Increasing data sharing for social good: Lessons from Africa's COVID-19 response.

1. Morine Amutorine 2. Jessica Montgomery 3. Prof. Neil Lawrence

Morine Amutorine: Data Science Africa (DSA), Jessica Montgomery and Prof. Neil Lawrence: University of Cambridge
* Corresponding author email: amutorine@gmail.com

Abstract

As Covid-19 cases spread across Africa, the need for timely data and information for decision-making and to aid interventions intensified. A concern for many governments was the ability to access data to rapidly inform policy responses, which increased focus on data collaborations and sharing initiatives across organisations and sectors. As a result, a variety of data-driven initiatives emerged, especially in 3 areas of (i) tracking and prediction, (ii) situation data dashboards and (iii) managing lockdowns and social distancing efforts. Looking beyond the pandemic, these initiatives offer lessons to effectively deploy data science for policymaking. This study reviews over 74 data-driven COVID-19 response solutions implemented across Africa during 2020-21, some of which impacted policymaking. We learned from the experiences of those that implemented data science solutions for COVID-19 response, mainly focusing on case studies that we found to play a fundamental role in enabling interventions to overcome data sharing and use challenges in areas such as data governance, data literacy and those that demonstrated strategic collaborations that can increase data sharing and use going forward. The lessons and recommendations herein are key in informing the development of strategies for data sharing that support increased data-enabled policymaking and can be used by several audiences aiming to enable and/or participate in data-sharing collaborations and support data-driven innovations for policymaking.