Open Data Day 2024 – Workshop Report
“Open Data as a Human Right Workshop: Empowering Law Students for Sustainable Development”
2 March 2024
Faculty of Law, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria – Nigeria

WORKSHOP REPORT by Muhammed Bello Buhari (Administrative and Advocacy Lead, Digital Grassroots)
Background & Introduction:
Open Data Day (ODD) is an annual celebration of open data all over the world. Organisations from likely every country create local events on the day where they will use open data in their communities. ODD is led by the Open Knowledge Foundation (OKFN) and this year's edition is co-organised by Jokkolabs Banjul (Gambia), Open Knowledge Germany, Open Knowledge Ghana, and Open Knowledge Nepal, all members of the Open Knowledge Network. As a way to increase the representation of different cultures, since 2023 OKFN offer the opportunity for organisations to host an Open Data Day event on the best date between March 2nd and 8th.

Against this backdrop, Digital Grassroots, with support from the Open Knowledge Foundation, organized the "Open Data as a Human Right" Workshop: Empowering Law Students for Sustainable Development. Led by our Administrative and Advocacy Lead, Muhammed Bello Buhari, this workshop aimed to empower law students by framing open data as a fundamental human right, exploring its intersection with digital rights, and highlighting its role in advancing sustainable development. The workshop convened 50 participants (law students), and 4 speakers who are legal professionals and experts in open data and human rights. Notably, the event welcomed 27 female and 23 male participants, underscoring our commitment to gender balance and inclusive community-building across all our programs.

Objectives:
- To empower law students by framing open data as a fundamental human right.
- To explore the intersection of open data with digital rights and its role in advancing sustainable development.
- To provide participants with insights into the ethical, legal, and societal implications of open data.
- To promote transparency, accountability, and social equity through the utilization of open data.

Participants:
Abdul Aisha Isa  
Abdulkareem Rahamatullah Ochuu  
Abdullahi Alhassan Nasiru  
Abdullahi Firdausi Mohammed  
Ahmad Abubakar  
Aisha Ihsan Abduho  
Aisha Kabiru Mohammed  
Aliyu Musa  
Aliyu Umar  
Aminu Amina Dabo  
Aminu Shuaibu  
Attahiru Rahma Anka  
Bello Mustapha Yusuf  
Bilal Umar Zambuk  
Daniel Chukwueloka Monyei  
Danpanna Aboki Hussain  
Esther Chinonyerem Isiguzo  
Faith Ruth Micheal  
Hafsat Aminu Tukur  
Hamza Abdullahi  
Hassan Fatima Aliyu  
Ibrahim Bashir Wambai  
Ibrahim Rabi Umar  
Jega Kabeer Muhammed  
Maburukah Arama Ozavize  
Mahmud Fatima  
Maimuna Bashir Sukola  
Muhammad Abdulmajeed Sani  
Muhammad Fatima Garba  
Muhammad Hamza  
Muhammad Fatimah  
Musa Ummulkhairi Damina  
Mustapha Hawwau  
Mustapha Muhammad Kamilu  
Mustapha Musa Lawan  
Nana Fatima Bello  
Ni’imah Salman-Adeniyi  
Rukayya Salisu Liadi  
Saidu Muhammad Danladi  
Sajo Hauwa Muhammad  
Shamsuddeen Ahmad  
Sharon Galadima  
Suleiman Yunus Shuaibu  
Tasnim Ibrahim  
Ummulkhuethum Sani  
Usman Bashir Sukola  
Yahaya Abubakar  
Yahaya Attahiru Ciroma  
Yahaya Muhammad Ali  
Zainab Musarrah Abubakar

Volunteers:
Sajo Hauwa Muhammad - Lead  
Aisha Ihsan Abduho  
Bello Yusuf Yusuf  
Ibrahim Rabi Umar  
Mahmud Fatima  
Maimuna Bashir Sukola  
Tasnim Ibrahim

Speakers:
Joy Gadani, African Media Development Foundation  
Musa Suleiman, Transparency and Accountability in Totality Initiative-FollowTaxes  
Yazid Salahudeen Mikail, Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data  
Zainab Sa’id Idris, Data Science Nigeria (DSNai)
Opening Remarks:
The workshop commenced with a warm welcome from Muhammad Bello Buhari, Administrative and Advocacy Lead at Digital Grassroots. Muhammad Bello extended a heartfelt welcome to all participants and facilitators, setting the tone for an engaging and productive day ahead. He provided an introduction to Digital Grassroots, the organization hosting the workshop and highlighted the significance of Open Data Day 2024 in promoting the importance of open data for sustainable development. He also outlined the aim of the workshop and its objectives, emphasizing the importance of empowering law students to become advocates for open data as a fundamental human right. His insightful introduction laid the foundation for a day of meaningful discussions and collaborative learning.

Key Highlights:

1. Insightful Presentation on Open Data (Session 1):
   Zainab Sa'id Idris, Data Science Nigeria (DSNai) and Mahmud Muhammed Ibrahim, Follow Taxes kickstarted the workshop with an insightful presentation, providing participants with a comprehensive overview of open data and its significance in today's digital age.

2. Understanding Open Data for Access to Justice (Session 2):
   Musa Suleiman, Transparency and Accountability in Totality Initiative-FollowTaxes led an engaging session focused on understanding open data for access to justice. Participants delved into topics such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP), the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, and various tools to secure access to information, gaining valuable insights into leveraging open data for legal advocacy.
Group Practical Exercise: Leveraging Open Data for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

During the workshop, participants engaged in a group practical exercise focused on exploring how open data can aid in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) facilitated by Muhammed Bello Buhari and Yazid Mikail. Divided into groups, participants were tasked with analyzing specific SDGs and proposing strategies for leveraging open data to advance progress towards these goals.
Group 1: SDG 9 - Innovation, Industry, and Infrastructure

Participants focused on leveraging open data to enhance internet infrastructure in Nigeria, aligning with SDG 9 objectives.

Their proposal introduced the concept of an "Open Data Tree," with roots representing essential data categories:

1. **Connectivity data**: Population connected to the internet.
2. **Access data**: Population with internet access.
3. **Affordability data**: Population able to afford internet services.
4. **Technical infrastructure data**: Overview of existing technical infrastructure in Nigeria.
5. **Socio-economic data**: Socioeconomic capacity of Nigerians.

These data roots informed the trunk of the tree, enabling:

1. **Better informed approach**: Enhanced understanding of internet infrastructure challenges to facilitate more informed decision-making and equitable resource allocation.
2. **Equitable approach**: Ensuring an equitable approach to addressing internet infrastructure gaps across diverse populations.

Building upon this foundation, the branches of the tree represent:

1. **Appropriate internet infrastructure**: Tailoring infrastructure solutions based on data insights to meet the diverse needs of communities.

Ultimately, the fruition of this approach leads to:

1. Increased connectivity.
2. Expanded knowledge and skills.
3. Stimulated innovation and economic growth.

Participants from Group 1 discussing strategies for advancing SDG 9
Group 2: SDG 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

This group focused on SDG 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Summary of Discussion: Goal 16 is essential for fostering peace and justice globally, yet challenges such as persecution, injustice, and abuse persist. To address these issues and advance progress towards SDG 16, the group proposed the following strategies:

1. **Community Development Peace Charter**: Identifying the root causes of conflicts and addressing community needs is crucial for promoting peace. The group suggested leveraging the Community Development Peace Charter to involve local communities in budgetary decisions, ensuring their needs are prioritized.

2. **Role of Public Private Development Centre (PPDC)**: To ensure justice, combating corruption within the judicial sector is imperative. The group highlighted the importance of organizations like the Public Private Development Centre (PPDC) in preventing corruption and promoting transparency within the justice system.

3. **Open Data for Transparency and Accountability**: Open data plays a vital role in fostering transparency and accountability within institutions. By providing accessible data, institutions can enhance transparency, thereby reducing corruption and strengthening governance structures.

Insights and Reflections: The group’s discussion underscored the interconnectedness of peace, justice, and strong institutions in achieving sustainable development. By addressing root causes, combating corruption, and promoting transparency, the group demonstrated a holistic approach to advancing SDG 16.
Group 3: SDG 5 - Gender Equality

Group 3 focused on SDG 5: Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, presented by Muhammad Hamza and Zambuk Bilal.

Key Points Highlighted:

1. Gender Inequality: The group emphasized the pervasive nature of gender inequality, citing unequal access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and decision-making positions. They proposed leveraging open data to track gender-based violence incidents, monitor wage disparities, and promote women's participation in STEM fields.

2. Ethnic Inequality: Addressing ethnic inequalities is crucial for achieving inclusive development. The group highlighted the significance of disaggregated data to understand challenges faced by different ethnic groups, including discrimination and lack of access to basic services. They emphasized that open data can empower policymakers to design targeted interventions that promote social cohesion and equitable opportunities.

3. Economic Inequality: Open data plays a vital role in revealing disparities in income distribution, access to financial services, and employment opportunities. The group stressed the importance of promoting transparency and accountability in economic governance through open data initiatives to mitigate inequalities and foster inclusive growth.

4. Education Inequality: The group noted pervasive inequality in education at every level, calling for comprehensive open data on the number of admitted students in urban and rural areas. This data can inform evidence-based decisions and help focus efforts on addressing educational disparities.

Insights and Reflections: Participants underscored the critical importance of enhanced data collection, advocating for the capture of gender and ethnic disparities across various sectors to enable evidence-based decision-making. Additionally, they emphasized the need for initiatives that improve data literacy skills among stakeholders, recognizing capacity building as pivotal for effectively addressing inequalities. Moreover, participants highlighted the value of partnerships and collaboration, stressing the role of collective action in driving meaningful change and advancing gender equality and inclusion agendas.
Group 4: SDG 13 - Climate Action

This group centered its discussion on SDG 13, which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

Summary of Discussion: SDG 13 emphasizes the need for collective efforts to address climate change and mitigate its effects. To contribute to this goal, the group explored various strategies leveraging open data:

1. **Monitoring Industrial Waste Disposal**: Access to data on industries and their waste disposal practices can aid in preventing pollution and environmental degradation. By tracking waste disposal methods, stakeholders can identify areas for improvement and implement sustainable practices.

2. **Collaboration for Waste Management**: Collaborating with relevant stakeholders, including regulatory bodies and environmental organizations, is essential for effective waste management. Through open data initiatives, stakeholders can monitor waste disposal activities and ensure compliance with environmental regulations.

3. **Public Awareness and Education**: Utilizing open data to understand consumption patterns and behaviors can inform public awareness campaigns on climate change. By partnering with NGOs and community organizations, stakeholders can promote sustainable practices and educate the public on the importance of climate action.

Insights and Reflections: The group’s discussion highlighted the critical role of open data in addressing climate change challenges. By promoting transparency, facilitating collaboration, and raising awareness, open data initiatives can contribute to achieving SDG 13 and fostering a more sustainable future.
Group 5: SDG 1 - No Poverty

This group focused their discussion on SDG 1, which aims to eradicate poverty in all its forms worldwide.

Summary of Discussion: SDG 1 emphasizes the importance of eliminating poverty as a fundamental step towards achieving sustainable development. To address this goal, the group explored several strategies leveraging open data:

1. **Regulatory Oversight:** Identifying regulatory bodies responsible for poverty reduction efforts and holding them accountable for transparent data collection and analysis. Key organizations such as the Ministry of Budget and National Planning, the National Planning Commission, and the National Bureau of Statistics play pivotal roles in poverty alleviation efforts through data-driven policies.

2. **Policy Formulation and Implementation:** Utilizing open data to enhance transparency in policy formulation and implementation, particularly in areas such as open budget allocation and tax policy enforcement. By identifying beneficial owners of companies and enforcing tax policies effectively, governments can allocate resources more equitably and address the root causes of poverty.

3. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Leveraging open data to monitor the effectiveness of poverty reduction programs and make data-driven adjustments as needed. By tracking indicators such as the number of individuals lifted out of poverty, stakeholders can assess program impact and ensure resources are allocated efficiently.

Insights and Reflections: The group's discussion underscored the critical role of open data in addressing poverty and promoting inclusive development. By advocating for transparent data collection and analysis, participants highlighted the potential of open data to inform evidence-based decision-making and drive positive social change. Moreover, they emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts among stakeholders to combat poverty effectively and build a more equitable society.
Participant Feedback:
Participants expressed appreciation for the interactive nature of the workshop, citing the practical exercises, group discussions, and real-life case studies as particularly valuable. Many noted that they gained a deeper understanding of open data and its implications for legal practice, as well as insights into how they can leverage open data to advance social justice and sustainable development.

“The workshop was the first of its kind in the Faculty of Law. It was engaging and interesting, providing valuable training to students on the relevance and importance of Open Data. I must admit, the unique perspectives and approach of the presenters made the entire interaction intellectual and entertaining. For example, Musa Sulaiman's approach to addressing Justice and Open Data by "Exploring Open Data's Role in Access to Justice, Open Government Partnership (OGP), and Freedom of Information (FOI) Act," was inspiring and helped to understand how freedom of information functions.

“Also, I love how Joy Gadani's discussion on "Open Data as a Human Right and Its Intersection with Digital Rights" effectively connected relevant constitutional provisions to Open Data. However, it was Yazid's presentation on "Open Data for Sustainable Development" that intrigued me the most. He was able to illustrate how each sustainable development agenda is linked to Open Data and engaged the participants in a game section to assess their understanding.

“I must commend the dedication and intellectual prowess of the organiser, M.B. Buhari and his organisation, Digital Grassroots for pulling up such an amazing day for Open Data. I look forward to more programs of this nature at ABU Zaria as an institution.”

- Muhammed Hamza, Participant

“The workshop surpassed my expectations, I actually thought it would be all those boring workshops we attend but this is one of the best workshops I have attended.

“This workshop was very innovative all the speakers thought us a lot especially the last speaker that spoke about SDG's, The method the workshop was set was impactful and the topic was quite interesting and as a law student I would love to attend more to gain more knowledge. The part when we were shared into groups to brainstorm on how open data could help achieve the SDGs - I found that very impactful for me and the presentation about digital rights it was very educative.

“Thank you for such and amazing workshop but next time I hope it would be like a 2 day event with more topics.”

- Ni'imah Salman-Adeniyi, Participant
“The workshop exceeded my expectations. I found the session on the intersection of digital rights and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be particularly valuable. It provided a comprehensive overview of how digital technologies can be leveraged to advance the SDGs, while also emphasizing the importance of protecting digital rights in this context. Additionally, the case studies presented were very illuminating, showing real-world examples of how digital initiatives are contributing to sustainable development efforts. The facilitators were highly knowledgeable and engaging, and the content covered a wide range of topics related to digital rights and open data. I particularly appreciated the interactive nature of the workshop, which allowed for meaningful discussions and hands-on learning activities. Overall, I feel more informed and empowered to advocate for digital rights and promote open data in my work.”

- Musa Ummulkhairi Damina, Participant

“My most valuable part of the workshop was the session facilitated by Yazid S Mikail on Harnessing Open Data to Achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Because as a development enthusiast and an SDGs advocate, the whole session resonated with me and the works I'm doing. So I learned so much about how data can improve my works around social justice and development pursuit.

“Generally, the workshop was so educating and enlightening. I have learnt so much about open data and how it can be used in various aspects like human rights, social justice and sustainable development.”

- Aliyu Musa, Participant

“Frankly speaking, all the sessions gave me an amazing experience but the segment I love most was a hands-on experiences on how open data can help Nigeria achieve the seventeen SDGs. Divided into groups, each group came up with a solution on how open data can help Nigeria achieve the 17 SDGs. It was wonderful, I learnt a lot.

100% I wasn't sure what open data meant so, I did my research before the workshop and had an insight as to what to expect. The speakers were amazing and they were good in introducing us to the new world.”

- Abdulkareem Rahamatullah Ochuu, Participant

“The workshop really enlightened me about what open data is, digital rights of citizens and so many things I learned. I must say I really didn't know I was going to learn that much!!! I look forward to attending similar workshops!❤️

“It is as really amazing, the speakers had ways of engaging with their audience. I really knew my digital right as a citizen and so many other terminologies associated with open data and it's importance to me as a law student. I was glad to be part of this!”

- Sharon Galadima, Participant
“I am a different person entirely compared to how I went to the workshop. As a person who is passionate about technology, I am happy being part of this workshop, I believe it is the right place to begin and I look forward to being part of many more to come. Thank you.”

- Muhammad Fatima Garba, Participant

“The program exceeded my expectation. Basically the program is excellent.

“The networking aspect is top notch. I was able to meet a speaker from my state and after the end of the program he invited me to join a project he is working on.”

- Saidu Muhammad Danladi, Participant

“The most valuable aspect to me was the area of Open Data and how it crosses across various sectors. I feel it is a necessary enactment we need in our systems if we really intend to achieve transparency and accountability in this nation. It is a solution to the root cause of our problems.

“The workshop in general was insightful, Informative, Inspiring and educative. Would love to see more.”

- Hafsat Aminu Tukur, Participant

“Harnessing open data to achieve sustainable development goals. The interactive session in it made me want to do more than I do already.

“It was really an eye opener and would love to attend more like it.”

- Esther Chinonyerem Isiguzo, Participant

“I attended the workshop with zero knowledge about Open Data et al. However, after attending the session, I can say I have at least an in depth knowledge of Open Data.”

“Overall, the workshop was excellent!”

- Mustapha Hawwau, Participant

“I liked the exercises done at the end of the workshop they really helped us to put into practice what we had learnt and apply the principles learnt in the workshop.”

- Aisha Kabiru Mohammed, Participant
Capturing memories: Group photograph with the Speakers and Participants at the Open Data Workshop

Behind the scenes: The host and volunteers ensuring a seamless event experience

First steps: Participants registering at the event entrance

In session: A cross-section of engaged participants during the workshop

In session: A cross-section of engaged participants during the workshop

Icebreaker: Participants enjoying an interactive activity
Refueling minds: Participants lining up for a well-deserved tea break

Tea time: Participants enjoying a break and networking over tea

Lunch: Delicious meals ready for our hungry participants

Participants receiving their certificates of attendance

A glimpse into post-event snapshots

The host and our Administrative and Advocacy Lead, Muhammed Bello Buhari
Conclusion:

The "Open Data as a Human Right Workshop" was a resounding success, achieving its objectives of empowering law students and raising awareness about the importance of open data in promoting transparency, accountability, and social equity by framing open data as a fundamental human right, exploring its intersection with digital rights, and highlighting its role in advancing sustainable development. Digital Grassroots remains committed to advancing the cause of open data and looks forward to organizing similar initiatives in the future.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all the speakers, participants, and sponsors Open Knowledge Foundation (OKFN), Jokkolabs Banjul (Gambia), Open Knowledge Germany, Open Knowledge Ghana, and Open Knowledge Nepal, all members of the Open Knowledge Network, who contributed to the success of the workshop. Special thanks to our volunteers, Sajo Hauwa Muhammad and her amazing team for their dedication and support throughout the planning and execution process.

Digital Grassroots will continue to engage with participants and stakeholders to build upon the momentum generated by the workshop. We encourage all participants to stay connected and actively contribute to the ongoing dialogue on open data and its role in shaping a more inclusive, transparent, and sustainable future.

Digital Grassroots is a youth and female-led nonprofit working to increase digital citizenship on internet governance and digital rights among youth from underrepresented communities globally. We proactively engage youth in addressing internet-related issues in their communities through digital literacy, networking, and activism.

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