a well attended Research Sharing Event on 15th July 2014 in Berlin, which was also webcast. Over 50 open data policy makers, researchers and funders attended this event. Additional dissemination took place at the Open Knowledge Festival.

In addition, over half of the case studies have made reports available online (see Appendix 1) and research posters were created for 15 of the 17 cases.

An ongoing log of case study outputs [is located here \(Google Docs, access available on request\)](#).

Local dissemination events for cases have taken place in Kenya, Nigeria, India, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay and others are planned. A number of these were webcast and recorded. Dissemination videos have been created by a number of projects and are detailed in Appendix 1.

In addition, many network participants have presented at local conferences. Full details of results and dissemination are still being collated as part of our ongoing monitoring and our new evaluation and monitoring framework.

The project is building a strong network for policy influence through the website at [www.opendataresearch.org](http://www.opendataresearch.org) which also features stories from the research cases. We have over 620

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://webfoundation.org/2013/11/towards-a-common-assessment-method-for-open-data/> for more details

subscribers to the project mailing list (up from 515<sup>4</sup>), 680 members of the project LinkedIn group (up from 470), 1,827 twitter followers (up from 1,244), and 2,120 visitors a month to the project website (up from 1,100 monthly).

## Impact:

The impact of case study research outputs will be reviewed in the next report, once a longer time period has elapsed between the publication of project reports and their use. However, we do have strong anecdotal evidence of the impact of the Open Data Barometer report published in October 2013 through the project, which has been cited in a number of academic papers, and which is being used as a policy indicator in Canada, New Zealand and a number of other countries.

In this report we do note a number of substantial capacity building and knock on impacts from the project. These notes are based on a group discussion at the recent ODDC network meeting in Berlin:

- The project has helped participants engage with new disciplines and new ideas: “Coming from a hacker movement, it was ‘shocking’ to be in the reality and realise our responsibility and the relevance of trust in relationships. People want to be listened to and a lot depends on the trust and relationships.”
- The project has helped a number of network members leverage new funding, including one partner receiving a Making All Voices Count innovation grant, and another receiving BRL 500,000 from Google.org to further develop their project.
- At the University of Ilorin the project has led to the establishment of an Open Data Research Group with ongoing activities and Masters students exploring open data.
- In the Philippines, researchers from De La Salle University have been asked to work on open data in a range of new settings, including disaster preparedness. They have also been invited by the city council to be involved in drafting local e-government policies.
- A number of organisations have increased their internal data capabilities, including INESC who have become an Open Data Institute node as a result of the project.
- The research process has given a number of projects access to policy makers, including for DATA in Uruguay, who have launched a new project in partnership with the City Council of Montevideo building on contacts made through the research.
- The project has contributed to the formation of strong understandings of open data in emerging contexts, such as in Sierra Leone, where the case study partner reports that at the beginning of the project there was confusion between OD and access to information. But now, the understanding has changed, and as a direct result of ODDC mentor input, government officials have included an OD component in the new information commission.
- Many projects report now being recognised as national open data experts, and being invited to contribute to ongoing policy processes.

As a result of the recent network meeting, participants from Africa have also started to work on developing independent networks to build on their work through ODDC<sup>5</sup>.

## Recommendations:

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<sup>4</sup> Numbers compared to last reported period.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://openuct.uct.ac.za/blog/openafrica-call-consolidate-african-open-network>



At present we have no specific recommendations to IDRC for any alterations to the project management or project plan.

During a feedback session at our recent network meeting, a number of network participants noted that the flexibility of IDRC funding had been invaluable in allowing them to deepen their understanding of open data.

Feedback on the extent to which our current project state is in line with expectations, and continued opportunities to interact with other projects in the I&N portfolio would be valuable as we plan for the future.



**ODDC Research Network Members, Berlin, 14th July 2014**

## Appendix 1: List of Projects and Case Study Reports Available

*The following partners received research funding and support through the Open Data in Developing Countries project. Projects were selected through an open call for proposals issued in mid-2012. Below we detail each project, and link to available and forthcoming reports and outputs.*

### **An Investigation of the use of the Online National Budget of Nigeria**

University of Ilorin, Open Data Research Group. Ilorin, Nigeria.

A mixed-methods study of the supply and use of budget data in Nigeria, combining interviews and media monitoring of newspapers and social media to explore the source of budget stories.

**Links:** [Project details](#); [Case study report](#) (forthcoming); [Dissemination event \(7<sup>th</sup> April 2014, Abuja, Nigeria\)](#); [Research poster](#).

### **Investigating the impact of Kenya's open data initiative on marginalized communities: case study of urban slums and rural settlements**

Jesuit Hakimani Centre. Nairobi, Kenya.

The study, conducted in two urban slums in the Counties of Nairobi and Mombasa and a rural settlement in Isiolo County, employed quantitative and qualitative research techniques, including focus groups, questionnaire and interviews that were designed to assess awareness and use of the Kenya Open Data Initiative data, and to understand the ways in which citizens seek out, access, use, and place trust in, government information.

**Links:** [Project details](#); [Case study report](#); [Dissemination event \(30<sup>th</sup> April 2014, Nairobi, Kenya\)](#); [Research poster](#).

### **Open data in the judicial systems: evaluating emerging impact on policy design in Uruguay, Chile and Argentina**

Centro de Implementacion de Politicas Publicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento (CIPPEC). Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Using a comparative design, this study explores developments in open data production, collection and publication by the judicial branches of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

**Links:** [Project details](#); [Case study report](#); [Policy brief \(Spanish\)](#); [Video](#); [Dissemination event \(8<sup>th</sup> May 2014, Buenos Aires, Argentina\)](#); [Research poster](#).

### **The use of open data in the governance of South African higher education**

University of Cape Town, Open UCT. Cape Town, South Africa.

Drawing on an eco-systems perspective this study analyses the flow of higher education administrative data within South Africa, focusing in particular on a Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) project that provides higher education performance information as open data.

**Links:** [Project details](#); Case study report (forthcoming); [Conference papers](#); [Shared datasets](#).

### **Open data, public budget and its relations to people's rights in Brazil**

Instituto de Estudos Socioeconomicos – INESC. Brasilia, Brazil.

Combining a study of budget transparency websites across 27 state capitals, the federal government and the senate in Brazil, with qualitative interviews with open data intermediaries and users, this study explores how far budget data is available and how far it is being used to lead to outcomes with impacts on rights issues.

**Links:** [Project details](#); Case study report ([English](#) / [Portuguese](#));

### **Opening the cities: open government data in local governments of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay**

Fabrizio Scrolini, Silvana Fumega, Ricardo Matheus

Through independent studies using a shared framework looking at city open data initiatives in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Montevideo (Uruguay) and Buenos Aires (Argentina) these studies build towards a comparative assessment of how open data is supplied and used in urban areas in Latin America.

**Links:** [Project details](#); Case reports: [Montevideo](#); [Buenos Aires](#); [Sao Paulo](#) (forthcoming); [Rio de Janeiro](#) (forthcoming); [Research poster](#).

### **Open government data for regulation of energy resource industries in India**

The Energy and Resources Institute. Delhi, India.

This project has examined the availability, accessibility and use of open data in the extractive energy industries sector in India. It looked at the impact of existing instruments and initiatives relating to coal, petroleum and natural gas, and explored opportunities to enhance the openness of government data for the extractive resource sector.

**Links:** [Project details](#); [Case study report](#); [Research poster](#); [Policy Brief](#); [Dissemination event report](#) (8<sup>th</sup> July 2014, Delhi, India)

### **Exploring the use and impacts of open budget and aid data in Nepal**

Freedom Forum. Kathmandu, Nepal.

Through two parallel studies this project looks at demand for, and use of, budget and aid data in Nepal.

**Links:** [Project details](#); [Research poster](#) (initial findings); Case reports in progress

### **Understanding the impacts of Kenya open data applications and services**

iHub Research. Nairobi, Kenya.

This study combined data from web analytics, surveys, interviews and usability testing to build up a picture of the role that intermediary application play in making government data from the Kenya Open Data Initiative accessible and useful. It explores issue of application sustainability.

**Links:** [Project details](#); [Research brief](#); Case study report (forthcoming); [Dissemination event \(30<sup>th</sup> April 2014, Nairobi, Kenya\)](#);

### **Opening the gates: will open data initiatives make local governments in the Philippines more transparent?**

Step Up Consulting. Bohol, Philippines.

Using a case study approach in three provinces in the Philippines, this project has explored how the sharing of governance information online has impacted on local government systems, and how the information and data has been accessed and used by civil society representatives and intermediary groups.

**Links:** [Project details](#); [Briefings](#) (x5); [Case study report](#) (forthcoming); [Research poster](#).

### **Exploring the impacts of online budget information at the sub-national level in Brazil**

Research Group on Public Policies for Information Access (GPoPAI), University of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Using action-research, survey and interview methods, this project has analyzed the Cuidando do Meu Bairro initiative (Caring for my neighborhood), an online tool visualising budget and spend data for the city of São Paulo on an interactive map. The project has asked whether the Cuidando do Meu Bairro platform allows the public to better understand municipal budgets, how budget information is used by the population, and how public managers respond to citizen use of the data.

**Links:** [Project details](#); [Poster presentation](#); Case study report (forthcoming); [Research poster](#).

### **Opening government data by mediation: exploring the roles, practices and strategies of data intermediary organisations in India**

HasGeek Media. Bangalore, India.

This study has explored the existence or non-existence of open data intermediary organisations in India,

surveying and interviewing NGOs to understand current and possible data access practices.

Links: [Project details](#); [Conference paper](#); [Online report](#) (in progress); Case study report (forthcoming); [Research poster](#).

### **The quality of civic data in India and the implications on the push for Open Data**

Transparent Chennai, Institute for Financial Management and Research, India.

The experiences of Transparent Chennai with data at the municipal level in India suggest that the quality of data is unreliable, especially data about the urban poor. This study has examining different kinds of municipal data through a case study methodology to documents the way data is collected by relevant government agencies and departments, how the data is used in planning and policymaking, the availability of data to the public, the accuracy of the data, and the implications of poor data quality on citizens.

Links: [Project details](#); [Poster presentation](#); Case study report (forthcoming)

### **How open data could contribute to poverty eradication in Kenya and Uganda through its impacts on resource allocation**

Development Initiatives, Kenya, and Development Research and Training, Uganda.

Using case studies from Uganda and Kenya this project has investigated the evolution of the open data movement in the two countries and has assessed the role that the movement plays in the equitable allocation of financial resources for the eradication of extreme and chronic poverty. The project explored the extent to which access to data translates to effective use (or not) particularly in instances where human and financial resources and capacities are limited.

Links: [Project details](#); [Case study report](#); [Policy brief](#); [Research poster](#).

### **Open government in the Philippines: exploring the role of open government data and the use of new technologies in the delivery of public services**

De La Salle University. Manilla, Philippines

This study explores the potentials of open data in two priority development areas in the Philippines: Maternal Health and Childcare (MHCC) and Micro-Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSME). Through a case study approach it looks at opportunities where open data techniques can be used to support practices in these areas, exploring the type of data sets, their current use, and how ICT can be used by local stakeholders to better benefit from data availability.

Links: [Project details](#); [Research poster](#); [Project website & YouTube Chanel](#); [Case study report](#); Journal papers (forthcoming); [Research poster](#).

### **Taking stock of the effectiveness and efficiency of open data initiatives in Sierra Leone.**

Society for Democratic Initiatives. Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone, as a transitional country, has instituted several transparency and accountability mechanisms to avoid the re-occurrence of the conflicts witnessed in past decades. This case has assessed the open data landscape of Sierra Leone and has examined how a country in transition can entrench transparency and accountability by instituting, at various levels of government, open government policies that allows for access to information and data and their proactive publication by public institutions. The project explored the challenges that have been faced in the implementation and uptake of existing open data policies, and how ways these challenges may be overcome in future.

**Links:** [Project details](#); Case study report (forthcoming).

### **Exploring the open data Initiative of the Ministry of Finance on national budget transparency in Indonesia**

Sinergantara

This study has focussed on the development of open data projects to make the Indonesian national budget available, looking in depth at process that occur during the initiation/creation and adoption of the initiative. Using a mixed-methods approach the study has explored factors including: the influence of governance structures on the initiatives development; the supply and demand of budget data; the social and technical intermediaries that support the flow of data to users; the sustainability of the initiative; and how open data eco-systems of standards, technologies and institutions affect the shape the initiative takes.

**Links:** [Project details](#); [Case study report](#) (forthcoming).

## Appendix 2: Process evaluation

Prepared by: Diogo Pereira da Silva and Elise Montano (Evaluators)

17 April 2014

### Executive summary

The purpose of the process evaluation is to determine the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the ODDC project against the project's original plans and design. The evaluation will focus on providing information about:

- how the organization and management of different elements of the project is progressing;
- identify and share good practices from the ODDC project and make recommendations on where and how improvements can be made.

For this evaluation input was gathered from an online survey, document analysis and in-depth interviews with sub-grantees, mentors and the Web Foundation (WF). The information gathered through this process has been analyzed according to the evaluation principles of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

#### *ODDC Network Structure*

There is an overwhelmingly positive experience in participating in the ODDC network. For many the added value lies in confidence building through sharing experiences, knowledge sharing and collaborative work. Partners also mention that the network brings a global perspective to their work and has given access to researchers, for whom Open Data is an emerging field in their country, to experienced players in this field. Face-to-face meetings such as the general kick-off meeting and regional meetings are highly valued in the network experience.

The building and strengthening of South-South connections are important parts of the network. However, partners are for the most part not engaging very deeply with other partners – especially not the ones based outside their geographical region. Cross network learning has happened in some cases due to the sharing of examples or methodologies, and there are a few cases of continued (local) collaboration.

#### *Mentor Experience*

The perception from the mentors and research partners is that the mentoring relationship significantly improved/benefited the outcome at the research partner level. It can be a rewarding experience when there is regular contact and when mentors feel that they can actually provide something of value to the work. Most often, mentors are providing guidance on not only content and research methodologies, but also in project management issues and networking. Mentors were most active and involved during the proposal writing phase, which is also when people were most happy with the mentor's role.

However, there is a general uncertainty about what role the mentor should play during the investigation stage and of how (much) to share with mentors.

#### *Web Foundation*

Research partners say the WF has met their expectations, or even exceeded it by providing research and logistical support and good leadership. Beyond the network coordination role, the WF has provided a mentor role to several organizations (e.g. proposing literature, suggestions to collaborate, strategic guidance on questions asked by researchers, etc.).

#### *Network Impacts*

As a whole, research partners expressed that they feel better prepared to participate in future international networks as a result of being involved with the ODDC network. There is a general agreement that the participation in this network has provided them confidence to talk about open data issues at a global or national stage. Nevertheless, many research partners believe that much of the network's impact has not been (fully) seen yet.

#### *Sustainability*

All participants interviewed would like to continue being part of the network, and specifically would be happy for the mentoring elements to continue. Most partners expect that it is more likely for them to be in contact with regional partners (not necessarily from same thematic group).

## **1. Introduction/Purpose of the Evaluation**

The purpose of the process evaluation is to determine the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the ODDC project against the project's original plans and design. The evaluation will focus on providing information about:

- how the organization and management of different elements of the project is progressing (e.g. case study research, mentoring, network activities);
- identify and share good practices from the project and make recommendations on where/how improvements can be made to the process to make the implementation of the project even more successful.

## **2. Sampling and Methodology**

For this evaluation input was gathered from:

- An on-line survey sent to all research partners and all mentors. The evaluators received 17 full survey responses to inform about network functioning. Surveys were submitted by 13 different research projects and 4 mentors.
- Document analysis which included review of project proposal document; peer and mentor support document; invoice/expense claim payment dates; reporting logs; full proposal guidance document and Interim report document.
- This report includes in-depth interviews from eight of the sub-grantees, three



mentors and Web Foundation coordinator. Individuals interviewed were:

Dr. Omenogo Mejabi of University of Ilorin;  
 Zacharia Chiliswa of Jesuit Hakimani Centre;  
 Sandra Elena of Centro de Implementacion de Politicas Publicas para la Equidad y el Crecimiento;  
 Michael Canares of Step Up Consulting;  
 Gisele Craveiro of Research Group on Public Policies for Information Access;  
 Sumandro Chattapadhyay of HasGeek Media;  
 Sherwin Ona of De La Salle University, Philippines;  
 Ilham Cendekia Srimarga of Sinergantara;  
 Mentor David Eaves;  
 Mentor Michael Gurstein;  
 Mentor Maurice McNaughton;  
 Tim Davies (Web Foundation)

The information gathered through this process has been analyzed according to the evaluation principles of:

- Relevance (to determine how the ODDC project is meeting the needs of research partners and mentors)
- Effectiveness (to determine how effectively the WF is managing the ODDC research network)
- Efficiency (to determine how efficiently the network is being managed)
- Impact (to determine what the impact of the network on research partners, mentors and the WF)
- Sustainability (to determine the major factors that influence the sustainability of the network)

The conclusions drawn from this analysis are bound by several limitations. While most of the researcher partners (14) were surveyed, and about half (8) interviewed, fewer mentors (4,3) were involved. While surveys were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, the interpretation of (subjective) qualitative interview data is of less use when trying to extrapolate these findings across the whole network.

### **3. Evaluation Findings and Analysis**

#### **Relevance, effectiveness and efficiency**

##### **ODDC Network Structure**

It is clear from the input given by research partners and mentors that there is an overwhelmingly positive experience in participating in the ODDC network. While most people feel they are engaging with the network, contact moments happen primarily through the web meetings and mailing list messages. Research partners also see the general kickoff meeting and regional meetings as part of the main or core 'network' building activities. One researcher expressed not being very active

in network because one of the main contact points - the mailing list - can be more like an announcement board than a place for discussion. There may be a need in the future to split communications across several online platforms – email for announcements, website and LinkedIn for public announcements and discussion, specialized social media or team communication (e.g. Yammer or Slack) for internal network discussions.

Many people have mentioned the importance of regional face-to-face meetings. One interviewee stated they are a “powerful tool for taking advantage of the network”. Another interviewee believes that face-to-face is important early in the process to get off on right foot. Research partners appreciated the chance to connect on a personal level and felt they were able to get a lot done in a short time frame during these meetings. One partner who was not present in the London meeting felt they had missed out, and as consequence lagged behind other projects (in terms of their experience and connectedness to the network). Although all highly value the face-to-face meetings, most also emphasize at the same time that they do recognize the limited resources the network has for traveling expenses.

#### *Added Value of Network*

The exact added value of the network structure is not clear to all participants. Interviewees recognize there is one, but they have different visions on what the added value is – suggesting that the network meets different needs for various partners. Most have the notion that the added value lies in sharing experiences, knowledge sharing and collaborative work. Partners also mention that the network brings a global perspective to their work; being part of an international research network allows them easily see the global context (not just local view) and creates a feeling that their research work contributes to a larger effort. The flexible make-up of the network provides connections between academic and action-research, and has given access to researchers for whom Open Data is an emerging field in their country to experienced players in this particular field.

At the same time, it builds the confidence of research partners to learn about other projects and compare their problems and situations to their own. Exchanges of experiences gives them confidence that they are going in right direction. Especially when the researchers need to analyze their impact and disseminate results, there is an opinion among the network members that more time should be spent on sharing and discussing these approaches to encourage more horizontal learning. For example, some researchers have expressed the need to think more about how to have an impact in the design of public policy in the future. These framing questions will be common to all projects, so there is a possibility for mutual learning.

#### *Working with Other Research Partners*

All research partners have expressed being satisfied or very satisfied with their interaction with other research partners in the network. The building and strengthening of South-South connections are mentioned by a few organizations as an important aspect of the network. However, partners are for the most part not engaging very deeply with other partners, and especially not the ones based outside their geographical region. The WF has been keen to push regional activities and has been successful in establishing some strong regional linkages. Philippines and Brazil can be used as examples of countries where close working connections have been made between national organizations through the ODDC project. That said, most feel this was a short period to build a network – more time is needed for the network to mature.

#### *Cross Network Learning and Knowledge Sharing*

There is a desire for more learning across and between projects in the network, but no clear strategy for how this would happen (ex. sharing common tools, sharing experiences, cross project resources, etc.). Several interviewees mentioned guidance on/examples of stakeholder maps and survey tools, as easy tools to be shared proactively among the network.

While researchers express a desire to learn more from the examples of others, the WF is the main driver of the learning/knowledge sharing process and it seems few researchers are spending the time to proactively learn from other projects. For example a shared drive was made available, but it is used to different levels by different research partners and many valuable resources are being missed. For projects that had a delayed start, they actually did benefit from some of the earlier projects having already developed questionnaires that they could work from. Projects borrowed ideas from materials that had been put in the shared folder. In this way, the knowledge sharing and learning didn't happen in a direct fashion, but happened organically.

#### **Mentor Experience**

There is an overwhelming agreement that the mentoring structure brings more value to the research. The perception from the mentors and research partners is that the mentoring relationship significantly improved/benefited the outcome at the research partner level.

#### *Partner perspective*

Most partners believe their mentor is knowledgeable about the topic of their project. A number of research partners were new to the Open Data topic and were expecting input mostly on content and research methodology from mentors. In many cases mentors have also provided guidance in project management issues and networking. People were most happy with mentor's role during the proposal writing phase, and this was also when mentors were most active and involved. However, many researchers are unclear about what support they should have gotten from their mentor after the full proposals were accepted. This has led a few organizations to feel

frustration, confusion and disengagement with the mentor process and in a couple of cases researchers were dissatisfied. However, overall most are still satisfied or very satisfied with the relationship with mentors and believe they provide timely input. In one case where partners knew their mentor from before, it made early communication and collaboration even easier. Satisfaction with the frequency of communication between researchers and mentors varies drastically and the actual frequency also varies.

#### *Mentor perspective*

Most mentors were happy to be involved in the reviewing and evaluation of the case study proposals. The process made them feel involved in the construction of the network although they did not have well defined expectations of their participation after the selection and proposal phase. Currently, mentors seem to feel disconnected from the overall network. This may be because some have chosen not to participate/follow mailing lists and webinars which are major contact points for the network. A couple of mentors have also expressed that they would appreciate more cross mentor sharing of information and experience.

The individual relationships that mentors have with researchers are very different experiences, and some mentors are having markedly different experiences across the (multiple) different partners they mentor. Mentoring can be a rewarding experience when there is regular contact and when mentors feel that they can actually provide something of value to the work. When contact is more irregular and the input that can be provided is less (because researchers are more experienced for example) it makes for a less rewarding experience (still good in one case, and in another the mentor feels expectations have not been met). Face-to-face is also an important relationship builder for the mentors – without it both mentors and mentees feel less satisfied with the experience.

#### *Role of the Mentor*

Most of the input provided by the mentors is on the content side and on research methodologies. The guidance given by mentors is usually 'on demand' and a few researchers found this to be not systematic enough (for example no systematic process and output schedule to show when input was needed/expected from mentors).

In some cases, mentors played a role in helping researchers to bridge their work with the ODDC project output requirements. One mentor interviewed noted that while some of the projects were concepts 'created from scratch' by organizations to meet the call for proposals from the WF, others were 'layered' on top of existing activities (that predate ODDC project). In the first case, mentors appear to have been needed for more hands-on, direct intervention in developing the projects. In the latter, the ODDC project was able to benefit from organizational synergies as the partners were more prepared and had a clearer focus from the start of the project.

In some cases mentors have also played the role of connectors/network enablers. In at least one instance mentors provided a key role in connecting two ODDC organizations, which allowed them to do joint research. Mentors have also facilitated/promoted connections of ODDC research partners with relevant external stakeholders and events. In one case a mentor provided key contacts in government that were instrumental for the research project.

#### *Expectations About the Mentor Relationship*

While researchers were happy with the role of the mentors, interviews showed that it is unclear if mentors are performing the role expected of them, because a number of researchers were not clear on what to expect to begin with. Early on the WF distributed a document (full proposal guidance) detailing what the mentor is/is not, but it is the opinion of this evaluator, that not all research partners were fully aware of its contents and their implications.

Some researchers were not sure if they should ask mentors to comment on their midterm report or research projects, to include them in internal processes, discussions and events, or to help them with project management issues. In some cases there has been perceived suspicion that the mentor was a monitor/evaluator to check their work, which is clearly explained in documentation from the WF. Researchers also have different expectations about how frequently mentors should be involved, and to what level they should be involved with the projects. One researcher would have liked more mentor support not just during the methodology phase, but also during analysis and writing. For some researchers, a more detailed understanding with mentors about planned out feedback moments (aligned with the project plans) may help to clarify expectations.

At the same time, mentors were generally unsure of what to expect of the mentoring experience. A couple of mentors were not fully clear on the nature of the relationship with their mentee over the project's lifespan, and what concrete support they were expected to offer after the research proposal phase. At times this was also because research partners were asking for support which went beyond the role originally outlined for mentors. For example, some mentors were surprised that their mentees wanted project management support. This needs to be clear in communication to researchers and mentors, but also during selection process, so that mentors have necessary project management skills (if necessary).

#### *What are the Structural Gaps?*

Confusion or differences in satisfaction with the quality and frequency of communication likely has to do with individual expectations about roles and responsibilities. A number of people are unsure of how much to share with mentors (some share everything, some choose to err on the side of sharing insufficiently). They feel they don't know "specifically" what they can ask for. Not all (researchers or mentors) are taking initiative to reach out to the other side – they often see it as the role of the other when it doesn't happen.

### *What are the Practical Gaps?*

At least one research partner finds that their mentors do not seem to have enough time in their agendas for the mentoring process. It has also been pointed out that when mentor and mentee are based in very different time zones it makes it hard to maintain contact because of scheduling issues.

### **Web Foundation**

#### *Is the WF Meeting the Needs of Research Partners?*

All research partners have indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the frequency and type interaction they have with the WF. Research partners say the WF has met their expectations, or even exceeded it by providing research and logistical support and good leadership. It has also helped provide a global perspective on issues as the WF sometimes know about events or organizations in a researcher's own region and provide that connection.

Some research partners also see Davies as playing the role of mentor and place significant value on this role (more than just a project manager/coordinator). However, running a network is time intensive to keep the network going, very few run autonomously as a self-driven network. The WF spends considerable time on the day to day on network administrative duties, and given limited resources, it reduces their ability to play the (valued) mentor/principal investigator role.

#### *Finance*

Most research partners are satisfied or feel neutral with timeliness of invoice and expense claim payment. Most of the difficulties that have been reported center around:

- bureaucracy at the receiving organization
- delays to initial grant installment
- currency fluctuations

From a sample of ten invoices sent to the evaluators, there was an average of 26,3 days between the date of invoice and the actual day of payment. Considering that most research partners are satisfied with this result it can be considered satisfactory (however it is unknown if the WF has internal service level agreements regarding payment times).

#### *Web Foundation's Role In Capacity building*

The WF has mostly focused on building knowledge on open data concepts, on research methodologies, research proposals and project development. The WF has provided a mentor role to several organizations (e.g. proposing literature, suggestions to collaborate, strategic guidance on questions asked by researchers, etc.). Some research partners feel that the WF could be more active in building project management experience although this is not currently within the scope of the WF's role in the ODDC network. Likewise, researchers have not reported capacity building on analytical skills (but it is unknown whether this is needed or if it is within the WF's scope). One

partner would have like to see more capacity building on practical skills like analysis and report writing, to improve the output standard.

## **Network Impacts**

### *Impact on Researchers*

As a whole, research partners expressed that they feel better prepared to participate in future international networks as a result of being involved with the ODDC network. There is a general agreement that the participation in this network has provided them confidence to talk about open data issues at a global or national stage: “we have now more confidence to talk to government and private sector about open data”. Some organizations have been invited to participate in other events (e.g. one Philippine research partner presenting findings in South Africa) as a result of participating in this network, a direct result of an open call which Davies circulated in the ODDC mailing list. Further example of the network's impact is one organization becoming a member of another network due to the fact they were a part of the ODDC project. ‘this project opened a lot of doors for us in the open data field and also helped identify partners and the main players in the field’.

Nevertheless, many research partners believe that much of the network's impact has not been (fully) seen yet. More than one research partner mentioned how they thought this was a short period to build a network – more time is needed for everyone to be able to use their research for some sort of sustained impact. It seems that depending on the nature of the organizations involved (eg. universities vs CSOs), they have a different plans for follow-up to the research. There is a perceived tendency from the CSOs to want to develop advocacy and communications plans to leverage their research and have an impact (on public policy etc.). The more pure research institutes seem to be happy to build on the first year with more research.

## **Sustainability**

All participants interviewed would like to continue being part of the network, and specifically would be happy for the mentoring elements to continue. Most think they will continue to engage with other research partners in one way or another once the project finished. Most partners expect that it is more likely for them to be in contact with regional partners (not necessarily from the same thematic group).

### *Collaborative Work*

Where research partners have had discussions with other researchers about future work, it has mostly been informal conversations about what sort of collaboration may be possible. There appear to be a few research projects that other researchers are more interested in collaborating with in the future than others. This tendency appears to happen mostly within the same regional group. Some partners have also started thinking about working as a cluster to identify funding, based on the relationships they have already established in their region (there is an idea to do this around themes,

but current suggestion is more focused on region). However it will be some time still until any results can be seen from this.

#### *Continued Research/Impacts of the Research*

Some organizations have expressed that they have intentions to continue the ODDC work, even without WF funding. Research partners are unclear about the ODDC Phase 2 and so, are considering looking for internal, local and international funding sources. This may be easier for academic institutions which have to produce publications, more so than CSOs which may have less access to research or non-earmarked funding.

## **4. Key Learnings and Recommendations**

### **Key Learnings**

- Processes internal to the organizations the WF contracts with, can affect the perceived efficiency of the ODDC project, but are external to it. (e.g. University does not make funding available soon enough to the researcher after receiving the installment from the WF. In one case communication problems within the researcher's organization also reflected negatively on how the ODDC project functioning is perceived.
- For the mentor/mentee relationship, geographically close time zones make a difference. It is easier to maintain contact in close time zones than those with radically different work hours.
- Mentors need enough time, and to prioritize the time to connect into the network early so that they feel buy-in or a connection to the work; this makes them more likely to engage more deeply as the project goes on.
- If connection isn't made right away between mentors and researchers, follow-up is less likely. Face-to-face meetings are an efficient way to (re)invigorate network connections.
- Mentors' roles vary depending on the type of organization they work with. There is often a key role for mentors beyond research and content advice, extending to networking and at times project management support.
- Projects that are layered on top of existing activities (that predate ODDC project) benefit the ODDC project by creating synergies (research partners were more prepared and had a clearer focus at the get go).
- Where projects are created from scratch to meet the call for proposals there is a need for a more hands on and direct intervention on the part of mentors.
- Projects that are focused on advocacy and policy change (rather than pure academic research) need more (support for) follow up activities in advocacy or capacity building (ie. with government).
- Projects that started later, made use of tools and ideas already developed within the network, demonstrating that organic learning and knowledge sharing is working.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Network Recommendations*

- The WF should ensure that mentors are given the opportunity to be more involved in general network activities (eg. in the webinars), where they could potentially contribute



to the wider network as a whole (“elder statesman perspective”).

- The WF should experiment with hosting (or encouraging researchers to plan) smaller (thematic) meetings or webinars to discuss and share experience on the research analysis phase.
- The WF should play a larger role in capacity strengthening of the research beyond questions of methodology. This can be done through more webinars on topics like case writing, analyzing and increasing impact, or providing more examples, templates and protocols that related to different research phases and outputs.
- The WF should continue to administer the network, at a minimum through maintenance of the mailing list, to maintain network contacts. Over time there may be a plan to spin-off administration, however for now at least one dedicated supervisor is essential.

#### *Recommendations for the Web Foundation*

- Learnings internal to the WF about how they coordinate and fund this project should be formally shared with similar sub-granting projects at the WF.
- The WF should play the role of project oversight, technical and content support to research partners and administrative tasks. Because urgent administrative tasks and technical responses to partners can easily eclipse the other roles, it is important for the WF to ensure that the principle investigator has time dedicated to larger and strategic issues in the project (either by separating the two functions, or designating specific time for each).
- The coordinator should be doing administration, and providing non-content related responses to partners so it does not have to go through the principal investigator. Principal investigator needs to tackle larger and strategic issues in the research.
- The WF should clearly communicate to all research partners and mentors about expected trajectory of the project in future phases.

#### *Mentorship recommendations*

- The WF and mentors should discuss the formal role of the mentors in Phase II of the network, to determine a structure based on need. This should include a discussion on the scope of the mentors as a body not just for one-to-one researcher support, but also for network oversight (e.g. a formal advisory board).
- The WF and mentors should create a clearer definition of mentor’s role both to mentor and to mentee. The role has been perceived by research partners as a monitor, a research supervisor, or hands off, on demand support. Roles and responsibilities should be included in contracts between different stakeholders, and the mentors and mentees should have an initial (kick-off) discussion about their expectations.
- Mentors should give research partners a general idea of how much time they have per week or month to support them. This would significantly help set expectations, and clarify what to approach the mentors with.
- Research partners seeking more structure in the mentoring process should develop (in their project proposals) clear phases, with indications of what points, feedback or advice will be needed from the mentors. This also provides a framework to

assess the progress of the mentoring (e.g. is the plan going to plan).

- Mentors could benefit from their own kick off/reflection session, which starts with reflecting on learnings from the previous period, and provides tools, guidelines and expectations on how to guide your mentees.