ADB

Engagement Policy and Practice : Knowledge Product - 3

South Asia Urban Knowledge Hub

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Contents

Engagement Policy and Practice : Knowledge Product - 3

Evidence based research in South Asia through standardisation and analysis of regional data*

1: Issues and Challenges

Reliable and timely database is a basic necessity for research, programme formulation and systematic planning. Moreover, the availability of detailed information, preferably at micro level is the key to effective planning. Non-availability of adequate and reliable data has often been cited as one of the main hurdles for planning and academic and policy research by planners, administrators and researchers working on diverse aspect of urban development in South Asia in general and India in particular. **The main problem in this regard is not that the data do not exist or are not collected at sufficient levels of disaggregation, but that much of the information has problems of coverage and definitional anomalies and are not rendered comparable or made accessible to potential users.** Also, there exists data on various socio-economic indicators with various utility agencies, which could be of immense help to decision makers and planners and facilitate evidence based and outcome oriented research[1]. This calls for establishment of a centralized urban database system where standardized data would be made available in a user friendly format. At present, there is no platform where one can access standardised database for cross sectional or temporal analysis to inform decision making or undertake research.

Information of quantitative nature is available from national data gathering agencies that bring out data sets at regular intervals. Besides, enormous information of both quantitative and qualitative nature is generated by government departments, public and semipublic agencies, municipal bodies etc., engaged in urban development activities. However, these do not become inputs in programme formulation or policy research as these data sets are not standardized and made available to potential users in a user friendly manner[2]. Since the basic concepts used for data collection are not standardized and no rigorous format is designed for their compilation, it

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[1] Kundu D. "Data Discrepancies", Info Change, Issue 28, *Centre for Communication and Development Studies*, 2014

[2] "Concepts, Database and Perspectives for Urbanisation and Slum Improvement in India", with Dr. Amitabh Kundu, Shelter, special article on Urban Poverty, Vol.13 no. 3 & 4, HUDCO-HSMI Publication, New Delhi, April 2012.

* The focus of this engagement strategy is on India with the assumption that respective K-HUB partners will engage in the process with their relevant stakeholders.

takes quite an effort and resources to make these comparable and useful for research or policy making. Importantly, the Government of India has launched a Mission for creation of 100 smart cities in the country. Availability of detailed information from various secondary data agencies may help in the formulation of smart city plans.

Prime Minister of India has stressed the need to address two key concerns facing the country , viz, reduction of poverty and creation of jobs. As per the concept note, GoI would assist all identified smart cities to develop City Development Plans based on ICT, GIS and Spatial Mapping. The KP will help to assess the development targets of the local governments and assist them with city level data. This reinforces the need for setting up the database centre. The setting up of the database centre will help in collating secondary data from diverse official sources, standardising the same and making the indicators comparable over time. The availability of such structured database can help in informed decision making and policy formulation.

Also, there is deficiency of suitable development indicators at disaggregated levels. As for example, per capita income is an important measure of economic well being. This data at the disaggregated level can be of immense help in assessing the economic vibrancy of cities. In fact, the selection of 100 Smart cities will be based on competitiveness of cities and this indicator is crucial in determining their economic strength. In India, however, the existing official data sources gives data on per capita income only at the state level and at district levels for few states. In such scenario, working out the methodology and calculating the indicators would help in strategising the economic vibrancy at the local level. No concerted effort have been taken at the national level to work out this indicator. The Planning Commission, however, gives data at the district level for select states as mentioned earlier. There are some piece meal efforts in this direction by individual researchers, but the acceptability of such data is questionable.

Information of quantitative nature is available from national data gathering agencies that bring out data sets at regular intervals. Besides, enormous information of both quantitative and qualitative nature is generated by government departments, public and semipublic agencies, municipal bodies etc., engaged in urban development activities. However, these do not become inputs in programme formulation or policy research as these data sets are not standardized and made available to potential users in a user friendly manner. Since the basic concepts used for data collection are not standardized and no rigorous format is designed for their compilation, it takes quite an effort and resources to make these comparable over space and time and useful for research or policy making. To cite an example, data on municipal finance is not available

from any secondary sources at a regular interval[3]. A disaggregated database on local finance on various heads and sub-heads is the need of the hour. As for example, data on own resources disaggregated by share of property taxes and user charges is very essential to assess the economic potential of any local body. The same is applicable in case of grants and shared taxes.

2: Goal and Objectives

Goal:
To promote evidence based research in South Asia through standardisation and analysis of regional data on demographic, social and economic indicators in a consistent manner

Objectives:
- Collation and standardisation of regional dataforbetter policy making, project planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation
- To facilitate creation of urban database so that an open platform of dynamic database is available for policy makers, practitioners and researchersto access the data
- Creation of a framework to study urbanisation similar to SAARC through the K-hub urban observatory
- Develop methodologies to work out suitable indicators to facilitate evidence based policy research and planning

3: Contextualizing the Issue

Large volumes and different types of data, including some of scientific and technical relevance are generated and compiled by various arms of the Government of India and various State Governments for meeting their specific requirements. Scientific organizations generate data and develop scientific data bases. Since such data are not generated under any standardized format, inter-operability of both scientific and technical data poses a serious challenge.

Keeping in view the emphasis of the Government on engaging citizens in Governance Reforms, placing of non-strategic data in public domain and the provisions of RTI Act 2005 for empowering the citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authority leading to the transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority, the National Policy on Data Sharing and Accessibility(NPDSA)has been brought out in 2012. The National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP) is designed so as to apply to all sharable non-sensitive data available either in digital or analog forms but generated using public funds

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[3] Only town directory of the Census of India gives this data for the particular year of the Census.

by various Ministries / Departments /Subordinate offices / organizations / agencies of Government of India. The NDSAP policy is designed to promote data sharing and enable access to Government of India owned data for national planning and development.

Need for the Policy

Evidence-based planning of socio-economic development processes rely on quality data. There is a general need to facilitate sharing and utilization of the large amount of data generated and residing among the entities of the Government of India. This would call for a policy to leverage these data assets which are disparate. The current regime of data management does not enable open sharing of Government owned data with other arms of the government nor does it expect proactive disclosure of sharable data available with data owners. Such regimes could lead to duplication of efforts and loss of efficiency of planning of activities focused on national development. In fact, this is a major challenge to be addressed since data sharing is not very common in India among various government departments.Efficient sharing of data among data owners and inter and intra governmental agencies and with public calls for data standards and interoperable systems. Hence, National Data Sharing and Access Policy aims to provide an enabling provision and platform for providing proactive and open access to the data generated through public funds available with various departments / organizations of Government of India.

Objectives

The objective of this policy is to facilitate the access to Government of India owned shareable data and information in both human readable and machine readable forms through a network all over the country in a proactive and periodically updatable manner, within the framework of various related policies, Acts and rules of Government of India, thereby permitting a wider accessibility and use of public data and information.

Scope of the Policy

The National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy applies to all data and information created, generated, collected and archived using public funds provided by Government of India directly or through authorized agencies by various Ministries / Departments /Organizations / Agencies and Autonomous bodies.

While policies provide official mandate, facilitation of optimum accessibility and usability of data by the implementers pre-suppose a trajectory of proper organisation of data, with access services and analysis tools that provide the researchers and stakeholders with added value. For data to be reused, it needs to be adequately described and linked to services that disseminate the data to other researchers and stakeholders. The current methods of storing data are as

diverse as the disciplines that generate it. It is necessary to develop institutional repositories, data centers on domain and national levels that all methods of storing and sharing have to exist within the specific infrastructure to enable all users to access and use it.

National Data Sharing and Access Policy aims at the promotion of a technology-based culture of data management as well as data sharing and access. It opens up, proactively, information on available data, which could be shared with civil society for developmental purposes, their price details if any, and methods for gaining access to registered and restricted use. The policy has limited its scope to data owned by the agencies, departments/ Ministries and entities under the Government of India and forms a statement of the Government of India of its commitment to transparency and efficiency in governance. Department of Science & Technology will continue the process of evolving the policy further, keeping in tune with technological advancements and the National requirements and enrolling the State Governments.

The National Policy will increase the accessibility and easier sharing of non-sensitive data amongst the registered users and their availability for scientific, economic and social developmental purposes. All the data holding organizations will be re-classifying their data and prepare a negative list of sensitive data, keeping in view, the broad guidelines delineated in the RTI Act 2005. This list will be periodically reviewed to see whether the data should remain in the restricted category or not. Efforts will also be made to convert the analogue data into digital domain within the set time frame.

The current Mission of the government of creating 100 Smart Cities would be based on an in-depth analysis of data at the city level. The knowledge product could be of immense help to state governments and urban local bodies.

4: Identifying Stakeholders for Influencing

The office of Registrar General of India, National Sample Survey Organisation, Central Statistical Organisation, Ministry of Urban Development and Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Institute of Urban Transport, state governments and various urban local bodies are the major providers of data. Since NIUA works directly with the MOUD and with state and local governments, it would be easy to access data from them. The ULBs would be approached to share their data on municipal finance. The MOUD has been kind enough to facilitate this process.

The urban development programmes and missions conceived by the new government are to be launched shortly. There is a strong likelihood that setting up of a city level database would be one of the prerequisite for the cities to access state and central government funds. Since NIUA is likely to be the project management unit of smart cities it could facilitate setting up of the data centers in respective cities and also gain from the knowledge resulting from the analysis of the disaggregated data at the city level. The future is expected to be of a much structured nature where there would be greater sharing of city level information among cities. This would be facilitated by knowledge hub. Once the data goes on-line UN agencies, international organisations such as Clean Air Asia are likely to benefit.

5: Anticipated Change

One of the important clients and facilitators for this knowledge product is the Ministry of Urban Development. We work very closely with the Ministry, which is aware of the knowledge product. In fact, NIUA has been requested by the Ministry to bring out a joint publication with the Ministry on "Handbook of Urban Statistics-2015. In addition, replies to parliament questions are also based on analysis of official statistics and database.

Dissemination of this knowledge product is also to take place through workshops, policy briefs and newsletters. Also, there could be greater dissemination of the Handbook, which will be updated on a regular basis and new indicators added to it. If required, training workshops will be organised to help end users in handling the database.

The data being put up on the website as a KP would be secondary data from official sources. The legitimacy of such data sets is hardly questionable. However, for the calculation of indicators like per capita income at the city level, expert group meetings will be organised to take the their views.The experts group would comprise of among others economists and statisticians working in this field. This will be done once the requisite data has been gathered. The MOUD will be approached to establish linkages with the National Informatics Centre for greater dissemination of the knowledge product. Through this website, the following changes are anticipated:

- based on research, disseminate key messages for specific audiences/users and preparation of presentations, media releases, speaking points for officials etc.
- online video/ guide for the user manual (how can people use the data, search the data, examples)
- icons/visuals to be embedded so that the data base and manual are 'user friendly'
- visual presentations with stories about how data can help decision makers and ultimately people on the ground

- media strategy - engaging them, educating them so they help tell about the KP and get people on board

6: Limitations

The formulation of the knowledge product could face certain unforeseen limitations. To illustrate, the Town Directory of census of India, gives data on municipal finance (income and expenditures of ULBs) for all towns in the country. The recently released Town Directory, 2011 came as a surprise where no mention about municipal finance data has been made. Also the 12th and 13th Central Finance Commissions (CFC) brought out data on local finance. Unfortunately the 14th CFC has made no mention about the same. In such a situation, it becomes extremely difficult to access such data which indicate the economic vibrancy of the cities. Similarly the Economic Tables of the Population Census of India have stopped publishing data on IX fold classification at the town level which again hinders the detailed economic analysis of cities.

7: Monitoring and Evaluation

This knowledge product does not strive to bring about change directly. It aims to facilitate informed decision making through facilitating access of policy makers and researchers to reliable and standardised data. A website would be created to extend the outreach of data to the public. The number of hits per day on website will be an indicator to track usage of the KP. The demand for hard copies of Handbook of Urban Statistics will be another indicator. The reference of the KP as a source of database for research studies and policy briefs would be another indicator to track progress.

Monitoring & Learning

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How will you assess if you are heading in the right direction?	Monitoring the progress of the timelines and milestones.		
How will you track whether you are doing what you planned to do (and take note of what was unplanned)?	Monitoring the progress of the timelines and milestones. Through frequent interaction with the MoUD officials who need structured database for informed decision making.		
How will you ensure your outputs are the right quality?	Quality assessment could be done through detailed interaction with subject experts on the deliverables.		
What indicators of success will you use	Expect to See	Like to See	Love to See
	Demand for Handbook of Urban Statistics Demand for conduct of training programmes on use of database for researchers and practitioners No of participants per training session	Reference of the KP as a source of database for research studies and policy briefs	Demand for the KP on an ongoing basis as a source of database for research studies and policy briefs

How will you measure this?			
What will you do with the results?			
How will you ensure you are learning?			
How will you share your learning with others?	By publishing relevant data and articles in the journal Environment and Urbanisation Asia in addition to uploading on K-Hub website and NIC website.		