

# IASSIST REGIONAL REPORT: AFRICA

July 2011 – June 2012

## 20110803: Ethiopia: **Handbook for African Data Managers initiated**

In August Data experts assembled in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to brainstorm content for a handbook being compiled by the UN Economic Commission for Africa's African Centre for Statistics (ACS) to assist African data producers to select the best software to manage their data and share this data to benefit research and policymaking in the region. The meeting was held jointly with a meeting of the African Group on Statistical Data Management (AGSDaM), which is the StatCom-Africa Working Group on Data management, and the production of the handbook is part of the work programme of this group. IASSIST member, DataFirst's Lynn Woolfrey and representatives from National Statistics Offices in Ghana and Nigeria gave presentations on current data management practices at their organisations. A representative from Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) discussed this regional organisation's data management platforms.

## 20110817: South Africa: **National Data Quality Forum launched**

2011 saw the launch by Statistics South Africa (SSA) of a Data Quality Forum to oversee the accuracy and usability of official SA data. SSA works with DataFirst at the University of Cape Town in SA to advance data quality, and DataFirst's Lynn Woolfrey attended the inaugural meeting of this body, held in Pretoria in August.

## 20110903: Africa: **Presentation at the First World Data System Conference leads to African data project**

Data managers from the South African Data Archive (SADA) and DataFirst presented at the World Data System Conference – "Global Data for Global Science", held on September 3 - 6, 2011 at Kyoto University, Kyoto City, Japan. The conference was organised by the International Council for Science (ICSU), a non-governmental organisation with a global membership of national scientific bodies. The aim of the conference was to receive opinions, comments and suggestions from scientific communities (data users) and other international data systems to establish an active plan to run the World Data System. "Scientific Sessions" were also allocated for presentations by data-oriented scientists in a variety of research fields, including information sciences and the social sciences. DataFirst's participation provided a perspective from social science data curation in under-resourced countries. Daisy Selematsela and Wim Hugo of SADA discussed the development of Digital Data Centres in African countries. A spin-off from this conference was a proposal by SADA supported by DataFirst to develop a Network Data Centre for Socio-Economic Data in Africa was

awarded an ICSU grant. The project is aimed at assisting the effective curation and sharing of data within and among African countries.

**20111012: Southern Africa: ICPSR provides free data to Southern African universities**

DataFirst has taken on the role of Southern Africa's research data hub via an agreement with the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), in the US, to coordinate Southern African membership of this organisation. An international consortium of 700 academic institutions and research organizations, the ICPSR provides leadership and training in data access, curation, and methods of analysis for the international social science research community. The ICPSR provides members with online access to their data archive of more than 500,000 files from survey research in the social sciences. DataFirst is the core of what will become a federation of Southern African member institutions, and is tasked with assisting these institutions to join the Consortium and benefit from access to their data resources and research support. Two more SA universities - University of the Witwatersrand and University of Natal, have also joined the Consortium. Southern African universities interested in free membership of the SA federation can contact DataFirst's manager, Lynn Woolfrey, who is the Hub's Official Representative, at [lynn.woolfrey@uct.ac.za](mailto:lynn.woolfrey@uct.ac.za)

**20111017: Africa: World Bank's International Open Data Portal launched with African Data**

A decision by the World Bank in 2010 to make their data freely available has resulted in the launch of their Open Microdata site in 2011. The data portal provides survey data on many African countries and by making data freely available the Bank's open data initiative could assist evidence-based policymaking in these countries. The data portal, including the microdata site is at <http://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/home>

IASSIST member Lynn Woolfrey has worked with the World Bank to provide input for the development of the microdata portal, based on experience with DataFirst's online data dissemination projects. In October 2011 DataFirst from South Africa began an OEDC funded project to cite all publications based on African survey data and provide links to these from the World Bank's microdata portal. This on-going project will assist researchers to know what has been done with the data and in this way build on empirical research. The citations component will be launched in 2012.

Lynn Woolfrey, 20120605