



WHAT IS CITIZEN-GENERATED DATA AND WHAT IS THE DATASHIFT DOING TO PROMOTE IT?

THE DATASHIFT IS SEEKING TO INFORM AND INFLUENCE GLOBAL POLICY PROCESSES ON THE SDGS AND THE DATA REVOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS **CITIZEN-GENERATED DATA**?

Citizen-generated data is data that people or their organisations produce to directly monitor, demand or drive change on issues that affect them. It is actively given by citizens, providing direct representations of their perspectives and an alternative to datasets collected by governments or international institutions.

Anyone can set up a citizen-generated data initiative, and motivations for doing so vary widely. Sometimes there is not enough accurate data provided by a government, or a lack of trust between government and citizens – as was the case with **a project which gathered citizens in Beijing to build air quality sensors**¹ attached to kites that could produce an accurate, timely dataset on air quality in the city. The Chinese government wasn't publishing air quality data, and had criticised foreign institutions who tried to do so – the only quantitative data on this important topic came from the citizen-generated data initiative.

In other cases, citizens collect qualitative data to raise awareness of a topic that isn't getting enough attention from institutions – like **HarassMap**², which collects experiences of sexual harassment in Egypt. By providing an outlet for citizens who want to make their voices heard, citizen-generated data initiatives can make valuable contributions to understanding and addressing sustainable development issues.

1 <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2012-07/23/float-pollution-kites-beijing>

2 <http://harassmap.org/en/>

Sometimes citizens are simply better placed to gather data on a particular topic. Take, for example, **CyclePhilly**³ – it gathers data from citizens who bike ride around the area, and gives it directly to regional urban planners to inform their work on making Philadelphia a better place to ride a bike.

Citizen-generated data initiatives can harness the power of collective intelligence to contribute in areas where key data is missing – like deforestation in the Amazon.

ForestWatchers⁴ gives citizens a platform to monitor forests from the comfort of their own homes, simply by tagging photos and marking deforested areas. Here, the data that people are contributing fits into a much bigger narrative, and is invaluable to tracking and monitoring important issues like deforestation.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Citizen-generated data is a useful complement to institutional data, not a replacement for it. It can highlight issues that are important to people and feed their views up into higher-level policy debates, or be used to verify official narratives and datasets. The initiatives that create citizen-generated data can also empower people, giving them a way to engage with political processes that might otherwise seem removed from their lives.

WHAT IS THE DATASHIFT DOING?

The Datashift is gathering and sharing experiences in using citizen-generated data in civil society projects in our initial pilot locations: **Argentina, Nepal, and East Africa** (Kenya and Tanzania).

We're doing this by directly supporting projects using citizen-generated data, and documenting the practical lessons we learn along the way. We'll present this information so that it's accessible for civil society groups that are keen to harness citizen-generated data in their work. This work will also inform higher-level policy debates, ensuring that citizen-generated data gets the recognition it deserves in discussions about the data revolution and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3 <http://www.cyclephilly.org/>

4 <http://forestwatchers.net/>

COUNTRY-LEVEL PROJECTS

The DataShift will provide civil society organisations (CSOs) from each country with bespoke, direct support to improve the planning and implementation of their citizen-generated data projects. Support will vary depending on the organisation's needs, but will include mentorship, resources, peer exchange and technical support.

We'll also organise three-day 'project sprints' in each pilot location, in which organizations supported by the DataShift will come together for intense, targeted work with local and international experts. The sprints will allow organisations to meaningfully move their projects forward, gain knowledge and share experiences with other participants.

First and foremost, the in-country activities will aim to learn the most appropriate ways to make citizen-generated data initiatives more effective by:

- » understanding organisations' needs and the context in which they work
- » prioritising peer exchange and local support, and relying on international experts as little as possible
- » focusing on long-term improvement by building organisations' in-house capacity
- » identifying roadblocks – such as lack of connectivity, limited software availability or technical expense – and finding ways to get around them

THE LEARNING ZONE

The DataShift Learning Zone will be an online space for bringing together existing resources and original research on how to make collecting and using citizen-generated data easier and more effective. We're aiming to offer easily digestible outputs that encourage and empower CSOs to use citizen-generated data in their work.

The needs of CSOs in Nepal, Argentina, Tanzania and Kenya will drive the materials and research that we produce, which will all be made available publicly online, bringing together the following types of information:

- » existing guides explaining how organisations can use citizen-generated data
- » case studies of innovative uses of citizen-generated data drawn from the private and public sectors, as well as global development projects
- » platforms that can help organisations gather and use citizen-generated data such as Crowdcrafting and Ushahidi CrowdMap
- » documentation of project sprints in pilot locations
- » research on the impact of citizen-generated data in Kenya, Tanzania, Nepal and Argentina
- » broader research into lessons learned from our in-country work



POLICY: THE SDGS AND THE DATA REVOLUTION

The DataShift is seeking to inform and influence global policy processes on the SDGs and the data revolution for sustainable development. Our current work is focussed on promoting the role that citizen-generated data can play in monitoring and driving progress on the SDGs, and ensuring that citizen-generated data and civil society are prioritised by the new Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data.

To do this, the DataShift is:

- » advocating for governments and other stakeholders to recognise citizen-generated data as a valuable source of evidence for assessing and informing policies to drive SDG progress
- » concretely demonstrating at the country level how citizen-generated data is a powerful complement to other sources of data
- » supporting civil society to convene and coordinate on harnessing civil society and citizen-generated data to monitor and drive SDG progress
- » protecting and institutionalizing the role of civil society in the SDG follow up and review process
- » ensuring that civil society contribute to and benefit from the new Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data

DataShift is a multi-stakeholder, demand-driven initiative that builds the capacity and confidence of civil society to produce and use citizen-generated data to monitor sustainable development progress, demand accountability and campaign for transformative change. Ultimately, our vision is a world where people-powered accountability drives progress on sustainable development.

WWW.THEDATASHIFT.ORG

DataShift is an initiative of **CIVICUS**, in partnership with **the engine room** and **Wingu**. For more information, visit www.thedatashift.org or contact datashift@civicus.org.

