Management's response to the independent evaluation of the OD4D program

August 2, 2017

Purpose and Background

Open Data for Development (OD4D) is a global partnership to advance the creation of locally-driven and sustainable open data ecosystems around the world. The first phase of the program, from January 2015 until March 2017, was funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the World Bank, Global Affairs Canada, and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). During this time, the OD4D program invested approximately CAD$ 9.6 million in projects based in over 50 organizations from all five continents on open data-related policies, standards, datasets, innovations and research geared towards realizing positive development outcomes.

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.[1] The evaluation assessed the achievement of OD4D program outputs and outcomes, whether intended or unintended, positive or negative. Also as part of accountability, the evaluation judged aspects of relevance, sustainability, and efficiency. The evaluation also considered the work of the Partnership on Open Data (POD), carried out by the Open Data Institute (ODI) and Open Knowledge International (OKI) from September 2013 until December 2014, and funded by the World Bank. POD merged into the OD4D program in 2015 through the mutual agreement of the World Bank and IDRC. IDRC's Evaluation, Policy and Evaluation Division was responsible to ensure the independence and the quality of the external evaluation.

Response to Recommendations

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, the OD4D Action Plan for 2017-2020, detailed in Annex 1.   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

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[1] Evaluation available at http://od4d.net/result/evaluation-of-the-open-data-for-development-program-2014-2016/

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.

Gender

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. Also, OD4D partners will be receiving targeted gender mentorship
and additional financial resources to target gender programming, which will help support
OD4D advancements in this area over the coming year.

Response to the overall recommendations

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. In fact, OD4D has invested an increasing amount of its budget on
activities related to "scale effective use", which at OD4D's inception accounted for less than
20% of the total portfolio, but reached 37% of investments in 2017[2]. 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.

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.

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).

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.

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[2] The other categories are "catalyse action"(12% in 2017), "support to governments"(21%),
"monitor impact" (30%)

Annex 1 - Actions related to individual recommendations.

	Recommendation	Action
Program results	Extending the 'regionalization' of the OD4D ecosystem.	Accepted/Ongoing - an increasing proportion of activities are led by regional initiatives.
	Strengthening relations with National Statistical Offices.	Accepted/Ongoing - increase collaboration between NSO and regional hubs and design of a strategy for global engagement.
	Exploiting complementarity with the OGP OD Working Group	Accepted - in contact with WG chairs and waiting on restructuring of the OGP working group.
Program design	Strengthen both ends of the OD value chain.	Accepted - actions incorporated as part of the research agenda in recent and future grants.
	Tighten networks and communities.	Accepted - the new "state of open data" project (under development) aims to critically take stock of progress across regions and sectors.
	Strengthen the 4D component of the OD4D equation.	Accepted - follows ongoing trend in approved projects, which are more focused in underserved regions and communities.
Program management	Strengthen and expand the Communications function	Accepted -initial improvements made to the website, and existing communication tools. An expanded communications strategy will be developed as part of the network strategy (below).
	Further refine the Theory of Change.	Accepted - continuous discussion with the OD4D network and other partners leading to the next IODC.
	Examine divergences within the OD4D ecosystem.	Accepted - OD4D will consult with stakeholders and emerging partnerships and review its role in the current global ecosystem.
Policy incidence	Keep driving the instrumental components of OD policies.	Accepted - actions are part of existing action plan developed with nodes. Potential for future expansion.
	Support networks as instrument of policy incidence.	Accepted - actions are part of existing action plan developed with nodes. More donor partners would be needed to expand existing and emerging networks.
	Informal networks count too.	Accepted - OD4D remains committed to catalyse informal networks through action-oriented events such as CAFDO, Condatos, AODC and IODC and other means.
Gender	Leveraging existing IDRC resources	Accepted - newly developed gender strategy

	for Gender.	includes a number of actions such mentorship focused programming. Potential for expansion.
	Investing on gender analysis for project design and implementation for significant returns.	Accepted - immediate actions include a Gender working group led by OD4D Mena and capacity building activities during AODC. Potential for expansion.
	Involving organizations with expertise on Gender and Data.	Accepted - A number of actions in course to focus on the release and use of gendered data sets as well as building capacities in this area.
Overall recommen dations	Greater emphasis on the 4D of OD4D.	Accepted -increasing number of actions aligned with overall investment trend, (approximately 37% of total budget in 2017).
	To expand (and define) the network vision of OD4D.	Accepted - OD4D will consult and engage the network, identifying ways to strengthen coordination and representation.
	Greater engagement with the D4D community.	Accepted - OD4D will explore links and new projects in the intersection with big data and official data for development (including emerging IDRC network on big data for sustainable development).
	Investing in strategic partnerships.	Accepted - OD4D will discuss and review its relationship with Charter, OGP and GPSDD.
	Focus on OD intermediaries.	Accepted- new action plan including growing engagement with media, NGOs and other sector specific network of intermediaries.
	Gender as an operational OD4D priority.	Accepted - a number of actions and agenda setting activities incorporated to the program, including mentorship and focused programming.
	Knowledge management at the core of the OD4D network.	Accepted - to formulate and implement a explicit knowledge management strategy in alignment with the OD4D network strategy.