

Project Title: ODI/Open Data for Development Programme 2015

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Synthesis

The overall aim of this project is to understand how developing countries can be supported to plan, execute, and manage government open data initiatives. In the first six months of our project, we have commenced implementation of tailored country support programmes in three countries, and brought together over 35 government leaders of open data implementation. Our focus during this period was scoping, developing new support methodologies, and piloting approaches which will be evaluated during the remaining period of implementation. Overall, we are well placed to achieve the project's objectives- having implemented 50% of activities.

The **scoping phase** between January-March involved conducting literature reviews, background research and engagement, including conducting in-country assessments. The scoping process was crucial to refine our theory of change and inform the choice and design of our country support programmes. As a result of this process, we have elaborated three mid-term country support programmes for Tanzania, Macedonia and Burkina Faso.

In this period we also **developed and tested several new methodologies for delivering support to open data leaders**. These include a model for peer-to-peer learning and leadership development ('[Open Data Leaders Network](#)'), and a tool for conducting strategic mid-term assessments of government open data initiatives. Based on feedback from the first round of pilot testing, we will be adapting and refining these methodologies for a second stage of implementation in the next project period (July-December).

In addition, we developed a **new curricula for training civil servants on open data change management** based on qualitative research conducted last year. This curricula has now been delivered at multiple forums (Cartagena Data Festival, Open Data Leaders Summit, Tanzania Government workshop). We will continue to adapt this curricula based on participant feedback and results from the final evaluation.

We have also played an active role in **shaping the global open data agenda** through participating in regional and global forums- including the International Open Data Conference (IODC) and Africa Data Consensus workshop.

In the remaining project period we will concentrate on evaluating the effectiveness of the different leadership support methodologies, tools and curricula which have been developed; and sharing our research outputs widely through global research, international development, and open data networks.

Summary of project highlights

- **Country scoping and inception phase complete** (3 countries selected for mid-term support, country support programmes developed, [scoping paper](#) produced)

- **2 new capacity support methodologies developed and piloted** ([‘Open Data Leaders Network’](#); and ‘Open Data Strategic Assessment’ tool)
- **New curricula developed for training civil servants** (‘Open Data culture change management’)
- **50% of country support interventions implemented**, and a pipeline of government open data leaders identified for the next cohort of the Open Data Leaders Network.

The research problem

Defining the problem and research question: This project is looking to answer the question- how can we sustainably unlock a supply of high quality, usable open government data in developing countries?

Our central hypothesis proposes that **local leadership and effective change management is key to building a sustainable national open data initiative**. From our previous experience and research,¹ we have found that developing leadership is a critical, but often neglected, element of good governance programming. Central to this hypothesis is a locally-driven approach to development which empowers citizens and governments to achieve their own goals for social and economic transformation.

In seeking to answer the research question, the project will test the hypothesis that addressing critical gaps in open data support for leaders from developing countries, will unlock a sustainable supply of open data. The gaps identified include:

- limited capacity, resources and will within governments to publish data;²
- internal resistance and need for cultural change (to open data by ‘default’); and
- limited access to outside experience and innovative ideas for driving implementation within open data teams

In answering the research question, we are providing medium-term support to open data initiatives, in order support a government in its ability to achieve impact and to capture sharable learning on how initiatives can best be supported to succeed. Beyond this, we also aim to identify where medium-term investment of resources can be most effectively applied, and raise awareness of open data more broadly among the society.

Evolution of problem and research question: Our activities and research to date have largely reinforced our hypothesis regarding the importance of focusing on local leaders, culture change, and the role of peer exchange. From our experience of piloting the ‘Open Data Leaders Network’ and ‘Open Data Leader’s Summit’ we are also recognising the need to introduce innovation and disrupting status quo thinking. While our experience of delivering tailored support to Burkina Faso and Macedonia- both countries facing potential elections in the coming 6-12 months- have alerted us to the need to consider further the importance of

¹ ODI (2015), ‘Open data in government: How to bring about change’, <http://theodi.org/open-data-in-government-how-to-bring-about-change>

² Centre for Global Development (2014), ‘Delivering on the data revolution in sub-Saharan Africa’, pg XII, accessed online at <http://www.cgdev.org/publication/delivering-data-revolution-sub-saharan-africa-0>

transitions, and of embedding open data capacity in institutions in order to sustain the initiatives in the longer term.

Research findings

Having completed approximately 50% of activity implementation, we are midway towards completing our general objective of capturing sharable learning on how open data initiatives can best be supported to succeed.

Although it is early to report categorically on research findings given that the implementation of activities is still ongoing, we can point to a number of early 'lessons learned', organised by key activity tracks. These lessons learned are drawn from rapid participant appraisals, and an integrated method of collecting feedback from ODI trainers and implementing partners. See the appendix for raw data, and preliminary lessons learned reports.

A. Country support programmes: Technical assistance in 3 countries

What works well:

- **Mixed methods-** combining remote approaches with face-to-face training/coaching is important to build trust, for example, when introducing open data basics to a team from Tanzania.
- **External voices-** ensuring the delivery team invite the participation of data users, developers, and civil society representatives at different points throughout the programme, for example during assessment or evaluation phases, to bring in the user needs perspective and verify information gathered.
- **Diverse implementation teams-** drawing upon a variety of experts to deal with multifaceted nature of open data initiatives is highly valued, for example, combining an expert with experience implementing civil service reform, with an expert on open data law and licensing.
- **Identify a dynamic open leader-** and supporting them to develop and implement their strategy. Connecting leaders to networks (national, sectoral or global), or bringing in external experts can help provide the leader with political coverage and address their sense of isolation.

What works less well:

- **Virtual coaching without pre-established relationship-** remote mentoring/coaching on technical topics, for example, around open data licensing in Burkina Faso, can be challenging. Conducting face-to-face follow up is recommended to solidify the outcomes.

B. Training for public servants

What works well:

- **Combine hard and soft skill development-** such as communication techniques to equip civil servants to explain open data to different stakeholders.
- **Storytelling through relatable use cases-** high demand for use cases from similar jurisdictions to demonstrate process and impact.

- **Harness ‘peer pressure’**- sharing use cases and the results of the Open Data Barometer can have a positive motivational effect.
- **Group participation**- allowing maximum time for participant discussion and joint problem-solving, to draw out latent knowledge in the room and promote new synergies, for example subregional sharing between Mexico and Chile.

What works less well:

- Too much lecture-style content on open data definitions and principles.
- Dominating training curriculum with examples from developed or opposing contexts eg US, UK, France.

C. Global Open Data Leaders’ Network

What works well:

- **Careful participant selection**- the dynamism of participants is key to create a sense of ‘shared struggle’, openness to sharing ideas and contacts, and commitment to joint problem-solving.
- **Clear learning pathway in network inception workshop**- through layering theory with application and experience. A degree of flexibility to tailor sessions to participant needs and interests eg through optional ‘labs’ or lectures, is also recommended.
- **High degree of reflexivity**- allowing maximum time for group reflection to enable pattern recognition, and help develop a sense of ‘tribe’ or common endeavour.
- **Allow group to define tools for continued collaboration**- initially we introduced an ICT solution (‘Fuse’), but participants actively established their own preferred networking solutions eg whatsapp group, twitter tags which were more sustainable.
- **Frameworks and theories**- grounding training in formal theories can help to add a sense of ‘legitimacy’ to daily, felt challenges. For example, some participants appreciated having a formal theory about change management to attach their experiences to.

What works less well:

- **Not enough innovation promoted, or challenging material**- to disrupt existing thinking and practice, for example, through exposure to startups or ‘challenge-style’ methodologies.
- **Lack of diverse perspectives (in terms of sectors and government levels)**- selecting leaders from different levels of government, for example from the city level, could expose participants to more innovative ways of approaching open data initiatives.

D. OD4D Network Activities

From our regional and global engagement, including the International Open Data Conference, Africa Data Consensus Workshop and Cartagena Data Festival, a few key reflections emerge:

- **Put innovation at the core of networks**- the ODLN has emerged as a promising network model with potential for scale-up and/or replication across other sectors eg

‘city leaders’, and education. This follows on from ODI’s experience working with other types of networks, eg sector-based (GODAN), and industry based (international Node programme).

- **Start with the policy problem you want to solve**, and consider how open data could provide a tool. The most impactful initiatives start with the problem and build collaborative stakeholder engagement around developing practical projects which test a solution, eg the climate smart decision-tool developed in Colombia to protect rice farmers from drought.
- **Need to continue working on common standards and approaches** for measuring impact, data sharing, data ownership and use, and privacy. These issues can be encapsulated by the discussion on defining our ‘data infrastructure.’ The Open Data Charter consultations and regional workshops provide good platforms to advance these conversations.

Technical and policy implications

From an internal effectiveness perspective, these findings suggest that while individual ODI training programmes are met with positive feedback- there is a need to develop sustainability strategies to embed knowledge-sharing beyond the life of the project. This could, for example, include ‘train-the-trainer’ methods, trialed last year with the ODI support to the ‘data squads in’ [Mexico](#), and which will form part of the remainder of the implementation of this grant. Another emerging idea for sustainability is establishing partnerships and shared curriculum with universities.

Furthermore, there is still a very real challenge of embedding open data capacities beyond the responsible open data team or National Statistical Office (NSO). As open data leaders frequently comment, they spend most of their time repeatedly explaining open data, and ‘convincing’ colleagues of its importance and impact. One approach trialled recently in Macedonia, is equipping more PR and communications staff to become open data messengers (both internally, and externally to government).

The overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants from the ODLN and Open Data Leader’s Summit confirm that incubating networks of policy entrepreneurs is a very promising approach to capacity building- also mentioned [here](#). This has enabled knowledge sharing across south-south and south-north context divisions, as we have seen with Macedonia advising Moldova on their OGP plans, or Chile sharing their approach towards supporting a culture of innovation with Malaysia.

Despite the very real technical challenges, such as interoperability and licensing, the major hurdles reported to us revolve around people and culture. Common challenges we hear reported include managing internal resistance to change, securing the political backing necessary to see through a sustainable long-term reform, maintaining open data as a priority following a ‘quick-win’ (such as establishing the open data portal), actually using open data to inform policy decisions, and engaging with users to understand their priorities and needs. This suggests the need to treat open data as a culture transformation (rather than just an ICT project), and seek to learn from other successful public service transformations. In order

to move from 'quick-win' territory to institutional change- in the next phase of open data support will need to revolve around strategic planning.

Unexpected learnings and areas for future research

During this initial period of implementation, there were also a few unexpected lessons- largely due to unexpected shifts in context.

- **Risks of investing in an individual leader-** a dynamic leader can be extremely impactful in driving change, yet momentum can be lost if they leave their post. Open data leaders tend to be young and entrepreneurial, therefore there is typically a high turnover rate as leaders are promoted or move to other more high profile policy areas. The challenge, therefore, is embedding the changes which these dynamic (and often disruptive) leaders may have catalysed, into the broader system.
- **Sustaining open data in times of transition-** in the course of implementation, two of our focus countries are preparing for national elections amidst a degree of political and social tension (Macedonia and Burkina Faso). This raises the question of how to sustain a focus on open data throughout times of transition, including what role open data has to play in promoting transparency during elections.

In the next project period, we will be incorporating these issues into our research plans.

Project implementation and management

Completed Activities

At the time of writing (30 June 2015), we have completed the following activities as per our

- a. **Scoping and assessment-** Between January- March 2015 we conducted two country visits (Macedonia and Burkina Faso), completed [desk research](#), and engaged closely with project beneficiaries to identify capacity needs and co-develop the mid-term programmes of support. See result of scoping phase in the '[scoping report](#).'
- b. **First cohort of Open Data Leaders Network ('ODLN')-** In February 2015 we launched the first cohort of the ODLN, a peer network for outstanding government leaders of open data initiatives from around the world. This involved delivering a five day inception workshop in London comprised of training, sharing and group development activities. An ICT platform was also developed ('Fuse') as a knowledge sharing platform and repository of documents. Based on feedback and learning from the first cohort, we are preparing to conduct the second cohort in July 2015- with long term plans of growing membership to a wider range of countries and city level government.
- c. **Africa Data Consensus-** In March, ODI participated in the Africa Data Consensus in Addis Ababa alongside OD4D partners such as the Web Foundation, and successfully advocated for the inclusion of G8 Open Data Charter principles such as 'open by default.' See [here](#).
- d. **Cartagena Data Festival-** In April, a team of ODI trainers trained 100 civil servants, journalists, and civil society representatives in 'Open data and change management' and 'Telling stories with data.'

- e. **Open Data Leaders Summit-** As part of the International Open Data Conference (IODC) in Ottawa, the ODI delivered a panel-style summit for 40 prominent open data leaders, and senior civil servants. In addition, Liz Carolan of the ODI made a key contribution to the Leadership 'Action Track', which involved facilitating a panel dedicated to sharing approaches to open data leadership development. See [here](#)
- f. **Tanzania country support-** In May, ODI trainers conducted an introductory remote training webinar on 'introduction to open data.' This was followed up by a face to face workshop on communicating open data and change management, conducted in partnership with the World Bank in Ottawa for 12 civil servants from a range of departments. A strategic coaching session was also held with a smaller group of senior civil servants to identify future priorities for their open data initiative.
- g. **Macedonia country support-** In June, ODI trainers completed a 2 day workshop on 'Open data in a day' and 'Telling stories with data', reaching 54 participants from a range of government institutions and roles- including communications, and ICT officers. Participants also included developers, civil society, and members of the Serbian open data initiative. In addition, ODI offered strategic advice to the responsible Minister, and technical advice to restructuring the open data portal.
- h. **Burkina Faso country support-** ODI's support for Burkina Faso builds off a history of supporting the national initiative from the preparing the open data portal and launching the application 'Our Data, Our Schools.' One of our earliest contributions was communicating the story of open data in Burkina to a wider audience, to amplify success and generate user interest. See [here](#). Following a scoping visit in March, legal advice on licensing, and strategic planning were identified as key areas for support. In addition, the open data license is in the process of translation into French. Just recently (June 7-20th) a strategic assessment was conducted using our new purpose-built tool.
- i. **Strategic assessment tool developed-** One of the gaps we identified during the scoping process, was a tool to help open data leaders who are part way through implementing their initiative to take stock of achievements to date, diagnose capacity or technical gaps and identify opportunities to focus on policy priorities,. While the Open Data Barometer and Index provide helpful high-level comparative analysis- they don't necessarily provide the level of detail required to operationalise actions. During May-June, ODI experts created a beta 'strategic assessment tool' based on landscape analysis, which was tested in Burkina Faso in partnership with the World Bank (results forthcoming).
- j. **Training curricula developed-** Based on [research](#) produced last year, we have also developed a training module on 'open data change management', which has been delivered in Cartagena, the ODLN, and with staff from Tanzania. We continue to adapt and add to the content based on demand and participant feedback.

Research methods and analytical approach

Our approach to answering the research problem is through **action research**. This involves an iterative process of design, testing, feedback, refinement and evaluation. During each stage of the process, we are intentionally collecting feedback from participants and our research partners which forms the basis of our research findings.

To collect participant feedback we are using rapid appraisal techniques- surveys, participant observation, and informal interviews. We use this feedback to identify areas for future support, and to reflect upon and improve our curriculum and approach. For more complex intervention models (ODLN and the assessment tool, for example), we also conduct a retrospective with ODI experts and partners. Insights gained from these retrospectives feed into the refinement stage. We also published the [raw data](#) from the ODLN (cohort 1) as open data.

Our main method of analysis during this design and testing period is 'lessons learned' reflection process. This involves asking the following questions to the implementation team, and other stakeholders (for example, the World Bank country team) immediately or very soon after delivery:

1. What did we expect to occur?
2. What actually happened?
3. What worked well and why?
4. What did not work and why?
5. What needs to be done differently?

We are also articulating a monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework with the help of M&E experts, and have created tools for data collection for each main activity- including interview guides and feedback forms. We will be conducting a final evaluation of all key support methodologies (training civil servants, strategic assessment, and ODLN) once all activities have been completed.

One knowledge gap we have identified is the need for literature reviews summarising the existing evidence base on 'what works' in relation to similar methodologies (eg strategic assessment tools as applied in other sectors). Recognising this, we have commissioned discrete pieces of research (taking place in July) to address this gap and feed into our remaining activities.

Forecasted expenditures

As at the date of writing (30/06/15) have finalised all our finances for the period from January to end May. Overall, we are well on track in terms of delivering our country support activities. However, as country support programmes have been delivered more cheaply than originally budgeted (due to more remote delivery options, and combining training with international events to minimise additional travel), we have opted to move some funding across to support the Open Data Leaders Network. This decision was also based on substantial take-up for the programme, including the success of the compressed version delivered at IODC (the 'Open Data Leader's Summit'), and demand to replicate the model at sub-regional (Africa, Latin America) or city levels.

In addition, considering there is so much momentum at the moment in the international policy space, including the SDG/'Data revolution' debates, and International Open Data

Charter conversations- more funding will also need to be diverted to support global agenda building in the next period.

Project schedule

In the next implementation period (July-December), activity and research plans include:

- **Completing all activities** (July-September);
- **Evaluating the effectiveness of support methodologies and training curricula** (August-October). Includes hosting a roundtable breakfast of governance and international development experts to discuss initial findings, and receive feedback;
- **Research product development and dissemination of results** (October-December) via different formats which could include case studies, blogs, white paper, and other media.

Project outputs and dissemination

Research Outputs

It is early days in terms of research outputs. To date we have collected data from country scoping, training programmes and the first round of country support activities. These results will feed into research evaluation products to be produced in next reporting period. In the interim, we have disseminated our early lessons learned and reflections via the following platforms:

- Blogs ([Burkina Faso's](#) progress; [Open Data Leaders Network](#); [supporting open data leaders](#));
- Website and ICT platforms for knowledge sharing between ODLN members ([ODLN page](#), Fuse, and Whatsapp group); and
- Participation in conferences and workshops (IODC, open data research symposium, and development sector meetings).

In the next reporting period, we plan on producing the following outputs and conducting the following dissemination activities:

- Breakfast roundtable with International Development sector
- White paper on open data government change (qualitative research)
- (potential) short video documentary on ODLN
- Lessons learned papers for each methodology presenting results of evaluation (3)
- Literature reviews summarising evidence for each methodology (commissioned- in process)

Knowledge creation

We have contributed to new knowledge creation in the form of a new training curricula on open data and change management in government (mentioned earlier).

We are also exploring how to package the ODLN model of peer networks for replication across other contexts (for example for peer groups at city, region or sectoral level).

Lastly, we are in the process of refining a new open data strategic assessment tool, which has potential for wider use by ODI and OD4D partners in other countries beyond the life of the project.

Capacity Building

The project is contributing to building the capacity of the ODI to better evaluate the effectiveness of our leadership support interventions through participant feedback mechanisms, and retrospective analysis. The lessons captured in the evaluations will help the ODI to further refine capacity-building approaches and curricula to be more impactful and responsive to participant needs. By sharing tools and approaches among the OD4D and broader open data for development research network, we hope to build the knowledge-base of 'what works' in open data capacity building more broadly.

In addition, we are directly building the capacity for at least 3 countries, at least 10 open data leaders, and many more civil servants through our training sessions and (planned) 'train the trainer' programs.

Impact

Although it is early to evaluate impact, we can point to a number of early intermediary results from our country support and other training activities.

*As a result of our programme of country support, **Macedonia** is:*

- Making design changes to their open data portal to become more accessible, functional and user- friendly;
- Focusing on communicating impact of their open data initiative, and telling stories with data due to more PR and communications staff equipped on open data;
- Developing a sustainability plan which could include sub-regional and academic partnerships to embed capacity building;
- In addition- members of the Serbian open data initiative are making changes to their OGP actions plans directly as a result of participating in the June training.

Further, as a direct result of ODI's support of the dynamic open data leader- the responsible Minister for open data has provided his full backing for her to continue to lead the initiative even from a new position.

*As a result of our programme of country support, **Tanzania** is:*

- Considering how to use open data to inform policy decisions- especially in the education and finance sectors. Participants are now reviewing the policy framework for implementing Open Data in Tanzania, and are thinking more intentionally about how to broaden awareness of open data and work on cultural change.

*As a result of our programme of country support in **Burkina Faso** is:*

- Preparing to respond to the results of the strategic assessment (conducted in mid June 2015). It is too early to predict the specific adjustments which will be made to their open data initiative as a result. The assessment identified opportunities and

potential changes which could increase impact of their initiative, for example, by choosing a sector focus education and agriculture.

As a result of the Open Data Leaders Network:

- Evidence of frequent horizontal knowledge exchanges between participants (particularly over whatsapp). For example, Mexico and Chile are closely cooperating and sharing strategies, and answers to questions around licensing and OGP plans have been crowdsourced among the group.
- Participants individually report a greater sense of motivation, confidence and encouragement from being part of the network. One participant in the first ODLN cohort from Chile commented recently at the IODC:

"It was an amazing bonding experience, and that created a network where you can openly ask questions on your everyday decisions that you make as a practitioner, and be sincere about the questions and the answers. And that helps a lot, because we do have challenges: everyone working on an open data national strategy has challenges (eg Creative Commons licensing)... now the network is even bigger, and it's amazing to find out that the questions and challenges are still the same if you add on many other countries. "

Recommendations

Please see details of our proposed changes in the 'forecasted expenditures' section.

Appendix

1. Raw data on feedback from [ODLN \(first cohort\)](#)
2. Raw data on feedback from [Tanzania training](#)
3. ODLN (first cohort) [lessons learned report](#)

NB data on Macedonia training, and feedback from piloting the strategic assessment tool and in the process of being collated and analysed.