open
data
charter

International Open Data Charter

September 2015

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Open data is digital data that is made available with the technical and legal characteristics necessary for it to be freely used, reused, and redistributed by anyone, anytime, anywhere.

PREAMBLE

1. The world is witnessing a significant global transformation, facilitated by technology and digital media, and fueled by data and information. This transformation has enormous potential to foster more transparent, accountable, efficient, responsive, and effective governments and civil society and private sector organizations, and to support the design, delivery, and assessment of sustainable development goals at a global scale.

   Open data is at the center of this global shift.

2. Building a more prosperous, equitable, and just society requires that governments are transparent and accountable, and that they engage regularly and meaningfully with citizens. Accordingly, there is an ongoing global data revolution that seeks to advance collaboration around key social challenges, provide effective public oversight of government activities, and support innovation, sustainable economic development, and the creation and expansion of effective, efficient public policies and programs.

   Open data is crucial to meeting these objectives.

3. Open data enables governments, citizens, and civil society and private sector organizations to make better informed decisions. Effective and timely access to data helps individuals and organizations develop new insights and innovative ideas that can generate social and economic benefits, improving the lives of people around the world.

   Open data presents an opportunity that must be seized.

4. Open data allows user to compare, combine, and follow the connections among different datasets, tracing data across a number of programs and sectors. When data can be effectively combined and compared, it can help highlight trends, identify social and economic challenges and inequities, and benchmark progress in public programs and services.

5. Open data can empower governments, citizens, and civil society and private sector organizations to work toward better outcomes for public services in areas such as health, education, public safety, environmental protection, human rights, and natural disasters.

6. Open data can contribute to the generation of inclusive economic growth by supporting the creation and strengthening of new markets, enterprises, and jobs. These benefits can multiply as more civil society and private sector organizations adopt good open data practices and share their own data with the public.

7. Open data can help improve the flow of information within and among governments, and make government decisions and processes more transparent. Increased transparency promotes accountability and good governance, enhances public debate, and helps combat corruption.

8. Open data presents opportunities to provide innovative, evidence-based policy solutions and support economic benefits and social development for all members of society. Open data can do this by, for example:

—*Supporting evidence-based policy making:* Encouraging governments' use of data in policy development and evidence-based decision-making, which enables improved public policy outcomes and underpins sustainable economic and social development;
—*Enabling cross-sector collaboration:* Supporting collaboration among governments, citizens, and civil society and private sector organizations on the design of policies and the delivery of better public services;
—*Following the money:* Showing how and where public money is spent, which incentivizes governments to demonstrate that they are using public money effectively;
—*Improving governance of natural resources:* Increasing awareness about how countries' natural resources are used, how extractives revenues are spent, and how land is transacted and managed;
—*Monitoring impact:* Supporting assessments of the impact of public programs, which in turn allows governments and civil society and private sector organizations to respond more effectively to the particular needs of local communities.
—*Promoting equitable growth:* Supporting sustainable and inclusive growth through the creation and strengthening of markets, enterprises, and jobs;
—*Geolocating data:* Providing geospatial and earth observation references, which support comparability and interoperability and effective analysis by allowing data to be layered geographically; and
—*Improved decision-making:* Enabling citizens to make better informed choices about the services they receive and the service standards they should expect.

When used in these ways, open data is a key public good which people can use to generate value, insights, ideas, and services to create a better world for all.

9. We, the adherents to the International Open Data Charter, recognize that governments and other public sector organizations hold vast amounts of data that may be of interest to citizens, and that this data is an underused resource. Opening up government data can encourage the building of more interconnected societies that better meet the needs of our citizens and allow innovation, justice, transparency, and prosperity to flourish, all while ensuring civic participation in public decisions and accountability for governments.

10. We therefore agree to follow a set of six principles that will be the foundation for access to data and for the release and use of data. These principles mandate that data should be:

1. Open by Default
2. Timely and Comprehensive
3. Accessible and Usable
4. Comparable and Interoperable
5. For Improved Governance and Citizen Engagement
6. For Inclusive Development and Innovation

11. We will develop action plans or identify existing mechanisms or policies in support of the implementation of the Charter principles and associated resources. We agree to commit the necessary resources to work within our political and legal frameworks to implement these principles in accordance with the technical best practices and time frames set out in our action plans.

12. This Charter has been developed with a view to adoption by governments of all levels and by multilateral institutions. While the focus of the Charter is on open government data, other organizations, such as those from civil society or the private sector, are also welcome to adopt these principles.

PRINCIPLE 1
OPEN BY DEFAULT

13. We recognize that the term "government data" includes, but is not limited to, data held by national, regional, local, and city governments, international governmental bodies, and other types of institutions in the wider public sector. The term government data could also apply to data created for governments by external organizations, and data of significant benefit to the public that is held by external organizations and related to government programs and services (e.g. data on extractives entities, data on transportation infrastructure, etc.).

14. We recognize that free access to, and subsequent use of, government data is of significant value to society and the economy, and that government data should, therefore, be open by default.

15. We acknowledge the need to promote the global development and adoption of resources, standards, and policies for the creation, use, exchange, and harmonization of open data.

16. We recognize that open data can only be unlocked when citizens are confident that open data will not compromise their right to privacy, and that citizens have the right to influence the collection and use of their own personal data or of data generated as a result of their interactions with governments.

17. We will

- **a.** Develop and adopt policies and practices to ensure that all government data is made open by default, as outlined in this Charter, while recognizing that there are legitimate reasons why some data cannot be released;
- **b.** Provide clear justifications as to why certain data cannot be released;
- **c.** Establish a culture of openness, not only through legislative and policy measures, but also with the help of training and awareness programs, tools, guidelines, and communication strategies designed to make government, civil society, and private sector representatives aware of the benefits of open data;
- **d.** Develop the leadership, management, oversight, performance incentives, and internal communication policies necessary to enable this transition to a culture of openness in all government departments and agencies, including official statistics organizations;
- **e.** Observe domestic laws and internationally recognized standards, in particular those pertaining to security, privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property. Where relevant legislation or regulations do not exist or are out of date, they will be created and/or updated; and
- **f.** In accordance with privacy legislation and standards, anonymize data prior to its publication, ensuring that sensitive, personally-identifiable data is removed.

PRINCIPLE 2
TIMELY AND
COMPREHENSIVE

18. We recognize that it may require time and human and technical resources to identify data for release or publication.

19. We recognize the importance of consulting with data users, including citizens, other governments, and civil society and private sector organiazations to identify which data to prioritize for release and/or improvement.

20. We recognize that in order to be valuable to governments, citizens, and civil society and private sector organizations, data must be comprehensive, accurate, and of high quality.

21. We will

- **a.** Create, maintain, and share public, comprehensive lists of data holdings to support meaningful consultations around data prioritization, publication, and release dates;
- **b.** Release high-quality open data in a timely manner, without undue delay. Data will be comprehensive and accurate, and released in accordance with prioritization that is informed by consultations with open data users, including citizens, other governments, and civil society and private sector organizations;
- **c.** To the extent possible, release data in its original, unmodified form, and link data to any relevant guidance, documentation, visualizations, or analyses;
- **d.** To the extent possible, release data that is disaggregated to the lowest levels of administration, including disaggregation by gender, age, income, and other categories;
- **e.** Allow users to provide feedback, and continue to make revisions to ensure data quality is improved as necessary;
- **f.** Apply consistent information lifecycle management practices, and ensure historical copies of datasets are preserved, archived, and kept accessible as long as they retain value;
- **g.** Consult data users on significant changes to the structure or supply of data in order to minimize the impact to users that have created tools based on open data; and
- **h.** Be transparent about our own data collection, standards, and publishing processes by documenting these processes online.

PRINCIPLE 3
ACCESSIBLE AND USABLE

22. We recognize that opening up data enables governments, citizens, and civil society and private sector organizations to make better informed decisions.

23. We recognize that when open data is released, it should be easily discoverable and accessible, and made available without bureaucratic or administrative barriers, which can deter people from accessing the data.

24. We will:

- **a.** Publish data on a central portal, so that open data is easily discoverable and accessible in one place;
- **b.** Release data in open formats to ensure that the data is available to the widest range of users to find, access, and use. In many cases, this will include providing data in multiple, standardized formats, so that it can be processed by computers and used by people;
- **c.** Release data free of charge, under an open and unrestrictive licence;
- **d.** Release data without mandatory registration, allowing users to choose to download data without being required to identify themselves; and
- **e.** Ensure data can be accessed and used effectively by the widest range of users. This may require the creation of initiatives to raise awareness of open data, promote data literacy, build capacity for effective use of open data, and ensure citizen, community, and civil society and private sector representatives have the tools and resources they need to effectively understand how public resources are used.

PRINCIPLE 4
COMPARABLE AND INTEROPERABLE

25. We recognize that in order to be most effective and useful, data should be easy to compare within and between sectors, across geographic locations, and over time.

26. We recognize that data should be presented in structured and standardized formats to support interoperability, traceability, and effective reuse.

27. We will:

- **a.** Implement consistent, open standards related to data formats, interoperability, structure, and common identifiers when collecting and publishing data;
- **b.** Ensure that open datasets include consistent core metadata and are made available in human- and machine-readable formats;
- **c.** Ensure that data is fully described, that all documentation accompanying data is written in clear, plain language, and that data users have sufficient information to understand the source, strengths, weaknesses, and analytical limitations of the data;
- **d.** Engage with domestic and international standards bodies and other standard-setting initiatives to encourage increased interoperability between existing international standards, support the creation of common, global data standards where they do not already exist, and ensure that any new data standards we create are, to the greatest extent possible, interoperable with existing standards; and
- **e.** Map local standards and identifiers to emerging globally agreed standards and share the results publicly.

PRINCIPLE 5
FOR IMPROVED GOVERNANCE AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

28. We recognize that the release of open data strengthens the governance of and trust in our public institutions, reinforces governments' obligation to respect the rule of law, and provides a transparent and accountable foundation to improve decision-making and enhance the provision of public services.

29. We recognize that open data encourages better development, implementation, and assessment of programs and policies to meet the needs of our citizens, and enables civic participation and better informed engagement between governments and citizens.

30. We recognize that engagement and consultation with citizens and civil society and private sector organizations can help governments understand which types of data are in high demand, and, in turn, can lead to improved data prioritization, release, and standardization practices.

31. We recognize that city or local governments are often the first point of interaction between citizens and government, and that these governments therefore have a crucial role in supporting citizen engagement on open data.

32. We will:

- **a.** Implement oversight and review processes to report regularly to the public on the progress and impact of our open data initiatives;
- **b.** Ensure that information published as a result of transparency or anticorruption laws is released as open data;
- **c.** Provide training programs, tools, and guidelines designed to ensure government employees are capable of using open data effectively in policy development processes;
- **d.** Engage with the Freedom of Information / Access to Information / Right to Information community to align the proactive release of open data with governments' obligation to release information on request;
- **e.** Engage proactively with citizens and civil society and private sector representatives to determine what data they need to effectively hold governments accountable;
- **f.** Respect citizens' right to freedom of expression by protecting those who use open data to identify corruption or criticize governments; and
- **g.** Encourage the use of open data to develop innovative, evidence-based policy solutions that benefit all members of society, as well as empower marginalized communities.

PRINCIPLE 6
FOR INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

33. We recognize the importance of openness in stimulating creativity and innovation. The more governments, citizens, and civil society and private sector organizations use open data, the greater the social and economic benefits that will be generated. This is true for government, commercial, and non-commercial uses.

34. We recognize that open data can help to identify social and economic challenges, and monitor and deliver sustainable development programs. Open data can also help meet global challenges such as poverty, hunger, climate change, and inequality.

35. We recognize that open data is, by its nature, an equitable resource that empowers all people by allowing them to access data regardless of who they are or where they live. However, we also recognize the existence of a global digital divide in regard to technological tools and expertise; this divide limits the ability of socially and economically marginalized people to access and use open data.

36. We recognize the role of governments in promoting innovation and sustainable development does not end with the release of open data. Governments must also play an active role in supporting the effective and innovative reuse of open data, and ensuring government employees, citizens, and civil society and private sector organizations have the data they need and the tools and resources to understand and use that data effectively.

37. We will:

- **a.** Encourage citizens, civil society and private sector organizations, and multilateral institutions to open up data created and collected by them in order to move toward a richer open data ecosystem with multiple sources of open data;
- **b.** Create or explore potential partnerships between governments and with civil society and private sector organizations and multilateral institutions to support the release of open data and maximize the impact of data through effective use;
- **c.** Create or support programs and initiatives that foster the development or co-creation of datasets, visualizations, applications, and other tools based on open data;
- **d.** Engage with schools and post-secondary education institutions to support increased open data research and to incorporate data literacy into educational curricula;
- **e.** Conduct or support research on the social and economic impacts of open data;
- **f.** Build capacity and share technical expertise and experience with other governments and international organizations around the world, ensuring that everyone can reap the benefits of open data; and
- **g.** Empower a future generation of data innovators inside and outside government by building capacity and encouraging developers, entrepreneurs, civil society and private sector organizations, academics, media representatives, government employees, and other users to unlock the value of open data.

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