



The
HAND-BOOK
OF THE MODERN DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST



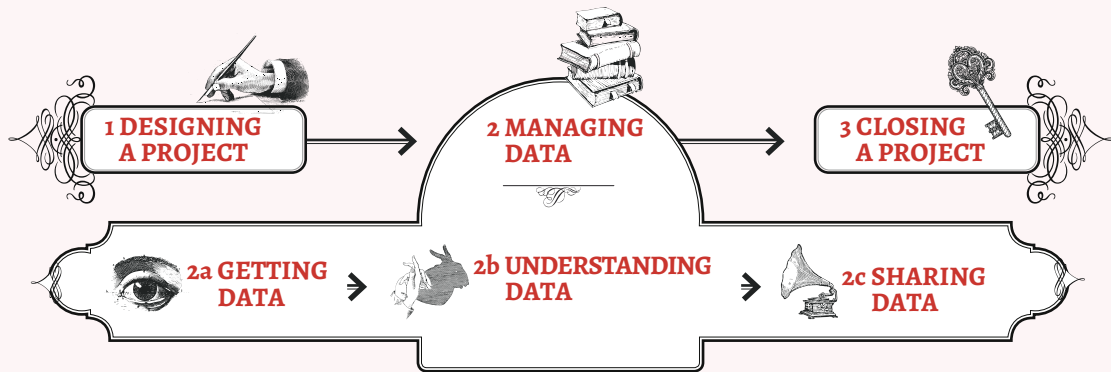
INTRODUCTION

WHAT THIS HANDBOOK HAS TO OFFER.





THE PROJECT DATA FLOW



TARGET AUDIENCE

A primer on why *responsible data* is a relevant concern for international development work.

WHEN MIGHT THIS CHAPTER BE USEFUL?

If you're wondering what materials this book offers or if you're looking for advocacy material as to why your colleagues or managers should be interested in responsible data.

CONTENT SUMMARY

AM I WORKING WITH DATA?

In short, yes, you are. Data is everywhere, whether we recognise it or not, and it can be qualitative (eg. words or photos) or quantitative (eg. spreadsheets).

No matter the kind of data we're talking about, it's important to remember *the people reflected in the data*. Gathering more and more data on people, even on large groups, can be dangerous. Unknowingly supporting discrimination that might be present in the dataset or, with enough aggregated datasets about the same population, could reveal details about individuals that violates their privacy.

The responsibility to mitigate against these kinds of decisions lies with all of us, not simply with the person who is directly responsible for analysing or collecting the data.

THE WORLD OF DATA: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

Data is used in more than just “*data-driven projects*” or “*data journalism*”. Nowadays, all sorts of international development projects rely on data in various formats. Though the rate of data use has increased rapidly over the past couple of decades, the discussion around ethics and politics of data has not evolved at quite the same rate.

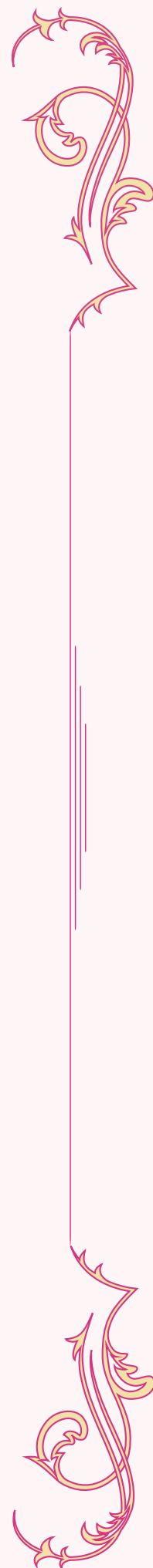
Within the development sector, we’re seeing increased mention of the “*data revolution*” - but what does this really mean? To date, there’s not been so much of a critical debate around the potential harms, or risks, associated with increased data use.

Having data is synonymous with having a certain amount of *power*. Within development, power disparities between donors and beneficiaries are already well-pronounced, and data could exacerbate those tensions. The data collector - in many cases, the donor - effectively owns a commodity relating to an individual, and that data could be financially valuable. This kind of model is rife within social media networks where the “*if you’re not paying, you’re the product*” mantra is relatively commonly understood. Similarly, we generally understand that if malicious actors have access to data, it can be dangerous.

This section discusses the role that data can play in either exacerbating, or (hopefully!) weakening power disparities that are present within the development sector, looking at issues like agency, legitimacy and representation. It goes on to discuss how a framing of *responsible data* can help, and why we think it is important. At its base, discussions around responsible data centre around *empowerment* and *avoidance of harm*: more than discussions about privacy and digital security, we understand responsible data to be about prioritising dignity, respect and privacy of the people we work with.

To put this in perspective, the chapter touches quickly upon a few of the harms that might come with irresponsible data practice, and goes on to explain a few strategies and arguments as to why responsible data is important. Common tensions that are often misunderstood are also addressed, with appropriate explanations - such as transparency and privacy, or representation and responsibility, to help the reader advocate for responsible data to be prioritised within their organisation.

Often, these advocacy strategies can be met with misconceptions around what responsibility means in this sense, and the very real harm that can be done with misuse of data. A few of the most common misconceptions are addressed here, such as misunderstandings around what *anonymisation* actually means in practice; around what data constitutes *sensitive* data; and different understandings of what *privacy* really means.



USEFUL RESOURCES

The “Am I working with data” flowchart is a fun way to help almost anybody realise that “working with data” is not only for the more technical among us, but can also include words, photos, books - all sorts of things that almost all of us interact with on a daily basis.

Donor code of conduct

http://www.ssireview.org/blog/entry/a_new_donor_code_of_conduct

UN data collection

<http://www.unglobalpulse.org/privacy-and-data-protection>

Professional standards for protection work carried out by humanitarian and human rights actors in armed conflict and other situations of violence

<http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/publication/p0999.htm>

Fair Information Practice Principles

<http://www.nist.gov/nstic/NSTIC-FIPPs.pdf>

International Principles on the Application of Human Rights to Communications Surveillance

<https://en.necessaryandproportionate.org/>

OECD Privacy Principles

<http://oecdprivacy.org/>

UNFPA guidelines on data issues in Humanitarian Crisis situations

<https://www.unfpa.org/public/home/publications/pid/6253>



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the engine room

This publication is part of a series found at <https://responsibledata.io>, produced by the engine room Responsible Data Program, 2016.
