



DataFirst

University of Cape Town

Data on Alcohol and Tobacco in Africa Project Case Study

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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>

The screenshot shows the DataFirst website interface. At the top, there is a teal header with the 'DataFirst' logo. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for 'DataFirst Home', 'Data Dissemination', 'Data Portal', 'Other African Data', 'Citations', and 'Contact us'. To the right of the menu are social media icons for email, a 'SHARE' button, and Facebook and Twitter icons. Below the navigation is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home > Data Portal > Data on Alcohol and Tobacco in Africa Project'. The main content area has a title 'Data on Alcohol and Tobacco in Africa Project' and a sub-menu with 'About', 'Datasets', and 'Citations' tabs. The 'About' tab is active, displaying a paragraph of text: 'The Data on Alcohol and Tobacco in Africa (DATA) Project is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and conducted by the Economics of Tobacco Control Project (ETCP) in collaboration with DataFirst, at the University of Cape Town. The project seeks to collect, archive and disseminate tobacco- and alcohol-related time series and cross-sectional economic data. The aim is to provide a single point of access for researchers interested in tobacco and alcohol policies in Africa. In its pilot stage, the DATA Project works to establish relationships with statistical authorities in Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Senegal, and South Africa in order to promote open access to their data and to increase the utilisation of existing data for research and policymaking. The ultimate goal is to expand the project to all Sub-Saharan countries.' At the bottom right of the content area is a blue button labeled 'Visit Portal'.

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

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www.datafirst.uct.ac.za