Data on Alcohol and Tobacco in Africa Project Case Study

LYNN WOOLFREY

PRESENTATION FOR THE IDRC PROJECT: EXPLORING THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING OPEN RESEARCH STRATEGIES WITHIN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS

Data on Alcohol and Tobacco in Africa

Tobacco use kills around 6 million people each year. The [WHO's 2003 Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#) is an international agreement by governments to reduce tobacco use in their countries to eliminate tobacco-related morbidity and mortality. It is also a guide on how to do this.

Nearly 80% of the world's 1 billion smokers live in LMICs. Researchers in these countries need data to help governments create effective tobacco control policies.

African tobacco data exists, but is difficult to discover and obtain. DataFirst and the Economics of Tobacco Control Project at UCT aim to collect economic data on tobacco from African countries and publish these data through online.

Successes

Working with the ETCP and other tobacco control researchers has help us to discover what data is out there

Leveraging our technical skills and existing software to create a clearinghouse for tobacco data discovery and access

https://www.datafirst.uct.ac.za/dataportal/index.php/catalog/data/about

Challenges

OBTAINING SHARING PERMISSIONS

RDM planning revealed that 2 out of the 3 datasets already held by project researchers could not be shared because of (1) confidentiality issues (2) commercial control of the data.

We will revisit (1) once the project site is established

We will recreate (2) from scratch from publicly available sources countries (a challenge, but not insurmountable – most of this data is in the public domain just collated by the commercial supplier)

Lessons learned

1. The African tobacco data ecosystem is a mess (like other data ecosystems) – even the WHO doesn't curate effectively!

2. Discovery support is vital – researchers don't know what data is "out there"

3. Don't assume researchers have permission to share (or even use) data

4. Data expertise is vital – for research projects which aim to disseminate their findings

5. Funders need to have clear policies for data management and data sharing – including compliance measures that they are willing to use!

Photo: Jade Gibson, 2014.

DataFirst, University of Cape Town

lynn.woolfrey@uct.ac.za
www.datafirst.uct.ac.za