

**Concept Note: Design Shop – Building Capacity for African Development Data  
 Monday January 19 and Tuesday January 20, 2015 -- Nairobi, Kenya**

The concept note describes how PASGR plans to identify and advance a capacity development initiative to realise the objectives of the data revolution in Africa. As an innovator in capacity development in the social/political sciences, PASGR will bring together African and non-African organisations around a comprehensive “Capacity for African Development Data” agenda. The “Design Shop” is intended to generate analysis and ideas that will be used to form a PASGR-convened **Working Group on African Capacity for Development Data**, expressly to drive this agenda forward in 2015 and beyond.

**Context: The Post 2015 Global Development Agenda and the “Data Revolution”**

As the shape of Post-2015 global development agenda continues to emerge, attention has focussed on turning the call for a ‘data revolution’ into a set of concrete proposals that, among other uses, will be integrated into the UN Secretary-General’s Synthesis Report on Post-2015. In late August 2014, the UN Secretary-General announced an Independent Expert Advisory Group (IEAG) on the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development to provide him with inputs to shape “an ambitious and achievable vision” for a future development agenda beyond 2015 to succeed the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Identifying and addressing many of the practical implications of a “data revolution” has become the focus of attention of many organisations and groups, even before final agreement on global development goals, targets and indicators.

The centrality of data to the framing, measurement and monitoring of global and national development goals is widely accepted. Implicit in this recognition is the need for investment in human and institutional capacity, which is especially acute in Africa, although there are a few examples of African innovation in data that have potential lessons for actors within and outside the region.

**African Development and the Data Revolution**

A variety of organisations and groups have brought valuable attention to the challenges of the data revolution in Africa, such as the work jointly led by the Centre for Global Development (CGD) and the African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC). At the country level in Africa, work has also focused on aspects such as: the systems of national statistics; the “testing” of data availability against indicative Post-2015 goals; and the potential of open data to impact resource allocation for poverty eradication.<sup>1</sup>

In its activities related to the Post-2015 agenda, the **Partnership for African Social & Governance Research (PASGR)** has increasingly focused on the issue of development data. At the 2014 UNDP “Dialogue: Data and Accountability for the Post-2015 Development Framework”, PASGR reported on the outcomes of an “African Forum on the Data Revolution”, framing some of the challenges associated with realizing a data revolution in Africa as having three strands – capacity, contextual and process.

CHALLENGES -- THREE STRANDS		
CAPACITY	CONTEXTUAL	PROCESS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uneven technical capacity of national actors.</li> <li>• Building a shared sense of ownership – so that data collected and used is relevant to African actors and not exogenously driven or owned.</li> <li>• Addressing legal gaps and ambiguities related to information ownership, privacy rights and freedom of information (public and private sector data).</li> <li>• Technology, infrastructure and connectivity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of informal social and economic activity outside the scope of conventional registries and databases, especially in fragile and conflict affected states.</li> <li>• Dealing with acute differences in capacity across African countries.</li> <li>• Data for policy monitoring and linkage to global goals/national development targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating national cross-stakeholder engagement.</li> <li>• Mobilizing the research community (think tanks and universities).</li> <li>• Uncoordinated data collection activities across government institutions.</li> <li>• Overcoming skepticism/change management strategies.</li> <li>• Engaging local resources and local actors.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> These examples relate respectively to country studies undertaken by PARIS21, three African country studies that formed part of a study on “Unpacking the Data Revolution at the Country Level” undertaken by Southern Voice, CPD and NSI with PASGR support, and country studies in Kenya and Uganda by Development Initiatives.

These and other global and regional activities directly or indirectly draw attention to the need for capacity development, especially the capacity of individuals to create and/or use development data, and who may work in a remarkably diverse range of organisations.

The data revolution has sharpened the attention to the question of the capacity of African organisations and individuals to be effective producers and users of data. PASGR sees the “data revolution” as a unique opportunity to connect data and African development, and emphasise that data capacity building should reflect the following:

**In Africa, all Data is Development Data** -- In the African context, the imperative of building more inclusive economies and need for determined responses to diverse societal and governance challenges, will occupy African policy actors for many years. In this sense, all data has potential value for African development regardless of whether its collection is driven or enabled by the private sector, the state, or by civil society. African development requires a uniquely comprehensive and inclusive approach to data, and similarly to data capacity building efforts.

**Data Needs and Users are Multi-level** -- As noted in a 2013 PASGR “data revolution” concept note, data and research evidence will be needed at three levels for *any* development goals to be meaningfully achieved:

- At the **global level** in terms of the information to establish progress against any indicator used to monitor global development goals and targets;
- At the **national level** in terms of providing evidence that the policy instruments chosen by governments to help achieve *national priorities* and *national targets* (including, but not limited, to those related to global goals), are in fact doing so, or if not, shed light on why;
- At the **local level** where the delivery actions of state and local services, as well as those of civil society and the private sector, most directly affect people, in order to establish impact and validate that the most vulnerable targeted are indeed being reached.

**There is Significant Diversity in Data Capacity Needs** – The spectrum of actors currently or potentially involved in development data is very broad. For some, the capacity gap and needs are better understood than for others – for example, national statistics organisations (NSOs) have received considerable attention to defining capacity issues, although much remains to be done in addressing the gaps. For other groups, data capacity gaps and needed technical capacity is less well understood. This includes civil society organisations, universities and think tanks, media and other groups. Moreover, African government agencies, at the national and sub-national levels, play a critical role in data collection through the functioning of various registries, and the routine collection of crucial education, health, income, real property, mobility and other data. In many countries, data generated by government agencies is a key input into national statistics, the rigour of which is dependent on the quality and comprehensiveness of the data provided. The private sector increasingly plays a critical role in generating and using data, and face challenges in finding well-trained staff with solid technical and business skills that enable firms to maximize the utility of available data for commercial benefit and/or public good. Lastly, public education should not be ignored as, among other things, the benefits of data and privacy implications need to be more broadly understood at all strata of African societies.

**Capacity Development Delivery Solutions will Involve Different Actors** – Broadly speaking, the design and delivery of data capacity building will involve two sets of actors:

- **African universities**, which will need to respond to the longer-term challenge of preparing data literate graduates in a variety of disciplinary programmes. These graduates will form the future work force for private firms, NSOs, civil society organisations, media, government bodies, regional and international organisations. They will also need to produce the next generation of African scholars able to teach and lead research that utilises (and creates) data much more innovatively than is the case today;
- **Professional development and training organisations** that can respond rapidly to the current needs of organisations and people already in the African labour market who, in the short term, need to be more effective in the generation and use of development data. These providers will need to play a key role in broadening technical skills and data literacy.

Across this spectrum of actors, there will be some commonality in specific capacity needs, as well as acute differences beyond the variance associated with national circumstances. In Africa, the data revolution will also need to take into account the particular challenges presented in fragile and conflict afflicted states, where the machinery of government is weak or absent, and challenges of data gathering, access and use are pronounced.

There are potentially a myriad of dimensions to capacity building in the arena of development data in Africa. An open and participatory process is required to: 1) identify the varieties of capacity development efforts needed (and consider priorities); 2) begin to scope out the specific nature of, and audiences for, professional development, training, higher education and other modalities of capacity building; and, 3) inform understanding of knowledge gaps and the need for policy-oriented research.

### **Objectives and Structure of the Design Shop**

PASGR, with support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, is hosting a “Design Shop” expressly to identify the potential elements, content requirements and modes of delivery of capacity development that would target individuals and organisations currently or potentially involved in development data collection/use in Africa. The **Design Shop: Building Capacity for African Development Data** will use three plenaries to systematically explore capacity development at the regional or country level:

**Plenary 1 --- Lessons from national investigation of aspects of development data systems, collection and use.** This will draw on findings expressly relevant to capacity building, from country level studies in Africa, as well as the reflections of representatives from six types of national actors: the private sector, media, civil society, national planning agencies, universities and think tanks.

**Plenary 2 -- Lessons from global and regional investigation of the “data revolution”.** This will include outcomes from the IEAG report, with particular attention to recommendations relevant to capacity development generally and in Africa specifically, as well as CGD/APHRC report “Delivering on the Data Revolution in Sub-Saharan Africa”. These inputs will also be accompanied by contributions of representatives from the six types of national actors noted above.

**Plenary 3 -- Lessons from African and Non-African capacity development experience.** This will include perspectives on the design and execution of learning that focuses on general data literacy and specific competencies, involving a variety of audiences, and the pedagogical/delivery experience derived from innovation in adult learning and technologies. It will draw on the experience of trainers involved in the “big data summer schools” at the Leiden Institute for Data Science”, workshop facilitators from Ushahidi in Kenya, and Twaweza in Tanzania, as well as those involved in undergraduate and graduate curriculum design in data sciences. The plenary will also explore the potential role of providers of capacity development in Africa (with or without collaboration with non-African partners), including the role of universities and training providers.

The goal of the first two plenaries is to help participants think about *specific capacity gaps that exist in relation to different actors*. In contrast, the third plenary will help inform ideas about the *nature of training, education, or other technology enabled learning approaches* that would be useful in addressing different gaps/actors.

In each plenary, panel members will provide short presentations, followed by moderated discussion to generate interaction among panel members and Design Shop participants. The three plenaries will occupy the first half of the Design Shop, and are intended to stimulate participants’ thinking around ideas for building human capacity supporting data for development in Africa.

The second half of the event will focus on drawing out specific ideas and recommendations for capacity development activities in the region.

To do this, participants will form three “Design Teams” on Day 2. Each Design Team, working with co-facilitators, will reflect on the plenary discussions, hear ideas and experiences from within their group, and scope out two capacity development recommendations, using a template provided that will aid consideration of objectives, approach, target audience, content coverage, delivery mode and other aspects. Design groups will be expressly encouraged to consider use of technology in learning, as well as addressing capacity needs of those already engaged (or potentially engaged) in development data, and the emerging generation of development data users. Recommendations may take different forms and involve beneficiaries from a wide and diverse audience, including but not limited to people in: national statistics offices, private firms, media, civil society, government bodies at different levels, the general public, and students at different levels from public school to post-graduate study.

In a final plenary, each team will present its recommendations. It is possible that some recommendations will be similar to those presented by another group. Rather than being seen as duplication, this is in fact a desired outcome, as it both validates the merits of a proposal, and provides an opportunity to blend the best features of two similar ones.

### **Design Shop Outcomes**

PASGR's believes that the ideas and recommendations arising from the Design Shop will have potential value to any regional or non-African organisations interested in realising a "data revolution". In this regard, the Design Shop outcomes will be "open-source" knowledge contributions available to anyone wishing to pursue a specific data capacity intervention, or enhance an existing one. A Design Shop report will be produced and made public, in addition to being provided to all participants and their respective organisations.

However, PASGR has an explicit goal beyond the above. The Design Shop will provide the basis (and point of departure) for establishment of a **Working Group on African Capacity for Development Data**. PASGR will convene this working group in the first quarter of 2015, and support its activities, which will initially focus on comprehensively charting future data capacity building activities, including opportunities for partnerships with African and non-African organisations, as well as prospective funders. Working group members will be drawn from regional organisations, government bodies, private sector, media, civil society, universities and think tanks. The working group will help ensure that incremental approaches are found that complement the efforts being led by other organisations that may focus specifically on a certain actor, country or sub-region. In this sense, the working group will focus on gaps that are currently not being addressed, and consider priorities within Sub-Saharan Africa.