

## **PARIS21 Seminar: The Value of Data: From measurement to policy change and impact**

The need to measure the value of data has become ever more important in times where national statistical offices (NSOs) face tight budget constraints, in particular in developing countries. To maintain relevance in the data revolution, NSOs need to convincingly communicate their added value and the subsequent role official statistics have to play. During the PARIS21 Annual Meetings, a seminar was organised to emphasise the value of data while looking at different areas including measurement, policy change and impact. The seminar looked at two cases from the educational context in Ghana and the UK, which convincingly demonstrated the value of data by engaging citizens in data collection and data use, in order to hold institutions to account.

Friederike Röder from the ONE Campaign opened the first session with a presentation on ONE's "Follow the Money" project which supports transparency in government spending. Friederike argued that secrecy around how public money is used can lead to corruption and poor-quality public services, ultimately affecting the likelihood of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) being achieved. Following the presentation, Friederike interviewed George Osei-Bimpeh from SEND Ghana, an NGO specialised in the promotion of good governance and gender equality in West Africa. The interview addressed the involvement of SEND in Ghana's national school feeding programme. Participants of the seminar agreed on the crucial need for accountability and co-operation between government agencies and civil society organisations, but they also questioned the quality of data produced by these types of organisations.

In the second session, Simon Burgess from the University of Bristol presented on how school performance information can be used to raise student attainment through accountability. He provided international evidence on the provision of test-score information and its use to inform school choice and improve school accountability. He also stressed the need to provide information in useful formats and pointed to potential adverse effects of coupling the provision of information with rewards for teachers and schools.

The roundtable discussion at the end of the seminar distilled concrete steps forward on how, as a partnership, PARIS21 can support work on data use and literacy and promote the engagement of citizens in the process. Mercy Kanyuka (Malawi) started the discussions by stating that while the cost of data production is assessed through national exercises such as the Country Report on Support to Statistics (CRESS), its benefits are much harder to quantify and there is an important role for PARIS21 to measure and demonstrate these benefits. Neil Jackson (DfID) echoed the need for PARIS21 to provide convincing evidence on the value of data. Reflecting on the unconvincing attempts to measure the benefits of the UK census, he argued that the way forward should be case studies with rigorous methodologies for data products that feature clearly defined uses. Silvia Montoya (UNESCO Institute of Statistics) agreed on the usefulness of school league tables for school accountability but stressed that more work needs to be done to make them accessible and usable by citizens. Ceri Thompson (Eurostat) provided an overview of Eurostat's ongoing work on a costing exercise for an entire catalogue of statistical products.

To conclude, the Chair identified three activities for PARIS21 to focus on going forward:

1. Produce concrete case studies to demonstrate the impact of data, as part of PARIS21 advocacy activities
2. Dialogue with non-official data producers, notably civil society organisations and the private sector, to create trust and identify priorities on who should do what as part of the NSDS process
3. Establish a programme for global data literacy. Through work with partners, conceptualise the components of statistical literacy and undertake country work on improving the use and understanding of statistics