

Final Report for OPAL Project on OPAL User Needs Assessment

Submission to SDSNA

March 31, 2017

Objectives

The primary objective of the work supported by SDSNA with this grant were to lay the requisite groundwork to launch an Open Algorithm (OPAL) pilot project in Senegal. The key milestones and strategic results of the work completed were to foster critical partnerships in various sectors in both regions, to perform a user needs study with key stakeholders in Senegal and Colombia, and to design and implement a workshop discussing user needs and governance in Dakar.

Activities

User needs and governance workshop in Dakar

A full-day workshop was organized in Dakar on January 24, 2017 by the OPAL team in partnership with Sonatel and ANSD. The methodology for the workshop was created by the OPAL team: primarily Anta Diena and Babacar Birane - the OPAL team in Senegal, Viviana Cañon – a consultant brought in to focus on the interviews in French and Spanish, and Natalie Shoup – the program manager of OPAL. The initial planning of the workshop was based on a mini-workshop held in Bogotá in April 2016 with participants from Colombia and the Philippines in particular focusing on exploring questions of governance and partnership models for OPAL.

Materials were designed including a concept note, facilitator guides and case studies and posters for mapping the local ecosystem and discussing potential governance structures.

Sonatel and ANSD are critical partners for the implementation of OPAL in Senegal and were co-organizers of the workshop. Senior level representatives from each organization gave very positive opening statements reiterating their commitment and belief in OPAL and welcoming all of the participants and collaborators.

The morning sessions of the workshop were focused on introducing OPAL project to all stakeholders and opening a discussion around the context, motivations and objectives. Many questions arose including around privacy, algorithm development and access, coordination of partners, management of the technical platform, and use of other datasets to complement the mobile data - such as official statistics data from ANSD.

In the afternoon session, breakout groups were formed with a diversity of participants from different sectors in each thematic group – education, migration, health, tourism and food security. Case studies were presented based on the Senegalese context and conversations began around development priorities in each thematic and potential questions to be addressed or indicators to be measured in those topics. Challenges around issues such as data access, cooperation, technical capacity were brought up across all groups.

Following this discussion, the groups transitioned to an exercise in mapping the local ecosystem and relevant stakeholders to their development priorities in Senegal including the local regulatory and government authorities as well as important partners in academia, multilateral institutions, private sector and civil society.

This led to the final discussion around potential governance structures and considerations including existing governance structures that could be used as models or relevant local authorities who should be included in the discussion. The role of Sonatel in this governance model is an important one to address as well as the balance of local and international experts.

User Needs Assessment

The user needs assessment consisted of analysis of the results and feedback from the workshop in Dakar as well as in-person and Skype interviews with key stakeholders in Senegal and Colombia across various sectors – government, private sector (Telco, consulting, etc.), academia, civil society, etc.

An interview guide was designed to steer the discussions and prepare participants while also remaining open-ended enough to receive diverse answers and have open conversations around development and well as institutional needs, priorities, and challenges.

A short questionnaire was prepared to follow during the interviews by the OPAL team with general questions regarding context and development priorities in the

country. Additionally, institutional priorities and challenges related to information and indicators were addressed and more specific questions around data and proxy indicators were tailored based on the particular partner organization.

ANSD and Sonatel in particular had great interest and participation with several members of each team participating in the feedback and providing supplementary information related to the project (attached in French). One important priority and context in particular from ANSD was the focus on the Plan Sénégal Emergent (PSE) and its primary objectives: 1) Structural Transformation of the Economy and Growth, 2) Human Capital, Social Protection and Sustainable Development and 3) Governance, Institutions, Peace and Security. Sonatel was interested to have ANSD in particular share their priorities regarding development topics and indicators and to be involved in the review of the report to further discuss the context shared by all participants in the interviews and workshop to take the user needs assessment forward.

The relationship with SDSN Sahel was also initiated particularly through the OPAL Coordinator in Senegal, Anta Diena. SDSN Sahel and Millennium Promise provided comments as well on the final draft of the User Needs Synthesis Reports and interesting discussions have begun on how to collaborate going forward particularly regarding use cases.

Future Work

We plan to have a second User Needs & Governance Workshop in Bogotá in early June 2017 modeled and building on the experience in Dakar. We hope to facilitate conversations and learnings from the Senegal OPAL team to the Colombia OPAL team as well as test and adjust the methodology in a different context.

We also plan to translate the User Needs Synthesis Report to French and English for wider dissemination and feedback as well as iterate on the draft – potentially adding case studies or inputs from other potential future countries that have expressed interest in OPAL such as the Philippines and Kenya.