Immediate Release

The GovLab, AFD, and Expertise France Fund Innovative Data Projects to Address COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa

BROOKLYN, New York, Tuesday, April 6, 2021 – Out of a field of over 80 proposals by organizations in Africa — many working in collaboration — The Governance Lab (GovLab) at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering, l'Agence française de développement (AFD), and Expertise France chose seven projects to receive the #Data4COVID19 Africa Challenge. The challenge seeks to address the social, economic, and health challenges resulting from COVID-19 in Africa through new collaborations around non-traditional, non-statistical datasets.

Following a call for innovative proposals that ran from December 15, 2020 through February 5, 2021, and with the input of a panel of outside data experts, The GovLab, AFD and their partners selected the following:

- **Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (Mali)** will seek to quantify missed opportunities for COVID-19 screening in vulnerable populations (such as people with HIV).

- **'Université Alioune Diop de Bambey (Senegal)** will investigate how the crisis impacted the students pursuing higher education and which action can be taken to support them.

- **Nigeria Centre for Disease and Control (Nigeria)** will study the social, economic, and political factors that influence individual knowledge and perception of COVID-19.

- **Code for Africa (Nigeria, Senegal)** will develop an "African COVID-19 Vulnerability Index" in coordination to give leaders up-to-date and granular resources.

- **The Population Council of Kenya (Kenya, Zimbabwe)** will examine how perceptions of COVID-19 and vulnerability to it affect adoption of protective behaviors among different subgroups.

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- **Institut National d'Hygiène Publique (Côte d'Ivoire)** will study how organizations can track the spread of acute respiratory tract infections with various datasets.

- **Data Science Institute - INPHB CI (Côte d'Ivoire)** will seek to understand public needs and concerns about government actions taken amid the pandemic.

"Though there's been much progress around the world to develop collaborative data ecosystems that can improve people's lives, there are still significant gaps. By funding this new and innovative work, we hope to build the data infrastructure needed to tackle the pandemic and other dynamic societal threats," said [Stefaan Verhulst](#), co-founder and chief research and development officer of The GovLab.

"Creating an environment to enable multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder collaboration for innovation to provide actionable strategic insights and contextual intelligence that leverage on data to address issues related to the COVID19 crisis is at the core of this initiative.", said Thomas Melonio, Executive Director of Innovation, Research & Knowledge at AFD. Peter Addo, AFD data specialist and Director of Datalab, echoed this point, noting, "This initiative is part of AFD's effort to prioritize investments in data and the Fourth Industrial Revolution to contribute to an innovation-led, knowledge-based economy in Africa."

"The important number of proposals received is a genuine proof that there is a real need for data related support in Africa," said Béata Suszterova, project coordinator within Expertise France. "The selected proposals are all very relevant and we are looking forward to working with our African counterparts on this data challenge."

In addition to funding, funded projects will have access to a Situation Room, an online meeting place where funded researchers and select data experts can meet to discuss their current work, brainstorm solutions to major challenges, and share findings. This resource will enable peer-to-peer learning and broaden the impact and reach of each individual project. Data-driven professionals interested in providing support can send an email inquiring at datastewards@thegovlab.org.

AFD and its partners will remain engaged and help manage the Situation Room. It will also communicate outcomes as they emerge. Organizations are encouraged to visit https://datachallenge.africa for more information on forthcoming work.

About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering
The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute. A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences as part of a global university, with close connections to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. NYU Tandon is rooted in a vibrant tradition of entrepreneurship, intellectual curiosity, and innovative solutions to humanity's most pressing global challenges. Research at Tandon focuses on vital intersections between communications/IT, cybersecurity, and data science/AI/robotics systems and tools and critical areas of society that they influence, including emerging media, health, sustainability, and urban living. We believe diversity is integral to excellence, and are creating a vibrant, inclusive, and equitable environment for all of our students, faculty and staff. For more information, visit engineering.nyu.edu.

About The Governance Lab at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering
The Governance Lab's mission is to improve people's lives by changing the way we govern. Our goal at The GovLab is to strengthen the ability of institutions — including but not limited to governments — and people to work more openly, collaboratively, effectively, and legitimately to make better decisions and solve public problems. We believe that increased availability and use of data, new ways to leverage the capacity, intelligence, and expertise of people in the problem-solving process, combined with new advances in technology and science, can transform governance. For more information, visit thegovlab.org.

About the Agence française de développement :
The Agence française de développement Group (AFD) is a public institution that implements France's policy in the areas of development and international solidarity: climate, biodiversity, peace, education, town planning, health, governance, etc. Our teams are actively involved in more than 4,000 projects with a high social and environmental impact in the French Overseas Departments and Territories and in 115 countries.   We thus contribute to the commitment of France and the French people to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
www.afd.fr   @AFD_France

About Expertise France :
Expertise France is the public agency for French international technical cooperation. The agency works in four priority areas: democratic, economic and financial governance; security and stability of countries in crisis/post-crisis situations; sustainable development; and strengthening health, social protection and employment systems. In these areas, Expertise France carries out engineering and implementation missions for capacity building projects, mobilizes technical expertise and plays a role as a project coordinator involving public expertise and private know-how.
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