

## **RDA 12 Plenary Meeting, Gaborone, Botswana: Interest Group on Data for Development**

**Wednesday, 7 November 2018, 16:00 – 17:30**  
**(Breakout 6 - WG/IG/BoF Working Meetings)**

### **Meeting title**

*Capacity Building for Data Management and Participation in International Surveys in Africa*

**Chair/group chair serving as contact person:** Ingvill C. Mochmann  
**Co-chairs:** Norman Mukasa, Simone Haasler

### **Introduction describing the activities and the scope of the group**

Data collection, data management, and statistical data analysis are the basis for monitoring the economic and social development of societies. In terms of understanding global developments and interlinkage between major social and economic dynamics, large-scale international surveys such as the annually run International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) are an important source of analysis. Based on a cross-national collaboration that started in 1984 with four founding members (Australia, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States) the ISSP today extends to over 50 member countries from all over the world. However, only two African countries (South Africa and Tunisia) are participating members of the ISSP.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, data generation and services related to the production and accessibility of reliable data to monitor social development and, ultimately, to contribute to reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) are only rudimentary developed and not always effectively produced and monitored by local actors. While in some countries national bureaus of statistics collect basic census-based and survey-based data, these data typically are not shared and not accessible to researchers. Some data collection is also organized by international organizations (like NGOs or the UN), which rely on their own selective data bases to support their respective development agenda. Where African initiatives have sought to foster data production and availability, alliances can only to very limited degree revert to support from African expertise.

The overall aim of the IG Data for Development is to address specific needs and challenges regarding data access and sharing in developing countries. This particular session is focusing on aspects related in particular to survey research in Sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Additional links to informative material related to the group**

<https://www.rd-alliance.org/groups/data-development.html>  
<https://www.rd-alliance.org/presentations-10th-plenary>

### **Meeting objectives**

By forming part of international data alliances and surveys, African countries facilitate and promote the spread of international standards of survey methodology and development in their countries. The proposed session seeks to address issues related to what is needed to increase the participation of African countries in international surveys. This includes aspects of data collection and sharing; national technology and infrastructure; data literacy and data management expertise; developing reliable data infrastructure and services; and, last but not least, the commitment needed from African stakeholders.

## Meeting agenda

### *Brief presentation of the session (5 minutes)*

#### **Aim of the session: Why international surveys in Africa?**

(Ingwill C. Mochmann, GESIS, Germany and session Chair)

### *Presentations (15 Minutes each)*

#### **1. Why survey data and data management in Africa? Benefits and challenges**

(Simone R. Haasler, GESIS, Germany)

GESIS - Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences Germany is the largest European infrastructure institute for the social sciences providing expert guidance and support at all stages of a research project with a special focus on the development of survey instruments and data collection as well as data analysis and management. GESIS is a key stakeholder in various international infrastructure and survey programs such as the European Social Survey, European Archive Association CESSDA and the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and supports a wide range of research institutions and public and private stakeholders. Based on recent collaborative initiatives, GESIS also engages in transferring its data knowledge and expertise to African countries, not least to support the participation of African countries in international survey programs to collect data for national and comparative research and data analysis. The presentation will outline two initiatives to support data expertise and data for development in African countries. The objective is to build up and strengthen data services related to the production and accessibility of reliable data to monitor social development and, ultimately, to contribute to reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### **Contact**

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#### **2. Comparative gains: Lessons from 15 years of South African participation in the International Social Survey Programme**

(Jarè Struwig & Benjamin Roberts, HSRC, South Africa)

In 2001, South Africa fielded its first International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in its national survey infrastructure, which was followed by full membership in 2003. Over the last fifteen years, the country has fielded each annual module as an integral part of the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS). This has brought considerable comparative insight to our understanding of important social sciences topics of global relevance, ranging from social inequality, to the role of government, religion and the environment. South Africa's long-term ISSP engagement however remains an exception within the African context, with Tunisia currently being the only other serving member of this important programme of research. To this end, there is increasing recognition and emphasis by the ISSP Secretariat and General Assembly on expanding ISSP coverage across the continent. Against this background, this paper reflects on the experiences and lessons learnt from South Africa's participation as an ISSP member, with the purpose of giving guidance to prospective country members from the continent, and encouraging progressively greater African participation in a series that continues to push the frontier of cross-national, public opinion evidence.

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**3. Afrobarometer experience**

(Robert Sentamu)

The Afrobarometer is an independent, non-partisan research instrument that measures the social, political and economic atmosphere in Africa. Afrobarometer surveys are conducted in more than 35 African countries on a regular basis. As the instrument relies on a standard set of questions, countries can be systematically compared and, ultimately, trends in public attitudes can be tracked over time. The Afrobarometer is dedicated to three main objectives: 1) To produce scientifically reliable data on public opinion in Africa; 2) To build institutional capacity for survey research; and 3) To broadly disseminate and apply survey results. Given its broad scope, the Afrobarometer is organised as an international collaborative enterprise. The Network consists of four core partners who are jointly responsible for project leadership and coordination: The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR South Africa), the Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), Institute for Development Studies (IDS Nairobi University) and the Institute for Empirical Research in Political Economy (IRREP Benin). The Afrobarometer Network also includes national partner institutions including NGOs, university research institutes, independent think tanks and private research firms that conduct the surveys. Topics covered include: Democracy, Governance, Livelihoods, Macro-economics and Markets, Social Capital, Crime, Participation, National Identity and other country-level development issues of interest. The Afrobarometer surveys results are fed directly into the policy process, usually through NGOs, decision-makers in government, policy advocates, donor agencies, journalists and researchers as well as Africans who wish to become informed and active citizens. Since 1999, the Afrobarometer has completed seven rounds of surveys covering 38 African countries and completing over 250,000 face-to-face interviews by 2015. Uganda Wilsken Agencies Ltd has been part of the Afrobarometer since the first round of surveys. The purpose of this presentation is to share our Afrobarometer experience, its evolution, success, challenges, struggles, adaptation and benefits.

**Contact:**

Robert Sentamu, Managing Director Wilsken Agencies Ltd (Uganda National Partner Institution for the Afrobarometer 2000-2012) and former Uganda Afrobarometer national investigator and member of the Afrobarometer Executive Committee

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**4. Key developments and challenges for running international surveys in East Africa**

(Norman Mukasa, Muteesa I Royal University, Uganda)

International Surveys are an important source of data to analyse global developments and inter-linkages between social and economic dynamics. However, key limitations for African countries to join such cross-national surveys are the high running costs, limited data management expertise,

weak national technology and underdeveloped skill infrastructure. In East Africa, the National Bureaus of Statistics collect basic census-based and survey-based data. These data typically are not shared and not widely accessible to researchers. Yet when accessibility is granted, the researchers tend to lack the skills to use the data. These challenges of National Bureaus of Statistics have seen the emergence of independent agencies and University research centres to generate data and provide consultancy services on data management. This presentation will describe the situation concerning data management capacities and initiatives in East Africa with emphasis on key developments and challenges for running international surveys.

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***General Discussion (20 Minutes)***

**Target audience: participants**

- Who are interested in survey research and methodology in general as well as large-scale, comparative surveys in particular
- Who conduct research in Africa, in particular survey-based research
- Who are interested in/ familiar with the development of data centers and open science in Africa
- Who are experienced with issues of relevance to the meeting objective as described above.

**Type of meeting**

Working meeting

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