



Using "Big Data" for Development

The analysis of digital information from around the world can become an important supporter of Development efforts according to a report launched on 10 July at the UN headquarters in New York. Entitled "Big Data for Development: Opportunities and Challenges" the UN Global Pulse report looks at how data from social media and other sources can provide useful information about the world population – including aspects like job losses, increasing food prices and other such economic indicators.

"Global Pulse's mission is to help us seize this historic opportunity to improve how we combat hunger, poverty and disease", said the Assistant Secretary-General for Policy and Planning, Robert C. Orr during the launch of the report, an event which included a roundtable discussion. However, he argued, this requires forging strategic partnerships between the 'Big Data' and development communities and trying out innovative approaches to serve poverty eradication efforts. To this end, the report is an important step forward as 'Big Data' is now 'front page news' with its potential reaching even the most remote areas in the world.

The report demonstrates how social media activity can be an early indicator in food price increases and unemployment in countries such as the US or Ireland and, for instance, how Tweets related to the price of rice in Indonesia mirrored official food price inflation statistics. However, Assistant-Secretary General Orr said that the work revealed by the report is just a fraction of what is possible. But for this, Global Pulse would need system-wide support to continue its efforts.

Global Pulse will continue to work with partners through a "Big Data for Development" campaign to mobilize private sector to contribute data, tools or resources to ongoing applied research projects. "Big Data is not just a buzzword for the business world or the data research community anymore," says Robert Kirkpatrick, Global Pulse Director. "The same data and analytical tools which have been developed in the private sector and academia have real applications and opportunities for understanding and responding to global problems like poverty, hunger and disease."

To read the full report, please click here: [Global Pulse \(pdf\)](#)

Sources:

- [UN News Centre](#)
- [Global Pulse](#)

“Generated by the South for the benefit of the South” — High level meeting on South-South cooperation for development

Around 290 policy makers and international organisations gathered in Bali, Indonesia, on 10-12 July for a High-Level Meeting on South-South cooperation — “Towards Country-led Knowledge Hubs”. The meeting’s outcome document, to be called the ‘Bali Communiqué’, will seek to encourage countries, international organizations and civil society groups to explore ways for setting up hubs for knowledge sharing between developing countries.

The Indonesian Head of the National Development Planning Agency, Armida Alisjahbana, argued that knowledge exchange is an important instrument for attaining development objectives given that “developing nations offer many best practices that may be adapted to suit development challenges”. In this respect, Singapore’s Cooperation Enterprise, Brazil’s agricultural research and technology transfer hub and the international development cooperation agencies established by Colombia and Mexico were named during the meeting as example institutional arrangements for knowledge transfer.

According to its Vice-President, Indonesia is ready to become such a knowledge hub for South-South cooperation in three main areas: energy, food security and community-driven disaster mitigation; governance and peace building; and macro-economic management.

Knowledge sharing has become an important factor for cooperation between developing countries in a number of areas. “There is a feeling that there are some solutions which can be generated by the South for the benefit of the South, and that ought to be shared between Southern countries,” John Ashe, president of the United Nations High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation, declared with the occasion of a UN showcase of South-South successes. Entitled ‘South-South and Triangular Cooperation’, the exhibition that took place on July 6 in the UN Headquarters was intended as a tribute to the South-South stakeholders and partners for their contributions to development results.

Sources:

- [IPS Inter Press Service](#)
- [The Jakarta Post](#)
- [Devex](#)

Commission launches Smart Cities and Communities European Innovation Partnership

Aiming to boost the development of smart technologies in cities, the Commission has launched the Smart Cities and Communities European Innovation Partnership (SCC). Working in cooperation with European cities, € 365 million in EU funds have been earmarked in 2013 for demonstration projects in energy, transport and ICT which are expected to deliver solutions to many urban problems.

With almost three quarters of Europeans living in urban dwellings, it is an important challenge for the EU to make cities into intelligent and sustainable environments. However, the potential for using innovative smart technologies is hindered by obstacles like technological risk, uncertain returns, regulatory difficulties and others. According to the Commission, the EU will promote strategic partnerships between energy, transport and ICT industries and European cities with the aim of developing modern urban infrastructures and system.

"Thanks to this partnership, high efficiency heating and cooling systems, smart metering, real-time energy management, or zero-energy buildings neighbourhood solutions will spread among more and more European cities" said Energy Commissioner Günther Oettinger about the Commission promoted SCC.

To support this new partnership, a high level group of CEOs from R&D industries, city mayors, regulatory authorities and public financing institutions will be created. It will serve as an advisor on the strategic orientation of the initiative, identify bottlenecks that are hindering the transformation of European cities and propose necessary actions.

To read the official document, please click here: [European Commission - Energy - Technology & Innovation](#) (pdf)

Sources:

- [EUROPA - Press Releases \(1\)](#)
- [EUROPA - Press Releases \(2\)](#)
- [Smart Cities and Communities](#)

Family Planning summit in London welcomed by ActionAid, with warning

The United Kingdom government, in partnership with the Gates foundation, organised the London summit on Family Planning to mobilise global policy, financing, commodity, and service delivery commitments in support of the rights of women in developing countries to benefit from contraceptive information, services and supplies. The efforts and commitments of the UK government are generally welcomed, yet ActionAid warns that the availability of family planning services alone will not ensure that women and girls can actually use them.

"It's great that the UK government and Gates Foundation are working together on this crucial issue. If they are to be successful then as well as tackling the lack of availability of contraceptives, they must also focus on the reasons why women are blocked from using them. As long as women need permission from their husbands or are facing violence then these great efforts will not be sufficient", said Rowan Harvey, ActionAid's Women's Rights Advisor. In a report launched ahead of the London summit, ActionAid shows that women and girls not seldom face social and cultural barriers, including rape and other forms of violence, that prevent them making decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives.

Entitled 'Sex, Choice and Control: The reality of family planning for women and girls today', the ActionAid report interviews women in Uganda, Liberia and Tanzania, stories which reveal the barriers millions of women face to access family planning and how devastating the impact is on their lives.

Marie Stopes International, a member organisation of Eurostep, which specialises in reproductive health in many parts of the world, was featured in The Economist's report on the conference.

According to the European Commission, over 200 million women and girls from developing countries are not using effective methods of contraception if they want to delay or avoid becoming pregnant, and this leads to over 75 million unintended pregnancies every year. Commissioner for Development Andris Piebalgs has announced €23 million to be pledged to the summit's goal of providing family planning services to an additional 120 million women by 2020 in the poorest developing countries. During the years 2007-2013, an average of €86 million in EU funds went to such family planning projects.

To see the new financial commitments made at the summit, please click here: [London Summit on Family Planning \(pdf\)](#)

Sources:

- [London Summit on Family Planning](#)
- [The Economist](#)
- [EUROPA - Press Releases](#)
- [ReliefWeb](#)

South Sudan turns one amid social and economic troubles

South Sudan celebrated its first anniversary on 9 July, a day that marks the day in which South Sudan became an independent country following a peace process that ended a long term conflict with Sudan. However the new country's first year has been far from easy as conflict with the north has continued and the new South Sudanese government and people have faced economic hardship, turning the situation into what Oxfam calls "its worst humanitarian crisis since the end of the war in 2005".

With the occasion, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon congratulated the South Sudanese people. "I extend my warmest greetings and best wishes to the Republic of South Sudan on the first anniversary of its independence. I had the honour of attending the independence ceremonies last year in Juba, and was deeply impressed by the country's commitment to peace," Mr. Ban said in a message. According to Oxfam however, this celebration comes amid heavy cuts in vital spending on infrastructure and services such as new roads, schools, healthcare and water systems and spikes in food and fuel prices as a result of high inflation.

Half of the South Sudan population now faces food shortages, more than double the number last year and according to the World Food Programme, a million people face starvation, with 4-5 million seriously at risk. "The jubilation of independence is now tempered by the reality of a daily struggle to survive," said Helen McElhinney, Oxfam policy advisor. "Some people are living on one meal a day and double the number of people are in need of food aid compared to last year".

Increasing conflict with Sudan is also playing its part in the crisis that is hitting the southern country. Border clashes have brought the two countries to the brink of war and resulted in a humanitarian crisis as people are fleeing the fighting. Aid agencies estimate that there are at least 150.000 refugees in South Sudan.

Renewed conflict and severe economic hardships means that South Sudan cannot live up to its potential. According to Oxfam, South Sudan could feed itself if it had a stable economy, peace and investment in its future. "We must not allow the large investments in agriculture, water, education and other services to be undone by the economic crisis and increase in conflict. The longer this crisis drags on, the greater the risk South Sudan's development will slip backwards, and its vast potential will be unrealised", urged McElhinney.

Sources:

- [Oxfam International - Press releases](#)
- [CNN.com](#)
- [AllAfrica](#)
- [UN News Centre](#)