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

# From Data to Development

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*Interim Technical Report*

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# Synthesis

There have been two main developments in this phase of the ODDC research from February to July 2015. The first is the near-completion of the four synthesis projects (ODDC 2) deriving from ODDC 1 explained in further detail below. The second is re-purposing (in agreement with IDRC) part of the ODDC 2 research budget to the Open Data Barometer (rationale and progress explained in detail below). All other research relevant to the third phase of ODDC research and the Open Data for Development network, ODAsia and ODAfrica, will follow in the subsequent "ODDC3" report. This report details the progress of these two deliverables, and subsequent roadmap and recommendations.

# Contents

# 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. Several common themes emerged in the seventeen ODDC 1 case studies that the Web Foundation perceived interesting to explore in further detail. These formed the basis of "ODDC 2". At the same time, there were clear indications of interest from governments, NGOs and others to continue the Open Data Barometer for another year. This was seen as strategically a greater priority than another education and capacity building project (ODERI) which was still to be planned in detail, and so the move was made to repurpose part of the ODDC 2 budget to the Open Data Barometer.

*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, slightly delayed the timelines for activities. IDRC agreed to a six month extension taking into account the original delay in fund disbursement.*

# ODDC 2: From Data to Development

In the second phase of [Open Data in Developing Countries research](#), we deliberately chose not to focus on the technical aspects of open data, but rather on the common social, political and legal aspects which emerged across many of the seventeen cases in the first phase of research. ODDC 2 is now near complete. Four studies were undertaken, largely drawing on the primary research from the first phase. These were:

- the role of subnational governments – such as cities or provinces – in open data provision (Miko Cañares and Satyarupa Shekhar)
- the role of intermediaries in linking open data supply and demand (Francois van Schalkwyk, Miko Cañares, Sumandro, Chattapadhyay and Alexander Andrason)
- understanding government inertia in adopting open data and how that can be overcome (Francois van Schalkwyk and Michelle Wilmers)
- and finally, the need for right to information laws to protect and encourage open data (Silvana Fumega)

All four reports have been submitted. Blogs are under way to share the findings, with the [first overall blog](#) paving the way for the more in-depth blogs corresponding to each project and second more detailed blog [on](#)

sub-national governments (the first research project). Our aim as the Web Foundation is to persist in emphasizing that in developing countries, it is not the technology that is the concern, but the enabling (or constraining) context. Due to restricted budgets, we were not able to build a monitoring and evaluation component into the ODDC 2 research. However, as we disseminate the findings, we will track the impact of the publications through downloads, shares and social media, while also designing a broader impact assessment strategy for future open data research.

# Open Data Barometer progress report

Following the decision to continue with the Open Data Barometer this year, the core Open Data Barometer team met in London in March and April 2015 to map the production process. Different internal WF team meetings were conducted starting in March and April 2015 to analyse the different alternative approaches for the third edition of the Barometer, and decide on a specific production plan on the basis of the available resources and the required project timing. A two-day inception meeting was held with the full WF ODB team in London April 2015 to refine and agree on the production plan as well as to bootstrap the production process.

The 3rd edition of the Open Data Barometer seeks to repeat the analysis from previous editions, but it is also introducing some significant changes and revisions focused on three main aspects:

- Two new additional context questions [C2 and C3] covering open data policies and data management practices respectively, and other methodological tweaks for the other context questions as first exploration steps towards the assessment of the International Open Data Charter principles.
- A more detailed and incremental scoring guidance with comprehensive criteria and scoring thresholds to guide the researchers and help in improving overall quality and consistency of the research results.
- A government self assessment simplified questionnaire for each of the countries in the study as a pilot experience with a two-fold objective: first, for further involvement of government in the assessment process and, second, as a valuable additional source of input for the research process.

As a pilot experience, the Barometer is also moving towards stronger involvement of regional partners in production, engagement and advocacy, building the study from the regional to the global. We are starting with ILDA (for Latin-America) and the Open Data Labs (for Asia and Oceania) as pilot partners in order to improve accuracy and relevance for the Barometer and expand capacity and community in those regions. Possible synergies with Open MENA are also being evaluated under the scope of an IDRC supported data research project for the MENA region.

In addition, the number of countries covered by the study has been increased with a total of 92 countries in the 3rd edition (86 in the last edition). The new incorporations are: Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Paraguay, Saint Lucia and the Slovak Republic.

**Work to date**

**Preparation phase**
The preparation phase included the following tasks:

1. **Setup and deployment of the supporting technical infrastructure**, including:
   - Upgrades and adaptations of the online survey tool.
   - Adaptation of a simpler questionnaire system for the government self-assessments.
   - Internal project mailing lists and collaboration forums for the assistance and exchange of knowledge within the research team.
   - e-mail system for the management of invitations for researchers and government representatives and further personal follow-up with each of them.

2. **Methodological adaptations**, including:
   - Update of the Research Handbook (25% of new content approx.) including new and adapted questions, detailed scoring guidance for all context questions, general improvements to the scoring guidance and other global corrigendum, improvements and updates on the basis of the experience from last edition.
   - Update and improvement of the guides supporting the study, including:
     - Quick start guide for the online survey tool.
     - Guide on how to conduct good quality reviews.
     - Guide on how to address review comments properly.
   - Update of other supporting documentation, including:
     - Templates for researchers and reviewers agreements.
     - Letters of representation.
   - Other new documentation, including:
     - MoUs for the regional partnerships.
     - Official joint announcement of the regional approach (not published yet).
     - Adapted and simplified self assessment questionnaire.
     - Official contact email templates for governments.

3. **Selection of the research team**

   - Signature of agreements with Open Data Labs and ILDA as regional partners.
   - Publication of an open call for researchers with the collaboration of the regional partners (more than 200 respondents).
   - Filtering and selection of a qualified research team with the collaboration of the regional partners. The team is composed by a researcher and a reviewer for each of the countries plus a series of substitute candidates using a combination of new applicants and past good performers from previous Barometer editions.
   - Setting-up of the research group, including:
     - management of contacts.
     - sending research invitations.
     - signature of research agreements.

■ securing research team and management of possible drop-offs.

**Research phase**

**Training**: Four 2.5 hours online training sessions were conducted before starting the research phase. The training covered explanation of the ODB process, methodology and tools.

**Status of the research team**: the team has been secured and is already working for 91 of the total countries. No drop-offs have been happening so far.

**Progress of the research**: the global research advance is currently estimated in a 55% of the total with 44 countries already complete and on track with respect to the expected research timeline to be finishing by mid September.

**Follow-up and support**: continuous follow-up and online methodological and technical support is being provided (e-mail, online forum, instant messaging and phone/skype sessions) for the micro-management of the research team (1500+ email exchanges so far).
Review phase

The review phase is just starting currently with the selection of the reviewers team, taking into account also their performance during the research phase. Reviewers have been already secured for a total of 63 countries giving priority to those countries where the research has been already completed in order to bootstrap the review process ASAP. It is expected that most of the reviewers team will be secured by the end of July.

The review process will be officially starting at the beginning of August and first training sessions have already been planned for the last week of July.
Government Self-assessments

**POCs management**: setting-up of a database for open data points of contact at the governments included in the study with more than 300 contact options using our own contact network enriched with other public sources.

**Call for self-assessments**: aimed to the 92 governments of the countries involved in the research process. A total of three contact rounds were conducted so far using alternative POCs in the absence of response.

**Progress of the self-assessments**:
   6 countries already completed;
   32 more with their participation confirmed;
   2 countries refused to participate due to lack of time or resources;
   52 not responding yet.

**Follow-up and support**: continuous follow-up and support is being provided as well, although with just one

country asking for substantial support so far and around a dozen of them requesting some different clarifications on the process.

**Challenges faced**

As expected, managing and coordinating a team of around 200 researchers and government representatives raised some issues that needed to be addressed during the process. The most representative ones were:

- Some specific circumstances affecting specifically to different regions and countries and causing significant delays to their respective research processes, such as:
    - Ramadan for countries where Muslim has a significant representation.
    - Nordic summer that is practically paralysing any activity in some countries (especially northern Europe)
    - General usual vacation time in several parts of the globe.
    - Some other particular circumstances (e.g. current conflicts in Yemen or current political and economic instability in Greece).

- Technical issues, such as:
    - Problems to access to our online systems, including the survey, given current restriction on specific countries (e.g. firewalls for Google Apps censorship in China and Myanmar)
    - Weak web and internet skills for a small group of researchers not very used to work online and requiring quite significant and continuous support (usually coming from countries where Internet penetration is still very low)
    - General connectivity and Internet reliability problems affecting specially several African countries complicating both, assessment of the country and communications for self-assessments.

- Cultural and governmental issues, such as:
    - Some governments being reluctant to share any information given privacy and/or security concerns with respect to official government information or declarations.
    - General low response times from governments.
    - Not clear open data related roles, especially in those countries where open data is still to be developed.

# Roadmap and recommendations

There are only a few specific comments to IDRC:

1. We will link the ODDC 2 findings to our third phase of OD4D research beginning in Asia and Africa.
2. There is likely to be much closer integration with the Open Data Barometer and the ODDC research

as this has raised significant interest in both Asia and Africa. We have already begun a process of regionalizing the research management of the Barometer in Asia with the Jakarta Lab managing this, and in Latin America in collaboration with ILDA. Future OD4D Asia research will also interrogate the Barometer in the context of constrained contexts in Asia further.

3. Overall funding for research may be reduced if the exchange rate losses keep on increasing.

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.