

Memorandum / Note

TO / DESTINATAIRE IDRC Board of Governors

DATE June , 2018

FROM /
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SUBJECT / OBJET Management response to the independent evaluation of the Open Data for Development (OD4D) program

Purpose: For discussion

This memo presents Management's response to the independent evaluation of the OD4D program.

In order to provide accountability to the variety of stakeholders, The OD4D Donors Committee commissioned an independent evaluation carried out from October 2016 to May 2017. Management is satisfied with the conduct and findings of the independent evaluation and the results of the program. Recommendations will be taken into consideration for the second phase of OD4D. Also, management would like to highlight that important lessons emerge from the review: (1) the value of the ecosystem approach, (2) the flexible and successful combination of using both global and locally-based partners, and (3) the need to commit to long-term capacity building based on an agenda led by local stakeholders.

Program Results

Management is pleased the evaluation found that the OD4D program has made critical contributions to advancing the open data (OD) field, and that the program achieved – and surpassed in a number of dimensions - the expected outputs and outcomes set out in the initial program document. We agree with the findings that more progress was made around efforts to develop an inclusive global agenda, increase open data capacities in government and civil society actors, and to create instruments that provide quantitative and qualitative references for the open data field. Aligned with the recommendations, recent investments have been increasingly focused on sector specific demands with a specific focus on reaching the most marginalized. We expect that recent investments will yield even greater impact in future years expanding on the foundation of research developed in this phase.

Program Design

Management is satisfied the evaluators found the OD4D program was able to set the wheels in motion in a complex context and without a clear blueprint. The theory of change, which was reiterated in 2015 to include new partners, was acknowledged as purposeful, results-oriented. The evaluators found that it logically reinforces the commitment to keep working with key partners. We will continue to re-examine the program design and update the theory of change to acknowledge the rapid evolution of the field.

Program Management

Management is pleased with the evaluators' findings that the OD4D program was effectively implemented, and their acknowledgement of the importance of the personal dedication of the small program management team. While the expansion of the management team depends on attracting funding partnership, management will explore options to improve coordination of the network with IDRC's limited resources. Improving knowledge management, ensuring gender-responsive outcomes, and developing a sense of community all require significant resources. An option IDRC will explore is outsourcing a greater portion of program coordination and event planning to existing partners.

Policy Influence

Management is pleased with the findings that the program has helped instill a notion of 'no-turning-back' when it comes to openness for public data. While acknowledging the complexity of the relationship between research and policy, OD4D's ability to foster greater political commitment to open data principles - reflected in new laws and regulations, open data portals, and evolving standards - shows the value of a locally driven and networked means of working. However, the evaluation highlights more needs to be done to evolve from policy and practice reforms to improving the well-being of the most marginalized. This is difficult for a research and innovation program to achieve, however more will be done to understand the relationship between the release and use of open data and the achievement of various development outcomes.

Issues for IDRC Governors and Senior Management

The evaluations highlighted a set of seven recommendations for IDRC. Under each recommendation, management has documented how it will address the recommendation.

1. Greater emphasis on the "for development" side of OD4D

We agree with the recommendation that the OD4D program should increase its focus on demand-side issues, such as putting more emphasis on users, particularly as they relate to their development needs. Building on the success of establishing a locally-driven global agenda and in unlocking the supply of open data, the OD4D program will deepen its work in specific sectors where research shows that that we can achieve greater benefit for the most marginalized.

2. To expand (and define) the network vision of OD4D.

Management recognizes the need to improve the network vision of OD4D. As three new hubs become operational in 2017 (MENA, Francophone and Anglophone Africa), we will engage our hubs and global partners to further develop a network strategy. Also, OD4D will commit to continue to engage the broad community in reflecting on the state of the open data field, leading to the next International Open Data Conference..

3. Greater engagement with the broader Data for Development community.

Management recognizes the value of strategic partnerships. It will explore ways to better acknowledge contributions made by other donors, which are mobilizing resources to the field and develop closer collaborations with the Open Data Charter, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) and the Open Government Partnership (OGP).

4. Investing in strategic partnerships.

Management agrees that the OD4D donor coordination mechanism was crucial to achieving the results obtained in this phase of the program and expanding this coordination will continue to be crucial to consolidate a network and maximize its impacts in the forthcoming years.

5. Focus on engaging more with Open Data intermediaries.

Management agrees, and the new action plan includes growing engagement beyond policy makers and technologists to new actors in media, NGOs and other sector specific network of intermediaries.

6. Gender as an operational OD4D priority.

Management acknowledges the concerns in terms of gender-sensitive programming and has already made efforts to develop a strategy to overcome barriers within the sector. A number of actions are proposed to focus on the release and use of gendered data sets as well as building capacities in this area. For example, current and future work planned for 2017 includes: a working group led by the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to support action in this area; the use of open data to help prevent and eliminate violence against women in Latin America, and projects developing data skills for women and girls in Haiti and Egypt. Finally, an increased focus in this area led to a new set of commitments around Feminist Open Government in 2018.

7. Knowledge management at the core of the OD4D network.

Management agrees with the need to formulate and implement an explicit knowledge management strategy in alignment with the OD4D network strategy, and has begun to connect some grantees with new resources to support the development of such a strategy.