Responsible Data Forum

organized by the engine room and Aspiration, a part of the engine room's Responsible Data Program

MISSION

The engine room, Aspiration and partners are working to support advocates in making smart and safe choices about how to use data in their work. For two days in early 2014, participants from the advocacy, technology, research, and funding communities will come together to address the complex problems that come with collecting and using data effectively and safely. Collaborators will surface problems, work towards solutions, and develop a mandate to carry the Responsible Data Project forward to develop useable resources for advocates.

CHALLENGE

Information and data are an increasingly important part of advocacy work, and intentionally or not, activists and civil society groups are collecting a lot of it—through surveys, mappings, record keeping and every day communications. And while data and communication tools can strengthen advocacy work, they can also put communities and activists at risk if they are not managed carefully and responsibly.

WHO AND WHAT

The engine room has been meeting with activists, donors and support groups to understand what kinds of technologies, data, and work flows present the greatest challenges; where the risks are and what can be done to meet them. Our goal is to develop decision-making tools, policy guidelines and resources that can support activists and civil society groups looking to strengthen not only how they use data, but also how they collect and protect it. These conversations have demonstrated a broad range of challenges and a notable lack of resources. They have also shown that the process for developing useable resources requires expertise and perspectives from a variety of fields. The next step for the Responsible Data Project is to convene experts and advocates from the technology, donor, activism, and support communities, to brainstorm problem and solution sets, and to launch a community-driven response to the broad and complex challenges presented by data in advocacy.

This event will provide dedicated headspace and community focus to develop resources that can be tweaked and launched following the event. A premium will be set on recruiting thinkers and doers from relevant fields who rarely have an opportunity to tackle problems collaboratively:

- **activists and advocates**, for demand-side perspectives on what resources would be most useful

- **security and privacy thinkers** who work on the strategic layers of decision-making about data

- **researchers** tackling ethical and privacy protections of collecting data from and about others

- **funders** working to improve the way they support safe and ethical data collection by grantees

- **technology doers** that understand the technical implications of ICT tools

Collaboration will focus on understanding needs, what kinds of resources would be the most useful, and what kinds of solutions can be feasibly created (at the event and beyond). Facilitators will chart out active work sessions and lead participants to map common needs and gaps, produce an action plan for pushing the project forward, and establish partnerships to carry out the project. Work sessions will be structured to produce basic useable resources.

SO WHAT (AND WHAT NEXT)

Some potential outputs from the event include:

- **Mapping of relevant data types**, data users and problems faced, on which to base problem-solving during the event

- **Identification of initiatives** addressing these issues in various fields, in order to develop powerful partnerships and support on-going work

- A **short list of relevant resources from the research community**, such as methodologies and ethical tools, for adaptation to advocacy contexts

- **Clear community priorities**, so that the project can develop the most needed and relevant resources

- **Identify common problems with quick-win solutions** (tools, guides, protocols), so that the project can hit the ground running

- **Groups and informal coalitions** to work on specific resources or processes in the event and beyond

- **Buy-in from participants** to take an active role in moving the process forward, to ensure sustainability and relevance over time

- **Policy guidelines** for donors and large organizations to guide support to data practices in-country

The event will likely lead to first draft outputs of resources, and a mandate for working on the problems that participants surface. What happens after the event will be just as important. Participants will collaboratively develop working groups at the event in order subsequently focus on specific priorities in line with their individual mandates. All outputs of the project will be attributed to the collaboration, and the larger umbrella project will be clearly branded as a consortium effort. Being a part of this diverse network of individuals and organizations supporting responsible data in advocacy will be a sharing and learning experience across related but often disconnected fields. Collaborating at this early stage is an opportunity to influence the future of the project and determine its trajectory.

The engine room will:

- manage logistics for the event and coordination for initial collaboration

- package products as consortium outputs

- support fundraising efforts to finalize outputs when appropriate

- maintain documentation of the outputs as they are developed

Aspiration will:

- co-design the event agenda in collaboration with participants and co-organizers

- lead event facilitation and support event facilitators in preparation and session delivery

- advise on Responsible Data Forum strategy, knowledge capture and event outcomes

- advise on and support post-event collaboration

TIMELINE

AUG:	Share concept note, identify key allies
SEP-NOV:	Secure funds
NOV:	Set time and place
DEC:	draft and share workflows and output targets
JAN/FEB:	Responsible Data Forum
MAR:	Set up living documentation, follow up activities