**Module 3 – Liz Carolan – Implementing an open data initiative**

**Implementing an open data initiative**

So my name is Liz Carolan and I’m the International Development Manager.

**What makes and open data initiative successful?**

So implementing an Open Data initiative is ultimately about carrying in a piece of cultural and institutional change, and within that there’s probably five main things that you would want to think about when setting up an initiative to ensure that it’s successful. The first thing that we’ve seen in many successful initiatives is a strong leadership mandate. You want to make sure that as the team implementing the initiative encounters resistance to change, there’s a strong mandate from the top of the organisation to help them push through and overcome those challenges.

The second thing is the demand for the data. There’s very little point in you investing time, energy and capital in the publication of data, if there aren’t people out there who are willing and able to use that to create the value and services, products, ideas, from that data - which kind of takes us to the third point, which is about engagement. How are you going to build it from the very beginning? Engagement with potential users of data, with the outside world – be that in civil society, in the private sector, perhaps in academia – successful initiatives have… structured ways for getting feedback and engaging with users.

The next thing you want to think about is the cultural change aspects. It’s tempting to focus in on the technical aspects of implementing an Open Data initiative but ultimately those are the kind of challenges which have been solved, and are being solved by the community, and it’s the cultural change where you’re really going to encounter some of the challenges, and where the key to success lies.

Which brings us to the last characteristic of successful initiatives, which is that they think from the very beginning how they’re going to stage their initiative. We’ve seen quite a lot of processes where people have concentrated on publishing some data, and then publishing more data, focussed on quantity, whereas as our thinking is evolving, what we’re seeing now increasingly is that a focus on impact and on specific either sectors, or datasets, building engagement around those from the beginning is a much stronger way to make sure that an initiative is successful.

**Demand and supply: how those who produce open data can also use it.**

So ultimately Open Data requires us to think differently about the market for data. Traditionally we would have thought of certain institutions such as government as suppliers of data and others as users of data, whereas now what we see is government, civil society and the private sector all simultaneously being both suppliers and consumers of data.