

Post-2015 Data Test Research Initiative Unfolds

www.post2015datatest.com

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WHERE WE ARE AT

The core research phase of the Post-2015 Data Test is currently underway. The website for the initiative has been launched – www.post2015datatest.com – which provides the latest information on events, publications and commentary on the initiative. Research teams in Bangladesh, Canada, Senegal, Tanzania, and Turkey have held inception workshops to launch the initiative at the country level, engaging a wide array of stakeholders including policymakers, representatives from national statistical offices and civil society organizations. In Peru, the research team has held the first in a series of planned meetings with local stakeholders. Over the month of May, research teams in Ghana and Sierra Leone will hold their country level inception workshops.

On April 28-30, 2014, the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) hosted a mid-stream workshop in Nairobi, Kenya. The workshop was attended by representatives from each research team and experts from organizations heavily engaged in international discussions on post-2015 and the data revolution, such as the UN Statistics Division, the UN Foundation, PARIS21, the Overseas Development Institute and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The agenda focused on unpacking lessons learned from the research initiative so far, problem-solving key challenges arising from the country studies, and next steps. A number of key lessons have emerged to date.



Nairobi Workshop Participants (Source: PASGR)

EMERGING LESSONS

Implementation

In terms of project implementation, the importance of providing flexibility to country teams to adapt the methodology and communications components of the project to their local context has been critical. For example, the methodology for the project includes a one day inception workshop to launch the initiative at the country level, followed by focus groups and interviews. In the case of the Peru study however, researchers found that it was difficult to obtain participation by key stakeholders across sectors and thematic areas for a full day. Rather, the team opted to make use of a series of smaller, half-day meetings to discuss specific goal areas with relevant stakeholders.

In comparison, the Bangladesh inception workshop was attended by over 75 participants from government, civil society, and international partners. In the case of Senegal, the Minister of Planning opened the inception workshop, which prompted significant media attention on the initiative.

On the communications and outreach side, country context plays an important role in determining the appropriateness of particular forms of communication. Overall, there has been a need to be flexible in terms of how teams make use of blogs, opinion pieces, social media, and engagement with the media in general, and for different audiences. At the workshop in Nairobi, participants highlighted the value of developing different communications and outreach strategies for the global, regional and national levels. It was recognized that while blogs and opinion pieces may make sense for global audiences, for example, they are not always relevant at the country level, particularly in instances where the media is already involved in following the research process.

Country Context and Stakeholder Interest

The Nairobi workshop revealed a wide variety of experiences between countries in terms of level of interest and engagement by local stakeholders on the project. The inception workshops in low-income countries, particularly Senegal, Bangladesh and Tanzania, were widely attended by stakeholders across sectors, generating quite a bit of excitement around the initiative. Reflections from the Turkish and Canadian teams suggest that it is much more challenging for them to engage domestic constituencies who may be unaware of the post-2015 process or fail to see its relevance to the national agenda.

Making Universal Country Specific

Based on the experiences of the research teams, there is little question that the international community will have a significant challenge making the universal post-2015 agenda country specific at the national level going forward. All teams received (and continue to receive) feedback from national stakeholders on the goals, targets and indicators being examined under the initiative. The goal areas include, broadly, poverty, employment and inclusive growth, education, governance, environmental sustainability and disaster resilience, energy and infrastructure, and global partnership for sustainable development. All teams are looking at two sets of targets and indicators under each potential goal area: 1) shared targets and indicators for all research teams to examine which will provide a basis for comparability across studies; and 2) targets and indicators selected to represent country specificity.

With respect to the goals, a number of teams raised issues regarding the relevance of “global partnership for sustainable development” for developing countries – what types of targets and indicators represent Senegal, Bangladesh, Sierra Leone, and Ghana’s commitments to global partnership, for example? What types of targets and indicators can be selected, to measure progress at the country level, that make sense for these countries, as well as Canada, Turkey and Peru?

With respect to targets and indicators, all teams have raised question regarding the list of shared targets and indicators; while most of them can be measured in all countries in theory, it does not mean they make sense for all countries in practice. For example, measuring the proportion of the population that lives under \$1.25 USD (PPP) per day does not make sense in Canada, though we know this will likely be an indicator included in the global goal area for ending extreme poverty going forward.

With respect to the country determined targets and indicators, teams recognized that the challenge is not so much about identifying priorities (i.e. targets), but rather, determining appropriate indicators by which to measure progress.

Positive Spillovers

Teams are already seeing positive spillovers from their engagement on the Post-2015 Data Test project. In January 2014, team members from Senegal, Tanzania, Canada and Bangladesh participated in the UNDP’s [Dialogue on Data and Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#). Researchers from Senegal have participated in other initiatives related to the identification of post-2015 priorities, particularly on food security, and are also liaising with other initiatives on the data revolution. In Peru, researchers from GRADE are participating in government consultations on post-2015 and accountability and looking at the potential for the Peru case study to serve as an input. From Canada, preliminary findings from the April inception workshop will be presented at the [Canadian Association for the Study of International Development](#) annual conference at the end of May.

NEXT STEPS

Over the next few months, country teams will be finalizing research inputs for the project, including conducting focus groups and key informant interviews as well as finalizing the data mapping components. In the meantime, a number of outputs are planned for the interim, including the finalization and publication of country inception workshop reports and *In-Progress Notes* for each country.

Over the summer, country research reports will undergo peer review and finalization for publication. NSI, CPD and Southern Voice will also begin drafting and finalizing the global synthesis report, a key outcome of the project.