



World Wide Web Foundation
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From Data to Development

Exploring the Emerging Impacts of Open Data in Developing Countries

IDRC Project Number 107075-001

Final Technical Report

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Synthesis

There have been two main developments in this phase of the ODDC research from August to November 2015

- Completion of the production of the third edition of the Open Data Barometer - in more detail below.
- Near completion of all ODDC 1 and 2 deliverables, bar two which are explained further below.

This report details the progress of these two components, and subsequent roadmap and recommendations.

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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. We detail the progress below.

Note: the grant extension 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.

Open Data Barometer

The 3rd edition of the Open Data Barometer introduced 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](#)¹.
- 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.

¹ Works on these has expanded from this project to another IDRC-funded project (107895-003) and the outputs have been uploaded under it.

The full final methodology used for this edition can be consulted through the updated [Research Handbook](#) that was driving all the research and review process. Other additional reference documentation available was:

- [Quick start guide](#) for the online survey tool.
- Guide on how to conduct good [quality reviews](#).
- Guide on how to [address review comments](#) properly.

As a pilot experience, the Barometer was also moving towards stronger involvement of regional partners in production, engagement and advocacy, building the study from the regional to the global. We started this edition 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. Other possible present or future synergies were evaluated and remain open, such as Open MENA for the MENA region or the European Policy Centre (CEP) for the Balkans.

In addition, the number of countries covered by the study increased up to 92 countries in the 3rd edition (from 86 in the last edition). New incorporations were: Georgia, Macedonia, Moldova, Paraguay, Saint Lucia and the Slovak Republic. We received also other multiple direct requests from governments, civil society and multilaterals for new countries to be added, such as Latvia; Lithuania; Taiwan; Oman; Kyrgyzstan, Cambodia, El Salvador, Iran, Serbia, Albania, and Montenegro. Those were not possible to attend to in this edition given time and resources constraints.

Work to date

The ODB research is now complete and was put together by a global team of 150+ researchers and government representatives. It took over six months and more than 9,000 hours of research and review work to compile. During that time we addressed more than 14,000 questions and respond to more than 5,000 comments and suggestions.

Dissemination activities were also conducted during the last International Open Data Conference (Ottawa - May 2015) and the OGP global summit (Mexico - October 2015) with the active participation of the ODB team in up to four different sessions and workshops (1) (2) (3) (4) related to the assessment of open data initiatives. Those were also useful in order to gather feedback for the future continuous improvement of the methodology and process. A [snapshot brochure of the ODB](#) has also been designed and 300 units were distributed during the OGP global summit.

Research phase

Research team: the 65+ research team was finally secured for all countries in the survey. Delays and drop-offs (less than 10%) were managed on a case by case basis with effective replacements in all cases where it was finally necessary and giving preference at late stages or in case of repeated drop-offs to the most experienced researchers that showed also the best performance.

Progress of the research: the research is now 100% complete for the total of 92 countries in this edition.

Follow-up and support: continuous follow-up and online methodological and technical support was provided all during research and review time (e-mail, online forum, instant messaging and phone/skype sessions) for the micro-management of the research team (2,500+ exchanges in total). All surveys were spot-checked during the process to offer early feedback to the respective country researchers.

Review phase

Training: A couple of 2-hours online training sessions were conducted before starting the review phase. The training covered explanation of the ODB process, review methodology and tools. Session records were also available for further review.

Status of the review team: the 70+ review team was secured for all countries in the survey. Substantial delays and drop-offs (less than 10%) were managed on a case by case basis with effective replacements in all cases where it was finally necessary, giving preference at late stages to the most experienced reviewers that showed also the best performance.

Progress of the review: the review is now 100% complete for the total of 92 countries in this edition.

Follow-up and support: continuous follow-up and online methodological and technical support was provided all during the research time (e-mail, online forum, instant messaging and phone/skype sessions) for the micro-management of the review team (1,000+ exchanges in total).

The review phase included in all cases at least two rounds of peer review and consequent addressing by the respective country researchers of the feedback and issues raised during the review, plus one final review and validation from the WF team before official completion and closing of the country survey. In total 5,000+ comments and suggestions were responded and addressed during the review phase.

The government self-assessments (see next section) were incorporated during the review phase as an additional source of information for peer-reviewers (and shared also with the country researchers later) in order to contrast and challenge the results available for each of the countries.

Government Self-assessments

Self-assessments: initially aimed to the 92 governments of the countries involved in the research process. A total of 56 self-assessment were finally conducted after up to five contact rounds using alternative points of contact in those cases with no previous response.

- These are more than a 60% of the total countries, above the initial 50% objective established for this pilot experience.
- Three more countries were expressing also their intention to participate but were not finally able to fulfill the deadlines after three extensions.
- Two additional countries were refusing to participate and the rest were never responding or the only contact mean available (usually generic emails and/or online contact forms in those cases) were always falling.

Generally speaking the pilot experience could be considered successful and the self-assessments have proved to be useful in the research process in order to improve evidence base and final results accuracy.

Follow-up and support: continuous follow-up and support was provided for the government representatives conducting the self-assessment surveys as well, although with few substantial support request apart from several clarifications on the survey questions or the research process.

Quality assurance process

A final QA control process has been performed on the results for further calibration and adjustments on the basis of statistical and qualitative review. A dashboard was prepared for the quick cross-comparison of the current scores with those from previous editions of the Open Data Barometer in order to detect possible anomalies that may need additional review.

A team composed by four members selected from the ODB research team plus two members from the WF ODB team. The QA team was performing the following tasks:

- Detecting any anomalies in the preliminary results that may need a final review for a selection of assigned questions across all countries in the survey.
- Review the answers and evidence (including self-assessments) for those questions that present anomalous values in the scores in comparison with the previous edition.
- Compare results between past and present editions in two scenarios:
 - A result for a given question in a given country across the different editions.
 - Results for a given question across all countries in present edition.
- Evaluate the results and assess whether the difference in value is really justified or not according to the evidence provided, the historical results, the current scoring guidelines and evidence provided for similar values in other countries.
- Provide justifications explaining in some detail the rationale for each of the conclusions and the recommended final scores.

3000+ scores were reviewed and adjusted when required during this process. This full QA review process has been completed by the end of the year.

Wrapping-up phase

Some final wrap-up tasks were also performed, including:

- Computation of the final scores for the ODB components and main index.
- Analysis of the main findings from the results.
- Processing of all payments to researchers and reviewers in compensation for their work.
- Bug fixes and improvements to the online survey tool on the basis of the feedback received during the research phase.
- Improvements and updates to the ODB website in preparation of the new edition release.

- Exploration of opportunities for the official presentation of the results and conclusions, including the 3rd edition report and a new data explorer.

ODDC 1: Exploring the Emerging Impacts of Open Data in Developing Countries

All ODDC 1 projects were completed by early January 2015 barring two - these were Transparent Chennai's report on open civic WASH data - water, sanitation and hygiene - in Chennai, and Society of Democratic Initiatives's report on open data in Sierra Leone. In the case of Transparent Chennai, feedback was given both by Tim Davies and Savita Bailur in January 2015 on a first draft but corrections not returned by the authors. Repeated requests were made during the year - in February as a follow-up, before the IODC conference in May, as a case study to take to AODC in September as open data in water provision was being considered one of the topics of the open data research in Africa, and finally an extra impetus for World Toilet Day on 19 November. On all occasions, the authors were either unresponsive or delayed. Similarly, the SDI draft paper was sent very late - in May 2015, with ebola outbreak cited as prime reason. Again, detailed feedback was given as the report was not considered publishable (lack of focus, no clear structure, poor integration of methods and evidence) but the author failed to address these. We have invested too much time in trying to obtain publishable levels of both and are now ceasing. The draft versions of both have been placed on the Web Foundation and ODRN websites.

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 were submitted on time and [blogs accompanied each of them](#).

Finally, with regards to both ODDC 1 and 2, we are exploring the possibilities of conducting an impact

assessment of the research with our external evaluators, Pereira de Silva consultants separately.

Roadmap and recommendations

There are only a few specific comments to IDRC:

1. 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.
2. The budget allocated to the ODB is clearly insufficient. It relies too much on one single person. Increased and extended multi-annual funding for the Barometer would contribute to a better planning as well as to avoid several of the problems usually faced during the production time and to other improvements in general such as:
 - a. better planning of the research dates and team, with more time and resources to improve the selection process, build capacity in the team and avoid usual conflicting dates for the research activity.
 - b. give response to the increasing new assessment requests from countries that would like to be included in the ODB and engage government more effectively in the process.
 - c. more time and resources for communication strategy and general dissemination activities, focusing not only on the production of the Barometer and publication of the results but also on continuous dissemination, evangelisation and engagement activities, specially on key global OD milestones.
 - d. keep building partnership and synergies to get the most from the Barometer outputs, including extension and strength of the regional partners network as well as improved self-assessment process enabling feedback loops and making the ODB a better global policy making, monitoring and accountability tool.

Without proper funding, the ODB will not be able to achieve its goal of becoming the single most important tool to measure open data impact.

3. It's been difficult to juggle the required activities per the grant agreement with the constantly changing landscape and some lack of clarity on the OD4D program, born during the project. We certainly appreciate the support and flexibility of IDRC and the close collaboration and amount of time devoted to the project by our program officer.
4. We have faced important financial issues with the project, especially due to CAD-USD exchange rate losses and had to remove or slim down activities to address the important loss.

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.