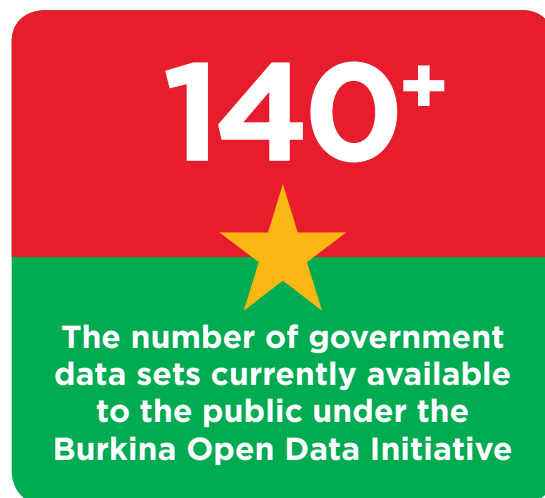


The Expanding Role for Open Data in Burkina Faso

Program Gains Wider Use in the Transitional Government

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The widening drive to provide open data in the public sector has taken a new turn in Burkina Faso. Open data has always been recognized as an enabler of economic development and government transparency. But in October 2014, when a popular uprising ousted Burkina Faso's long-standing leader and established a transitional government, the country's nascent Burkina Open Data Initiative (BODI) took on new life as an enabler of the transition. With support from the Open Data Initiative and the World Bank, BODI had debuted just four months before the uprising, showcasing about 50 data sets of government information and an app that focused on education. In the months since then, the development of BODI has only accelerated, with more staff, more data sets posted, and new applications launched or planned. Under the transitional government, BODI has expanded with a web page for finding data on government contract awards and a program to help track and manage the country's persistent drought problems. And BODI envisions a polling-place finder and reporting of vote totals as ways to support turnout and transparency for the scheduled October 2015 national elections.



Background

Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries, created an agency, ANPTIC, to promote and oversee the advance of information and communication technology (ICT) within the government. In 2012, ANPTIC asked the World Bank for assistance in developing a program to make important government data sets available online to the public through "open data."

The goals of the request fit into the World Bank's ICT agenda to advance the spread of open government data: increase the capacity for evidence-

based decision making in both the public and private sectors; raise the transparency and accountability of the government; improve the delivery of government services as well as citizen engagement with the government; and build an ICT ecosystem linking the public and private sectors with the international community to help build job growth, innovation, and economic development.

With support from the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building, the World Bank used its "readiness assessment" process to identify some of the challenges facing the country's development of open data.

The pursuit of open data is much more than a simple edict requiring agencies to somehow make their data available to the public. It entails an elaborate and far-reaching change in procedures and possibilities for e-government. At the heart of open data is an internationally recognized set of “open data standards,” freely available technical requirements for electronically organizing various types of data—such as those on budgets and procurement as well as social and economic data on health, education, industry, agriculture, and transport. Use of an open data standard is critical to searching, analyzing, and publishing the data in multiple formats in consistent fashion.¹

The e-government efforts demonstrated that, despite less than 5% of the population having online access, Burkina Faso saw open data as a catalyst. It would stimulate training, job opportunities, and international engagement that could help it attain its development goals by accelerating the country’s entrance into the digital era.

The Launch and Evolution of BODI

At its launch on June 5, 2014, BODI made available about 50 government data sets and an Internet portal for searching them, data.gov.bf. The event also initiated a new app, “Our Schools, Our Data,” which provided information on one rural community of 17 villages and 4,300 students. With training that will boost citizen skills and engagement, residents in other communities will use surveying techniques and editing software to gradually expand the app’s coverage to the entire country.

Since the transitional government began in October 2014, its support for BODI has clearly increased. By the first quarter of 2015, the government’s operat-

ing budget had added 60 employees to the governing agency, ANPTIC, and the number of staff members on the open data team grew to six.

In December, the government launched another portal featuring a searchable database of government procurement offers and contract information.

After a second readiness assessment by the World Bank, Burkina Faso received additional funds for an open data project to advance the country’s adaptation to drought, climate change, and natural disasters.

Next Steps

The open data initiative provides the motivation to provide training that will increase the data literacy skills of the government as well as members of the media, students, community leaders, academicians, and the general public.

For the upcoming election, the interim government has invited the BODI team to investigate the creation of apps that will inform voters of their nearest polling places and enable quick reporting of local election results via text message. The results will be compiled into national results in a central database, where they will be publicly available in close to real time.

Now standing at more than 140, the number of data sets managed and released to the public under open data standards will continue to grow. In the process, government transparency, service quality, and a climate of trust between government and civil society is also likely to grow, along with the country’s digital economy,

► For more information on this topic:

WBG Open data website:

<http://data.worldbank.org/>

ODRA Toolkit:

<http://opendatatoolkit.worldbank.org/en/odra.html>

¹ As described by the “briefing document” of the Open Contracting Data Standard Project (<http://standard.open-contracting.org/>), a technical standard for assembling open data “provides a ready-made approach to sharing data effectively, allowing the [agency entering the data] to focus on content, completeness, and quality. It dramatically lowers ... cost..., [allowing use of] various [output] formats..., [and] technology tools and services can use the information easily and reliably. [As] technical standards gain wider adoption, global comparisons [of the data] are made possible.”

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