# LEVERAGING BIG DATA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**28 - 31 March 2017 (4 days)**
**MIT Media Lab, Cambridge, USA**

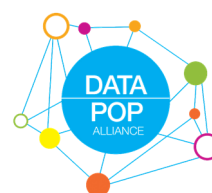A course by

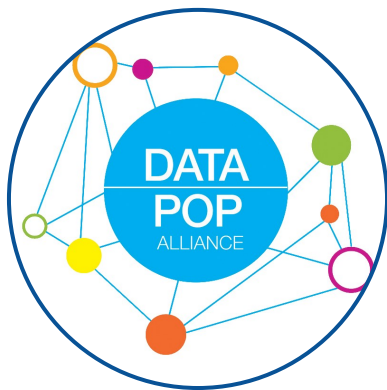## United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC)

in partnership with

## Data-Pop Alliance

# Organizers

**Data-Pop Alliance**

Data-Pop Alliance is a global coalition on Big Data and development created by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI), MIT Media Lab and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), joined by Flowminder Foundation, that brings together researchers, experts, practitioners, and activists to promote a people-centered Big Data revolution through collaborative research, capacity building, and community engagement.

**United Nations System Staff College**

The United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC), through the establishment of the Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development, facilitates comprehensive learning, training, and knowledge management on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

# Course Overview

The course aims to help practitioners and policy-makers develop and implement Big Data innovation projects, policies, and partnerships in support of sustainable development objectives. Through a blend of teaching formats, including traditional instructor-led teaching, keynote speakers, and interactive and hands-on technical sessions, participants will learn the foundations of Big Data in the context of sustainable development and explore how to engage with Big Data in their daily work and life. The broader and longer term objective is incentivizing and enabling participants to contribute to a people-centered Big Data revolution—i.e. shape and leverage emerging Big Data ecosystem in ways that reflect and foster social progress and citizen empowerment across the globe, especially those of poor and vulnerable segments of societies.

Through the course, participants will:
- Gain a better understanding on the common contexts and concepts of Big Data and sustainable development, including the political economy of data, official statistics and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Be exposed to current technical methods and applications that yield insights for specific development problems;
- Practice design and development of inclusive and ethical Big Data projects partnerships and policies;
- Learn how to effectively engage and communicate about Big Data with key stakeholders and communities through visualization and storytelling.

Through guided activities and interactive project labs, participants will have the opportunity to design data-driven sustainable development projects and discuss the implications and impact of Big Data projects for the SDGs.

# Learning Objectives and Target Audience

## Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course, participants will have:

- Heightened awareness of and interest in the main applications and implications of the most recent debates and advances in Big Data and sustainable development;
- An increased understanding and capacity to actively and constructively engage in and with Big Data in their work ;
- Motivation and ability to create partnerships with various stakeholders within and outside of their organization to develop effective, sustainable solutions using Big Data sources and methodologies;
- Skills to help apply course lessons and key concepts towards policy implementation and project development through session activities and adaptation of the Big Data and sustainable development course toolkit.

## Target Audience

**The course is open to UN and Non-UN participants** with an interest in Big Data and sustainable development-related issues and innovation. The course is designed primarily to the needs of project management professionals and staff with introductory to intermediate skills in statistics and economics.

# Course Agenda

**Day 0: Afternoon welcome and networking reception  at the MIT Media Lab Silverman Skyline Room (course venue)**

**Day 1: Contexts and Concepts: Understanding key Big Data ideas in order to translate sustainable development-related problems into specific data objectives**

*Morning Sessions:*
- Workshop kickoff
- Keynote: policies, societies and literacy in the age of Big Data
- Expert Panel: case studies on Big Data and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

*Afternoon Sessions:*
- Mapping global and local Big Data ecosystems

**Day 2: Methods and Tools: Applying Big Data methods and tools to yield insights for specific sustainable development-related problems**

*Morning Sessions:*
- Day 1 Refresher
- Landscape of Big Data methods and tools
- Technical tutorial 1

*Afternoon Sessions:*
- Technical tutorial 2
- Data expedition
- Reflection on Day 2 and Preview of Day 3

# Course Agenda *(cont.)*

Day 3: Design and Strategy: Operationalizing Big Data as inclusive projects, partnerships and policies & Ethics and Engagement: Engaging key stakeholders and communities through ethical practices and effective story-telling

*Morning Sessions:*
- Keynote: ethics and politics of Big Data
- Designing Big Data projects: project archetypes and lessons learned

*Afternoon Sessions:*
- Policy frameworks for ethical data use
- Data storytelling: Telling the story you want to tell with Big Data
- Reflection on Day 3, Preview of Day 4
- Special seminar: Big Data and the SDGs

Day 4: Big Data for sustainable development in action: Data partnership and project development lab

*Morning Sessions:*
- Day 4 kickoff
- Data partnership and project development Lab

*Afternoon Sessions:*
- Project pitches and feedback
- Applying the Data and sustainable development toolkit
- Workshop wrap up: debrief and next steps

# Cost and Target Audience

## Cost of Participation

The course is offered at a fee of **USD 2,500** per participant, covering the following:

- Reception and four days of training with a balance of presentations, full group and small group work on case studies and exercises;
- Exclusive access to online resources on Big Data and Sustainable Development;
- All course materials, resources and contacts.

In addition, thanks to the generous support of the Hewlett Foundation and in order to promote inclusive and multi-stakeholder participation, Data-Pop Alliance offers Fellowships covering the costs of the course to selected professionals from institutions in the public sector, civil society, and academia. If you meet this qualification, letters of interest for a Fellowship describing your role and organization, your interest in the course and what you hope to gain are welcome to trainings@datapopalliance.org.

All participants are expected to cover all travel and accommodation expenses associated with the course. Certificates of attendance from the UN System Staff College and Data-Pop Alliance will be awarded to participants who complete the course.

# Venue and Registration



Venue:

MIT Media Lab

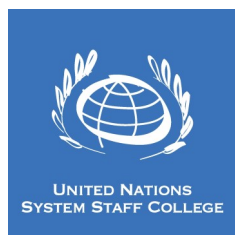77 Mass. Ave., E14/E15
Cambridge, MA
02139-4307 USA

*Images by Andy Ryan*

The MIT Media Lab occupies a six-floor structure with approximately 163,000 square feet of laboratory, office, and meeting space designed by the Tokyo-based architectural firm of Maki and Associates. Together with the existing Wiesner Building (designed by MIT alumnus I. M. Pei), the complex serves as a showplace for new concepts in design, communications systems, and collaborative research.

## Registration

In order to register for this course, please click here to go to the course webpage. On the course webpage, please click on 'Sign Up' and fill in the online registration form. The enrollment deadline for this course is **21 March 2017**.

The United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) is the primary provider of interagency training and learning for staff of the United Nations system. Its overall objective is to promote and support UN inter-agency collaboration, increase the operational effectiveness of the UN system as a whole and provide UN staff with the required skills and competencies to face today's global challenges.

UNSSC conducts a variety of learning and training activities, in Turin and Bonn, UN Headquarters as well as at the regional and country levels. All such activities effectively respond to the cross-agency, far-reaching reform agenda of the United Nations.

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