Capacity Building Needs Assessment

Deliverable no: D3.1.1
01 December 2016
## Deliverable title
Capacity Building Needs Assessment

## Month of Delivery
M6

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## Date
01 December 2016

## Version information

<table>
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<th>Version</th>
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<td>28 June 2016</td>
<td>version for internal review</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>15 July 2016</td>
<td>internal review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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1 introduction

Open data\(^1\) has a huge potential to solve the significant challenges facing agriculture and can benefit the agricultural rural communities.

Open access to agricultural and nutritionally relevant data is vital for innovation in agriculture and value chain development driven by farmers, farmer organisations, researchers, extension experts, policy-makers, governments, private sector and civil society stakeholders\(^2\).

The Global Open Data for Impact and capacity Development in Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN Action Project) is a 3.5 year project lead by a Joint Venture of international partners with a strong agriculture, nutrition, data and ICTs record such as Wageningen UR –Alterra, AgroKnow, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR), the Land Portal, Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA), Open Data Institute (ODI), AidData, Institute of Development Studies (IDS). The project proposal was formulated in response to the DFID call-Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition Initiative: Open Data Research and Capacity-Building. It aims to enabling an effective use of open data in tackling the food security and nutrition challenges by building the capacity of potential stakeholders to both understand the potential of open data for agriculture and nutrition and to engage with it practically.

In this regard, the objective of the Focal area n.3 is to building the capacity and diversity of open data users leading to a more effective use of open data in tackling key agriculture and nutrition challenges.

In order to effectively achieve this objective, and most specifically to build the capacity of potential users (e.g., researchers, farmers, journalists, citizens, policy-makers and politicians) to understand the full potential of open agricultural/nutrition data, we are looking to use some innovative approaches to raise awareness within this group about the benefits of open data. The inception phase will be used as an opportunity to determine possible interventions and benchmark existing e-skills for open data handling amongst project actors.

2 literature review

The United Nations report on the data revolution for sustainable development\(^3\) stressed the need for improving governments and citizens capacity in data literacy in order to remove barriers between people and data. The report outlines the fact that strengthening national capacities in open data production and usage is considered as essential for any data revolution, particularly in developing countries where the basic infrastructure is often lacking. The capacity development strength of the partners delivering Focal Area 3 is that each partner has not only the technical capabilities to develop new tools and working methods, but that they are also able to scale up activities through established networks encompassing both North and South regions.

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1 Open data is defined as data that anyone can access. More at http://opendatahandbook.org/guide/en/what-is-open-data/

2 www.godan.info

3 http://www.opendatarevolution.org/report/
There are few studies in this area of capacity development either defining the necessary e-skills nor examining the success of capacity development such as the one from Ubaldi’s⁴ but one that is of particular interest in a developing country context is that by Mitrovic⁵.

This study, which is aiming to suggest how developing countries can implement Open Government Data (OGD) set out the following:

1. Establish what e-skills are needed for efficient and effective provision of open government data
2. Establish what e-skills are needed for beneficial use of OGD by citizens in South Africa and Namibia (for the purpose of this specific study);
3. Determine what is the role of intermediaries in this OGD supply-usage continuum;
4. Explore the OGD related e-skilling policy-making implications and suggest further actions

Many of the lessons learnt from this study including a classification of relevant e-skills can be applied to this project. The term e-skills is refereed as to the ability the ability to use and develop ICTs to adequately participate in an environment in which ICT is a requirement for advancement in government, business, education and society in general. The study determined demands for technological and societal policy which show the types of e-skills capacity which required to be built in this instance.

The reviewed literature made by the author, revealed that many governments struggle with access to and usability of data. The usability of open data is related to the quality of the provided data, which often causes reluctance from governments to publish open data. This is, according to the study, attributed to the lack of capacity in data management or having no idea of the kinds of data needed in the market place. Thus, policy-makers should ensure that government officials, as OGD providers, are equipped with appropriate e-skills data management and data science skills, hence ensuring data users will obtain usable, high quality data. On the other hand, the technology related OGD policies should focus on e-skilling users to effectively use various technologies such as wired (e.g. PCs) or wireless (mobile phones, tablets or laptops) devices for accessing and manipulating Open Data.

The study outlines as well the key role played by OGD intermediaries to bridge the digital divide, and make OGD available and useful to majority of citizens. According to the author, intermediaries are therefore the best placed in connecting open data providers and open data users. However, in order to perform their task successfully, these intermediaries must be appropriately skilled. E-skilling of OGD intermediaries can be done through self-learning, short courses or more formal education.

Within the context of the GODIVAN project this can be related to the activities foreseen during the inception phase. The approach guiding Focal area 3 is to engage and enhance open data capacities of intermediaries such as journalists, CSOs working with open data providers through face to face and online trainings.

In this respect, journalists can bring data alive to illustrate a story and make policy discussions more transparent. Finally but most importantly providing farmers and civil society organisations can be reached at scale with the capacity to use open data through local training and innovative approaches using ICTs.

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⁵ Zoran Mitrovic (2015), Building Open Data Capacity through e-Skills Acquisition, Conference: 3rd Internationala
3 Methodology

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has published extensively on capacity development and, in particular, on assessing capacity needs, defining capacity development as ‘the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time’. UNDP approach can be described as the following: first assess the existing capacity, then assess future capacity envisaged by answering the question – where do we want to go? – and from these two, identify the capacity gaps. Strategies can then be developed to fill the gaps.

In conformity with the UNDP approach and other UN agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the GODAN project will similarly align to this approach as we firstly recognise that support the capacity development process requires identifying the existing activities and what additional capacities may be needed to reach the desired outcomes. This exercise, to be conducted during the inception phase, will help to understand the capacity skills and needs that will serve as backbone to develop and implement the capacity development action plan that will serve to address the bottlenecks in open data use in the thematic areas identified within the project. It will also constitute the baseline for consequent activities foreseen during the implementation phase such as the development and delivery of training courses materials and of innovative self-training products.

The baseline survey would be shared amongst the GODAN members, partners’ of the GODAN Action project, as well as with other key actors in open data field to ensure a widening participation.

3.1 The Process

Under the above framework, the baseline survey was planned to fulfil GODAN Action Activity 3.1.1 “Assess capacity development needs of target groups”. This common exercise developed within all WP 3 partners, will be developed in consultation with DFID. The overall objectives of the baseline survey are to identify the most promising areas and identify the needs, incentives and barriers of key actors in the selected thematic areas and establish their capacities working with the GODAN secretariat and members.

3.1.1 Phase 1. Desk Research and Mapping exercise

The mapping exercise is a first step to guide through this process. The exercise seeks to summarize the existing needs in open data with a special focus on agriculture and nutrition domain, reviewing and building on advances made in recent years. It will provide a snapshot of the existing capacities and training resources in the field of open data, areas where gaps in data hinder the full engagement of end users, existing open data initiatives and sources that can be tapped to address an effective use of open data, and new opportunities using open data.

Initial research will be conducted via the internet to develop a database of existing training courses on open data offered from different organisations. These organisations could eventually be helping in providing more information on the actual training they currently provide. These organisations would include: government organisations, civil society, non-governmental organisation, research networks, academic institutions, media groups, etc.
3.1.2 Phase 2: Survey Development and Distribution

One or Two questionnaires (To be decided) will be developed and send to the different stakeholders. One of the questionnaire could be tailored and directed towards researchers and data publishers, while the other one targeting journalists/social media practitioners and communities.

The questionnaires will be developed following the ODI Training Needs Analysis (TNA) and it will be conducted among representatives of the organisations identified during the desk research/mapping exercise. This survey will also be helpful to refine the profile of the organisations providing open data trainings. The inputs received from the survey(s) will be evaluate and analysed and will fed into the development and implementation of a capacity development plan to address barriers in open data usage. The questionnaire(s) will be developed online (created via Survey Monkey).

At the same time, WP3 partners will develop online training materials taking into account the needs identified during the assessment needs exercise.

The WP3 consortium will focus on building capacity using four approaches and will assess their efficacy.

1. Face to face: to promote open data training with existing ICT training providers and help improve open data materials.
2. ‘Workbench’ activities: with multiple stakeholders on an open data project building their applications and learning about key success factors.
3. E-training: to develop online training courses based on existing approaches with FAO.
4. Self-learning: in particular, innovative approaches to learning using mobile phones.

All materials produced for each training event will be uploaded in an ‘open data learning repository’ to ensure efficiency and knowledge sharing among capacity development activities. This will enhance capacity on data production and data curation amongst different stakeholder groups such as data producers and researchers.

4 Needs Assessment Survey of Open Data Users

Survey Structure /Tentative questions

1. Name
2. Gender
3. Organisation
4. Role
5. What is the geographic coverage of your organisation?
6. Do you work with data in your job?
7. If so, how often do you interact with data in your work?
8. Do you manage people who work with data?
9. If so, how regularly do they work with data?
10. How much do you know about open data?
11. What open data standards or guidelines does your organization rely on?
12. Which data tool(s) you work more?
13. What data tool(s)/guidelines you rely mostly on to inform your work?
14. What are the main challenges you encounter within your work with open data? (Knowledge, access, use, share, source verification?)
15. Do you feel your organisation uses data well?
16. How many trainings/ capacity development activities have you been taking in the field of open data?
17. If so, can you please describe briefly it?
18. What were the training materials used during this training?
19. Are you applying these skills in your work?
20. Are there any resources that would be useful to your work but still missing?
21. What data skills would benefit you in your work?
22. Would you like to be involved in more initiatives (trainings/workshops, seminars) on open data?
23. What is your favourite learning approach? face2face or online?
24. Are there any suggestions you would like to share with us?