



World Wide Web Foundation
1110 Vermont Ave NW, Suite 500
Washington DC 20005

Harnessing Open Data to Achieve Development Results in Asia and Africa

IDRC Project Number 107574-005

1st Interim Report

March 2014 - February 2015

Date:

8th April 2015

Synthesis

Since early 2013, the Web Foundation's '[*From Data to Development: Exploring the Emerging Impact of Open Government Data in Developing Countries*](#)' (ODDC) project has explored how open data operates in practice across the Global South, building a network of research partners investigating the supply and use of open data in different political, social and governance contexts. This ongoing project has found that whilst southern partners believe substantial benefits can be secured by opening up data, existing supply-side open data initiatives (for example, initiatives focussed primarily on building open government data portals) rarely connect with the needs of the citizens, civil society groups, intermediaries and entrepreneurs who could make use of data. New strategies are needed if open data is to deliver powerful development impact. This third phase of the IDRC-supported research presents a "re-booted", real-world perspective on open data. The intention is to understand the most immediate and relevant open data aims and challenges particularly in Asia and Africa. Thus far, the Web Foundation has organized three events in the pursuit of establishing this third phase of research: a Regional Agenda Setting Workshop for Asia (Jakarta, February 2015); a Regional Agenda Setting Workshop for Africa (Addis Ababa, March 2015), and an Outcome Mapping monitoring and evaluation strategy (London, March 2015) embedded from the very beginning of the research phase. This report summarizes each of these and sets the roadmap ahead.

Contents

[Synthesis](#)

[Aims and objectives](#)

[Regional Agenda Setting Workshop for Asia](#)

[Regional Agenda Setting Workshop for Africa](#)

[Outcome Mapping Monitoring and Evaluation](#)

[Open Data Research Symposium and 3rd International Open Data Conference](#)

[Roadmap and recommendations](#)

Aims and objectives

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. This appears to be particularly the case in developing countries, and therefore Asia and Africa.

Phase 3 of the ODDC research continues the four main research goals of the project:

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

Two additional goals specific to this phase are:

- To support research-driven in-country capacity building around implementation and critical assessment of open data activities.
- To move from desk-based, academic research to more applied, action research (e.g. conducted by government employees, CSOs etc)

The activities below detail how the Web Foundation is operationalizing these goals.

Note: the grant approval was received late by the Web Foundation, in late October rather than 1st September 2014 as per the Memorandum of Grant Conditions; this, combined with a change in research lead, has slightly delayed the timelines for activities.

Regional Agenda Setting Workshop for Asia

As a major means of determining the open data research agenda for Asia, a Regional Agenda Setting Workshop for Asia was convened in Jakarta, Indonesia, between 4-6 February 2015 (using #ODAsia2015 on Twitter). We have already released a comprehensive [workshop report](#) outlining a vision for Open Data in Asia in 2020.

A total of 34 individuals (25 male, 9 female) attended from 11 countries across Asia and from 4 other countries outside the region, including IDRC's Senior Programme Officer, Information and Networks (for Asia), Phet Sayo. Participants were carefully selected to ensure balanced participation from government, international non-government organisations, CSOs, journalists, and researchers and academia; as much of an equal representation of male and female participants as possible; and participation from all categories of the [country clusters of the Open Data Barometer](#), so experiences could be shared. The workshop was designed using the Outcome Mapping approach, establishing a joint vision, mission, priority countries, sectors and issues and identifying boundary partners for a 5 year open data agenda until 2020 ([detailed in the report](#)).

The workshop sought to achieve the following objectives:

- Refine the selection of sectors to engage in and key issues to be addressed for creating solid foundations for open data impacts in the region, and at a practical level in particular sectors and countries.
- Shape the design of future research in the region, including sectors, countries and specific challenges, for a) sectoral scoping studies and b) action research projects to be conducted throughout the duration of the project.
- Build and foster relationships with strategic partners to expand and strengthen the network of organizations working on open data in the region.
- Ensure that the agenda for open data research and development in the region is set, owned and driven from within that region.
- Engage with stakeholders to act as mentors and advisors in the development and implementation of studies and action research projects conducted by partners and with the support from the Jakarta Lab.

The workshop participants identified five major themes that would constitute the vision of open data in Asia in the next five years. These were as follows:

- Governments show strong leadership and commitment to open data at all levels (national, sub-national)
- Countries develop and implement a standard for open data formulated through participatory and inclusive processes
- Sectors and movements sustainably collaborate on open data initiatives
- Citizens have increased capacity to use and benefit from open data

Each of the five stakeholder groups (government, international non-government organisations, CSOs, journalists, and researchers/academia), committed to a stakeholder specific mission statement, outlined in the workshop report, aligned to tangible milestones until 2020 (e.g. for government groups, Milestone 1 was right to information laws enacted in all Asian countries; Milestone 2 - creative commons licence legislated; Milestone 3 - “open by default” and by 2020: open government). Finally, priority **countries, sectors and issues** were discussed. It was agreed that **countries** would be identified on the basis of need, government context (possibility of working in the country), resources, objective for open data work and evidence (which countries provide replicable and scalable models for open data). Priority sectors which were identified were:

- Public Administration, Law and Justice
- Health and social science
- Energy and mining
- Education
- and Transport and Infrastructure

A key strategy map for the coming months was to

- Conduct research to understand key problems and issues and inform open data initiatives.
- Develop and test replicable models for ensuring open data provision and use.
- Build the capacity of both governments and users to unlock the potential of open data, including access to technology and other resources.
- Implement collaborative projects among key stakeholders

A final comment on the Regional Agenda Setting Workshop is that it was clear it generated much energy and interest, particularly with [the formal launch of the Open Data Lab Jakarta](#). It is critical that we harness the momentum and expressed commitment of the partners who attended both the workshop and the launch.

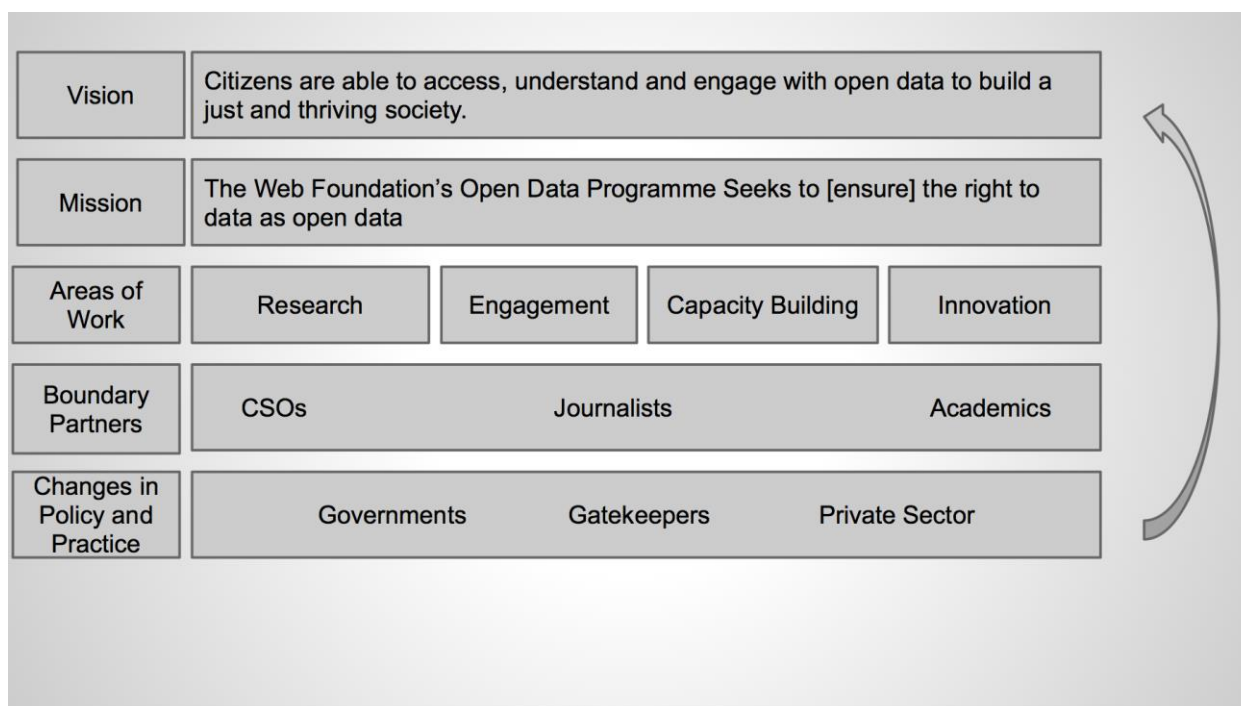
We plan to prioritize research partners and projects and start conducting and commissioning actual research in Q2/2015.

In parallel to the Asia workshop, a Regional Agenda Setting Workshop for Africa was convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 27 March 2015 (#ODAfrica2015 on Twitter). More information about it will be provided in the next project report.

Outcome Mapping Monitoring and Evaluation

The Web Foundation was keen to embed outcome mapping as a monitoring and evaluation tool from the very beginning of this phase of research. While both Regional Workshops were designed using outcome mapping, Pereira da Silva consultants have been hired as overall OM evaluators for ODDC Phase 3 (having previously evaluated Phase 1) and a kick-off intentional design meeting took place on 12th and 13th March

in London. [Details of the outcome mapping workshop](#) and [agenda](#) are here. In addition, the workshop helped in clarifying the Open Data Team's overall strategy (including research) as follows:



The consultants have been kept up to date with all materials from both workshops and a follow-up conference call, particularly to discuss the Africa workshop outcomes, has been scheduled with them for the week of 13th April. In addition, the Research Lead is exchanging outcome mapping lessons learned with the Open Data Institute and Sunlight Foundation.

Open Data Research Symposium and 3rd International Open Data Conference

Some of the Research Lead's time has been and will be dedicated to co-chairing the Open Data Research Symposium, including contributing to the peer review of 59 research abstracts for the symposium, organizing the logistics of the symposium and co-ordinating with the main Open Data Conference. In addition, due to the Web Foundation's position supporting the [3rd International Open Data Conference](#), and accepted panels and workshops, some workload is being committed to this (preparing sessions, organizing speakers etc).

Roadmap and recommendations

The immediate roadmap is to establish and commission concrete research projects in Asia and Africa as a result of the two Regional Workshops. Ideally, these would be similar in scope (as similar issues on right to data, intermediaries and capacity building arose in both contexts), which would also allow for somewhat

parallel monitoring and evaluation as well as closer generalizability.

At present we have a few specific comments to IDRC for some alterations to the project management and project plan:

1. There is likely to be more research ties with the Open Data Barometer as this has raised significant interest in both Asia and Africa.
2. To reduce uncertainty and possible delay, we are likely to convene a restricted call for future research projects in Phase 3 rather than an open call.
3. The shape, type and number of research projects to be conducted may significantly vary to reflect the agreements reached at both workshops and properly support the implementation of regional agendas.
4. Overall funding for research may be reduced if the exchange rate losses keep on increasing.
5. If the prospect Open Data Education Research Institute (ODERI) partners are able to develop a sound proposal we intend to fund such as previously agreed.
6. Capacities, expertise and networks in both Asia and Africa would benefit of additional regional expertise at the Web Foundation. We have proposed to shift some research resources towards personnel to increase the time allocation of key staff and truly believe their contribution will be crucial.
7. Having several projects funded by IDRC under the new OD4D banner at the Web Foundation is adding extra management and administrative costs. We recommend IDRC to consider the merge of some or all of these projects in the future under common goals and activities as reasonably possible in order to increase synergies and efficiencies.

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.