

Chapter 7

Open Data

ABSTRACT

The chapter addresses the open data initiatives. The openness of data translates into the ease of access to information for the citizen. This chapter discusses the current status of, and recent evolution in, open data with the emphasis on open government data in the African data communities based on the findings of the Africa Open Data Barometer and the Africa Open Data Index. It addressed issues on the process of transforming national data ecosystems to a state where data from both conventional and new sources are being harnessed to inform decision-making better and enable sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the quantity and quality of data on social, economic, political and ecological activities are expanding exponentially. This is driven by growth in the numbers and analytical power of computers, machines and mobile devices; the spread of the Internet; the falling cost of data storage; and the surge in remote sensing, satellite and other technologies that are creating new data and tools on an unprecedented scale. It is also driven by a surge in demand for data from the public and private sectors and civil society, and by greater experimentation, innovation and adaptation in data production, dissemination and governance across multiple data communities (Sunlight Foundation, 2014)

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BACKGROUND

The global open data community makes strong arguments for the potential applications of open data in enabling innovations that are catalysing social, economic and political transformations by changing social and economic sectors. Openness is seen as foundational in harnessing the opportunities for data innovation that are unlocked when data cross geographical, territorial, sectoral, disciplinary, social and other boundaries. Data generated by citizen groups have also been shown to hold great promise, while the power of high-quality official statistics and scientific data in helping inform policymaking has long been recognized (European Commission, 2011, Fitzgerald, A., Hooper, N., Cook, J., S., 2013).

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

A Consensus on data in Africa was adopted at the Eighth Joint Annual Meeting of the African Union Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, of the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, March 30 and 31, 2015.

Data Revolution in Africa

The United Nations Development Program, the African Center for Statistics of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the World Wide Web Foundation and the Open Data for Development Network have published the first edition of the report on the Revolution data in Africa: Africa Data Revolution Report 2016.

This is a biennial report that highlights developments in the national data ecosystems on the continent. It attempts to map the continent's data ecosystem, referring to the production, distribution and use of data by public and private sector actors, and civil society, in relation to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (Economic Commission for Africa, 2017, 2018).

The Principles of the Africa Data Revolution

(Economic Commission for Africa, 2015) provide the following principles:

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