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Without data, science is merely an opinion: the African Open Science Platform project

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The Science International Accord on Open Data in a Big Data World presents an inclusive vision of the need for and the benefits of Open Data for science internationally, and in particular for Lower and Middle Income Countries. In addition to benefiting from Data from the international community, African countries have much to contribute for all to benefit in making progress towards implementing the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provided that Data curation activities are aligned with international standards. Providing a comprehensive view of what is happening on national and continental level, will not only assist fellow researchers and potential funders in identifying gaps –it will also assist African countries to identify opportunities for capacity building, inter-regional links to strengthen collaboration, towards international alignment with science activities on international level. The African Open Science Platform initiative is an important outcome of the Accord on Open Data in a Big Data World, and great progress has been made towards a better understanding of the following four focus areas:

- 1) buy-in and support from countries and institutions through data policies;
- 2) capacity building and developing skills;
- 3) how sharing of data by researchers is awarded (incentives); and
- 4) current infrastructures that exist to support the sharing of data.

This presentation will be focusing on the alignment of the project with the SDGs, as well as sharing outcomes of the project regarding the mentioned focus areas. Phase 1 of this project focused on creating awareness and doing a landscape survey of what is done in terms of Open Data. Phase 2 –starting on 1 November 2017 –will be focusing on building capacity and presenting training workshops. Initiatives indicated above are captured in a database, which will inform future recommendations. This platform is expected to enhance accessibility to and increase the impact of African science, and specifically the data sets underlying the science.

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