WorldPop Impact Assessment Report - audio summary

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Transcript

Speaker 1: In a world often, you know, drowning in data, how do you actually find the insights that truly make a difference? Welcome to the deep dive. Today we're doing a deep dive into the real world impact of WorldPop's data and especially their collaborative approach. Our source for this is an impact assessment report. It was put together by Dev Afrique, which is an African led, Africa based social impact organisation. They're committed to tackling complex challenges right there on the continent.

Now before we jump in, just a quick but important note for you, our voices, they're actually AI derived. They come from source material uploaded by WorldPop and crucially, this audio has been rigorously edited, checked and validated by the experts at WorldPop. So, you know you're getting thoroughly vetted, insights straight from the source.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And what's really fascinating here is just how foundational this kind of demographic data can be. You know, how it can fundamentally reshape efforts on the ground. And how WorldPop is really bridging some significant information gaps across the globe. So, our mission today really is to understand how these open access population estimates from WorldPop are actually being used. We're talking NGO's, governments, national statistics offices, mainly in low- and middle-income countries.

Speaker 1: OK, so WorldPop's core thing is these open access, high resolution population estimates there for the public good. But I mean, there's lots of data out there. What makes this such a, well, a game changer?

Speaker 2: That's a really good point. The game changing part, I think, comes down to addressing these really specific gaps. Often decision makers are wrestling with data that's maybe hard to get or it's outdated or honestly, just too complicated to make sense of easily. WorldPop steps in there with these granular, up-to-date estimates, it makes sophisticated demographic insights accessible to pretty much anyone who needs them.

Speaker 1: Right. Which brings us to that co-development approach the report talks about. It sounds like it's not just about, you know, dropping data off, it's more than that.

Speaker 2: Exactly. It's absolutely more than that. If you think about the bigger picture. This co-development model is really key. Key for sustainable evidence-based decision making. WorldPop doesn't just hand over a data set, they actively work with the national statistical offices with government agencies.

Speaker 1: So, like building it together.

Speaker 2: Precisely. Joint development, embedded training, really building the capacity of the local teams. This makes sure the outputs are relevant, that they're trusted, and that the countries actually feel ownership over the data. It avoids that sort of 'parachute' approach.

Speaker 1: That makes a lot of sense, and it seems like this collaborative model is leading to some really tangible impacts. The report mentioned some striking examples in humanitarian aid.

Speaker 2: Oh, definitely. Take Meta's Data for Good programme. WorldPop's population estimates allowed them to provide really essential support during crises. For instance, shelter and clean water for about 70,000 people in Nairobi. And another 800,000 in northern Ghana. It just shows how quickly and effectively, aid can be deployed when you have that accurate, current demographic map.

Speaker 1: And what about the health sector? It sounds like there were some big wins there too.

Speaker 2: Huge wins. The impact on public health is pretty significant. In the DRC, the Democratic Republic of Congo, WorldPop data helped boost malaria testing by 18%.

Speaker 1: 18% that's substantial.

Speaker 2: It really is. And in Nigeria they identified 100 of these zero dose areas, you know, places where kids weren't getting any vaccines. That allowed local teams to go in and increase vaccine coverage across 67 of those areas. That's lives saved right there.

Speaker 1: Absolutely.

Speaker 2: And one more in Ghana. They used WorldPop data to optimise where they put sickle cell screening sites. The potential - increasing infant screening by maybe 42%.

Speaker 1: 42% that's incredible potential.

Speaker 2: These aren't just statistics. They translate into healthier communities.

Speaker 1: And it's clearly not just about aid or health. Governments themselves are seeing efficiency boosts. That example from Colombia's statistics department seemed really powerful.

Speaker 2: Oh, it really is a standout case. DANE used a WorldPop tool called PreEA for their 2024 economic census. Basically, it automated how they mapped out economic units in cities.

Speaker 1: And that helped how?

Speaker 2: Well, this process used to take maybe two or three days of manual work per city. With the tool just 5 minutes.

Speaker 1: OK, 5 minutes down from several days.

Speaker 2: Exactly 5 minutes per city. It's a massive saving and time and resources. obviously. But it also shows how this kind of data structured for automation can just fundamentally change how government operations work.

Speaker 1: Makes previously painstaking tasks almost instant. And what about other areas like education?

Speaker 2: Education has benefited too. UNESCO used WorldPop estimates for modelling school age populations vital for planning resources. And Data Science Nigeria during the COVID lockdowns used this really granular data to get educational materials out to almost 8 million students from low income backgrounds. Helping keep learning going when schools were shut.

Speaker 1: That focus on capacity building, not just data delivery, seems crucial too.

Speaker 2: Well, it raises that key question, doesn't it? How do you empower local actors not just to use the data, but maybe even master creating and applying it themselves?

Speaker 1: Right. Building self-sufficiency.

Speaker 2: Exactly. So WorldPop runs embedded training workshops, they've strengthened population modelling skills in 14 countries so far. Like in Papua New Guinea, the training helps spot talented local researchers who they could then mentor further. Or in Ghana, there's a regional health director who learned these geospatial techniques and now actually shares his knowledge through YouTube tutorials. That's real local ownership.

Speaker 1: That's fantastic. And the sheer adoption rate says a lot too, doesn't it? Over 800 publications citing WorldPop data between 2017 and 2023 across 58 countries.

Speaker 2: Yeah. And over 1,000,000 downloads from platforms like HDX and ArcGIS. It's clear this data has become pretty fundamental for a lot of important work.

Speaker 1: So, stepping back, what's the big takeaway here for you? It seems clear that accurate, accessible demographic data is vital, but it's that combination, isn't it? The data plus the genuine co-development with local partners that seems to be reshaping how help actually reaches the people who need it most. It's about empowering from within.

Speaker 2: Absolutely. And maybe a final thought for you, the listener to mull over. Just consider how critical this kind of foundational data really is, especially when it's openly shared and developed collaboratively. How essential is this granular co-developed data, and maybe ask yourself what other areas out there could desperately use this kind of approach?