Cepei Value Proposition, Vision, and Strategy 2023 2030

Cepei

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2023-2030

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Our value proposition

PART 1

Digitization and the internet, the increasing complexity of intertwined financial markets, dense urban systems, and transboundary environmental challenges (from climate change to global pandemics) are just the tip of a mammoth iceberg that is forcing governments and other stakeholders to rethink the way we govern these global problems. Unfortunately, there is no playbook on how to do this. No one country, region, or community can definitively say they have achieved sustainable development, nor that they have the recipe for how to do it.

Strong political leadership is undoubtedly key. Indeed, political science has highlighted that effective governance in the 20th and 21st centuries is dependent on a politics of leadership that emphasizes the power of the executive, the necessity to engage with powerful bureaucracies, and the importance of direct public engagement. Likewise, other policy studies and literature emphasize that strong leadership is essential to force critical junctures or moments of disruption in what is otherwise a path-dependent political system. But political science also points to the central role of policy intermediaries, people who understand complex political systems and can act as a broker between external stakeholders, experts, advocacy groups, and those in positions of power to help shape new decisions. In an influential paper on advocacy coalitions, Paul Sabatier called these people **policy brokers**.

The Centro de Pensamiento Estratégico Internacional (Cepei) is an independent think tank headquartered in Bogota, Colombia. For 20 years, Cepei has worked to develop a detailed understanding of global, regional, and national policy processes with the intention of being an expert policy broker.

Our Mission

To strengthen political processes at the highest governance levels, enabling governments and their partners to better deliver on **their sustainable development objectives.**

Our Vision

To become the preeminent think-tank situated in the Latin American region, working **to strengthen local to global policy processes for sustainable development**, with active research partnerships in all regions.

How we work

Drawing on more than twenty years of experience and the latest policy science literature, Cepei has three main competencies and related ways of working:

1 **Facilitating convenings that give our stakeholders a clear path to meeting the 2030 Agenda goals.** Since our inception, we have hosted more than 125 national and international events, some resulting in major initiatives. Cepei brings together experts, local practitioners, and political actors to infuse new ideas into key political moments.

2 **Using data and evidence to identify the best opportunities for our stakeholders to track progress.** Cepei subscribes to the belief that better evidence, communicated simply and clearly, and put in policymakers' hands, can help deliver better policy results. This evidence should help inform policy and deliberative processes so that they are designed to be responsive to and reflective of an ever-changing landscape.

3 **Brokering multistakeholder participation to inform and guide sustainable development policy.** A fundamental ingredient for effective and responsible governance is inclusivity. Opening up the decision-making process to include, and accommodate citizen, expert, and practitioner opinions should be a cornerstone of all 21st-century policy development.

Beyond 2015

From 2014-2015, Cepei co-chaired the Beyond 2015 campaign, which brought together more than 1.300 civil society organizations from over 132 countries to reach a civil society consensus around a minimum standard of legitimacy for a post-2015 framework.

Making Multilateralism Fit for Purpose

Testifying our expert knowledge of UN deliberation processes, and the high-level impact of our work, since 2019 we partnered with the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General and subsequently with UN Women and the Development Coordination Office, to carry out research and provide recommendations on ways to streamline and maximize the impact of the United Nations' regional assets. Cepei visited all five regions where the UN does its work, carrying out consultations with members of the UNDS and experts at the regional level. As a result, not only did the research team question staff working within the UN, but also members of civil society, academia, and government. Overall, more than 1.000 people got involved and many multi-stakeholder meetings were convened around the globe. Our work was acknowledged by the UN Secretary-General for "…. engaging in an innovative partnership that delivered rigorous analysis and recommendations that helped to inform the work of the internal review team (of the UN)."

The creation of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD)

Cepei and its partners convened the Cartagena Data Festival in April 2015. It involved the participation of 400 people from across the development community. The meeting resulted in the creation of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data; a multi-stakeholder platform that works to align the power of public and private data in support of the SDG. Today, the GPSDD has over 300 members, a Board chaired by the UN Deputy Secretary General, and is delivering large-scale programs worldwide to improve the quality of data on sustainable development (visit: www.data4sdgs.org). Cepei was fundamental in its inception, serving on the interim Steering Committee that governed its initial operations.

Our blueprint

To achieve our mission, whilst capitalizing upon our core competencies, we subscribe to identified three concepts that guide all our work:

Tracking the Quality of the SDG Reporting

To understand how the development community is contributing to the SDGs, Cepei follows, analyzes, and actively engages in global sustainable development governance processes. To help improve these processes, Cepei offers insight and demystifies them for non-expert audiences. Tracking the quality of the SDG reporting also involves curating timely data and information on the state of sustainable development policy and outcomes across the regions.

Cepei strongly believes that diverse, high-quality evidence translated into relevant products and analysis can help decision-makers to make more effective and informed decisions. We focus on developing short policy products, which draw upon our own programmatic experiences or those of our partners, as well as the latest academic evidence. We also work to curate and draw insights from and visualize a wide range of public and private data sets. This may take many forms; from large-scale quantitative datasets to smaller qualitative insights or analytical papers. The key point is that it is accessible and policy-relevant, delivering timely insights on the SDG reporting progress.

Accelerating SDG implementation

We take advantage of opportunities to improve the quality of the reporting process by making our methodologies, data, and analysis accessible and relevant for Latin American stakeholders so they can identify entry points for more effective engagement. Making these processes and dialogues open to a wider audience promotes transparency and accountability, and–as recognized by Agenda 2030–can help to strengthen the quality of policy outcomes.

Cross-cutting Cepei Organizational Effectiveness

Underlying all of our work is Cepei's commitment to investing in and improving upon its organizational assets and capacities. Cepei is an ISO-9001 certified institution (a quality management system) continuously seeking to improve its relations with partners, the quality of its products, and its internal management processes by fostering a strong organizational data culture. We strive to employ high-quality, responsive, and flexible working processes, to respond to the dynamic environments within which we live and work.

Our Partners

Cepei places a strong emphasis on partnership, engagement and outreach. In addition to local partnerships, we have key institutional collaborations and partnerships at the highest levels of public policy. The nature and scope of our partnerships vary, focusing on research, technical support, advocacy, and communications. Some examples of our key partners include:

1 Multilateral organizations

We work at the most senior levels of the UN system, including with the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and Regional Economic and Social Commissions such as ECLAC, to strengthen the institutions supporting global sustainable development, particularly regional and national data and statistical systems. We aim to make global and regional sustainable development processes more accessible to a wide public audience.

2 Governments

Our main interlocuters are governments at national and local levels, with whom we work to promote the SDGs, strengthen their data and evidence inputs, and support policy processes. For example, we have worked with a number of countries across the global South to strengthen their national data strategies and statistical improvements. We have Memoranda of Understanding with ten governments in Latin America.

3 Non-Governmental entities

We have a broad range of NGO partners from universities, think tanks, and international charities to private companies, with a particular emphasis on those specializing in data for stakeholder engagement and contributing to sustainable development.

In addition to these bilateral partnerships, we are an active member and participant in global initiatives, including PARIS21, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (specifically their TReNDS program), C4UN, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, and Together 2030.

Our strategy for 2023-2030

With just seven more years remaining to achieve the SDGs (and being off-track) there is little time but a huge opportunity to act. At Cepei we are committed to understanding Latin American and the Caribbean's progress toward the SDGs, and how different stakeholders can contribute to accelerating the SDG implementation processes. In support of this, we follow a simple blueprint: track to accelerate.

PART 2

Cepei's Strategic Objectives

Following our blueprint, we have two strategic objectives. The first is focused on decoding policy processes and the second is focused on evidence, including the data required to monitor sustainable development.

Strategic Objective 1
Strengthening Policy Processes

Our first strategic objective focuses on understanding and decoding policy processes. Our aim is to help decipher complex local, national and international policy processes relating to sustainable development, to identify opportunities for external evidence inputs, and to encourage multi-stakeholder engagement. Making these processes and dialogues open to a broader audience promotes transparency and accountability and, as recognized by Agenda 2030, can help to strengthen the quality of policy outcomes.

For 20 years our focus has predominantly been on tracking global and regional processes from a Latin American perspective. From 2023 onwards we intend to translate lessons learned from Latin America for other regions' use. Taking a regional perspective–being an ambassador for the regions– to understand global sustainable development processes is a unique Cepei offering, which responds to the new, emerging trends of transboundary, polycentric governance.

There are three key activities in this strategic objective, each with corresponding projects:

a. Support robust follow-up and review of sustainable development with critical analysis at regional levels

A key component of the 2030 Agenda is follow-up and review; a commitment by governments to ensure robust data collection activities, annual review processes, and regular reporting to the international community on their activities progressing the 17 SDGs.

In support of this, Cepei has closely monitored countries in the Latin American and Caribbean region to assess their policy commitments to sustainable development, the quality of their annual review processes, and their preparation of Voluntary National Reviews to be reported to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). We have also observed common lessons and successful practices which we have consolidated into published guidelines. As a result of this work, we have witnessed increasing references to Cepei's guidance and support in countries' VNRs and are supporting an ever-increasing number of partnerships with Ministries, National Statistical Offices, and planning offices across the region responsible for sustainable development monitoring.

We are consolidating and deepening this work by merging all of Cepei's existing tracking products into one SDG tracker, available on Cepei's website. This tracker responds directly to the excellent feedback we have received from country partners across Latin America who have repeatedly acknowledged the value of Cepei's guidance in the preparation of their VNRs and will include:

- **SDG regional and country profiles** for all Latin American and Caribbean countries, and over time will expand to cover other regions and the countries therein.

- **A Cepei flagship report**, which will highlight regional progress and trends in sustainable development, national policy changes, and innovations, as well as key quantitative and qualitative data on progress towards the goals.

- **A Voluntary National Reviews Quality Index** measuring VNRs´ degree of alignment with the reporting commitments established by each country in the 2030 Agenda and related instruments.

- **Common lessons and best practices** across countries, and guidance and templates to country stakeholders worldwide on how to build a comprehensive and impactful VNR.

b. Monitoring and making accessible complex political decision-making processes to support multi-stakeholder engagement in SDG implementation

Core activities in 2023 and beyond will include ongoing monitoring of global and regional convenings relating to the 2030 Agenda (including but not limited to the HLPF and UNGA, and ad hoc ECLAC SDG dialogues), synthesis and communication of key events and the decisions reached, to make these processes accessible to a diversity of stakeholders including academia and civil society. Summaries of meetings and events will be made available as blogs and opinion pieces on the resources section of Cepei's website, whilst country commitments and pledges will be published on dedicated goal-by-goal 'Regional Profile', and country pages ('Country Profiles') as part of the SDG Tracker.

This work is pursued in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including the UN development system, universities, and national SDG commissions.

Another flagship program in 2023 is 17 Rooms. This is a process, developed by The Brookings Institute and Rockefeller Foundation, to facilitate practical, expert dialogues and problem-solving on key SDG topics. With Rockefeller's support, Cepei is leading a 17 Rooms series across Latin America, intending to reach multi-stakeholder agreements to implement concrete and feasible actions to accelerate regional SDGs implementations within a 12-18 month framework. The project also aims to show how this methodology can be contextualized to a given region. If successful in Latin America, Cepei will work with Brookings and partners to develop a replicable methodology and expand the effort to other regions worldwide.

C. Supporting a multilateralism fit for purpose

The complexity of transboundary sustainable development challenges requires new governance models and approaches. In recognition of this, the UN launched a large-scale institutional reform program to try and support country, agency, and regional UN offices to more efficiently work with governments in support of sustainable development programming, planning, and delivery.

A major component of this work is the reform of the UN's regional collaboration bodies and platforms. Since 2019 Cepei has been actively supporting this work, as an external partner, first working closely with the Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General and currently engaged through the UN's Development Coordination Office.

Our ambitions with this work are to facilitate open, active dialogue between national and regional stakeholders on the best institutional mechanisms to support regional cooperation, and in doing so to encourage broad, multi-stakeholder engagement, as per our core operating principles. While a key recommendation report was completed in mid-2022, Cepei anticipates actively working with the UN development system to implement our findings well into 2023. Thereafter, we hope to continue collaboration with the UN DCO and EOSG to support UN strengthening and institutional development and deliver the SDG.

Strategic Objective 2

Improving the Evidence-base for Decision-making

Cepei's second strategic objective is about improving the evidence base for decision-making. We strongly believe that diverse, high-quality evidence translated into policy-relevant products and analysis can help decision-makers to make more effective and informed decisions. We focus on developing short policy products drawing on our own programmatic experiences or those of our partners, as well as the latest academic evidence. We also work to curate and draw insights from a wide range of public and private data sets. There are two key activities of this program:

a. Open Data: Connecting data and information to sustainable development outcomes

Our first key activity with this workstream is to make data and information on countries' progress toward the SDG more accessible to policymakers. We understand that accurate, quality data can help to inform key policy and decision-making processes, but all too often that information is hard to access or identify. Through a series of activities, including our annual flagship report, and the establishment of a community of practice on data communications, we aim to make policy-makers within Latin America and the Caribbean more aware of the range of public and private data sources available to them to help inform their decision-making.

Building on the success of our past projects, Cepei will now issue an annual flagship report, which will feature key SDG data from across Latin America. In this report, Cepei aims to present the most current and high-quality public and non-governmental sources of SDG data from across the region. The report will provide a narrative description of the types of data available for each country in Latin America by SDG, highlighting particular gaps or areas of improvement. The report will also reflect upon data quality, as well as institutional and human capacity for data production.

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In support of our commitment to make more data and information accessible to policy-makers, we will undertake mapping work to identify new, alternative data sources. Specifically, we will look at complementary sources of data being produced by companies, NGOs and academia and explore ways and means that this data could be reconciled with official statistics to support SDG monitoring. This builds on past successful initiatives, such as our data-sharing partnership with the Bogota Chamber of Commerce and the Colombian National Statistical Office (DANE). Insights gleaned will be made available in our annual Latin American Flagship report.

Building on our work with the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) where we have collaborated with think tanks and academic institutions in five regions, we will continue to examine new private sector data sources to support SDG acceleration. This work capitalizes on Cepei's strong connections with various companies and networks across Latin America and our multi-stakeholder convening core competency.

b. Improving the quality of SDG data through stronger policies and procedures which inspire public confidence in official statistics

Building upon past successes in data communications and visualization, Cepei works with NSO country partners in our Community of Practice in data communications and visualization. This group aims to bring statisticians and data communications specialists, together with non-expert media and communications persons, to identify ways of better sharing and making accessible SDG data and insights. Moving forward the group will include representatives from all of the 10 countries with whom Cepei currently has or is developing an MoU (Ecuador, the Dominican

Republic, Paraguay, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Uruguay, Peru, Costa Rica, and Argentina). As part of this initiative, Cepei (and its ally the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century or PARIS21) are making available training materials and guidance on data communications.

Cepei will also facilitate connections and support from our visualization partner, Salesforce. This community plays to one of Cepei's great strengths, as noted in our 2022 VIP satisfaction survey; facilitating networks and helping to bring together NSO representatives from across the Latin America and Caribbean communities.

Going forward, subject to fundraising, we will expand our activities relating to these strategies. Separately, we will continue to promote better data policies and processes by participating in (and facilitating) several data networks. First, as described above, we will facilitate a new data communication working group. We will also continue to provide expert inputs and advice on NSO and NSS modernization through our participation as a member of SDSN TReNDS, the UN World Data Forum program committee and as an invited guest at the Statistical Conference of the Americas of ECLAC.

Our Products

SDG Tracker

We have integrated Cepei´s multiple information tools and analytical outcomes in a simple-to-use and customizable platform, the SDG Tracker, which will be available on Cepei's website. The SDG Tracker includes two components: Regional Profiles and Country Profiles to provide our stakeholders with information to enable informed decisions on SDG implementation issues. The SDG Tracker offers documents, data, and Cepei analytical products for each country, as well as regional SDG implementation plans. The Tracker will also offer insights on countries' SDG governance, data availability, and reporting profiles, including identifying data gaps and the availability of non-official SDG-related data sources.

Voluntary National Reviews Quality Index

Cepei has observed that the VNR process is not drawing the expected results and the report quality is subpar across the board. The Index measures their degree of alignment with the reporting commitments established by each country in the 2030 Agenda and related instruments.

Flagship Report

This collates the latest policy information and data for all the countries in which we work on the quality of the SDG reporting process. It will integrate non-governmental perspectives and information, thereby complementing national accounts and providing a shadow report on regional progress. It will be published for various international and regional events such as the Regional Sustainable Development Forum Annual meetings, HLPF, World Data Forum, and UNGA. It will be made available as a PDF / printed output and as a series of digital pages (as a creative online product).

17 Rooms Latin America

Accelerates progress by convening regional leaders to commit to multisector actions that can be implemented in 12 to 18 months, advance all SDGs, and create momentum by taking the next step, even if it is not the perfect step. This commitment is a mantra for the Brookings Institution which founded this initiative. In 2023 we will host a series of meetings and events in support of this initiative and actively connect this innovative methodology to SDG reporting processes in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Data Action Plan 2030

Aims to accelerate progress toward robust SDG data systems, by raising awareness and setting benchmarks for data issues. We hope this program will build on lessons learned from working on data partnerships to accelerate implementation and will purposefully encourage an active regional, multistakeholder dialogue in advance of the World Data Forum, 2024.

Multilateralism Fit for Purpose

We remain committed to providing relevant findings and possible solutions to significant structural obstacles that remain within the current UN development system reform. We will provide the SDG Summit with inputs on how the UN could jointly implement transformative actions as part of a regional rollout process with a clear and concise vision, a compelling narrative, and a set of practical mechanisms.

Cepei will continue to produce impactful, policy-relevant papers, blogs, and insights to help guide specific policy processes. Specific activities planned for 2023 and beyond include:

- **Programmatic Insights and Working Papers:** Insights from our programs on UN institutional reform and private sector SDG data will be published as working papers, available to download on our website. These products are intended for use by our project partners and other technical practitioners working on SDG acceleration.

- **A series of blogs and commentaries on SDG data in Latin America**, under our 'Data Roadmap to 2030' initiative.

- **A series of Policy Briefings and Blogs on ongoing political processes** under the UNGA and various regional forums, including Cepei's series on the High-Level Political Forum (Latin American country-by-country Voluntary National Review analysis; a comparative regional performance during each HLPF session and a Cepei's opinion piece on each year HLPF main issues), our Latin America and the Caribbean countries Sustainable Development Forum report, and our Latin America and the Caribbean at the UNGA Annual Debate analysis.

Cepei´s Organizational Development

To support our programmatic objectives, growing resources, and staff numbers, we will work to strengthen our organizational processes and protocols. Specifically, we will:

1 Foster a strong data culture across Cepei

As strong believers in the power of data and evidence to inform effective decision-making, Cepei is working to strengthen our internal data management and analytical capacity by establishing a data lab. The lab is a team of data scientists, statisticians, analysts, and visualization experts, who can support the curation of data, analytics, and its communication and visualization. With this capacity, we aim to ensure all of Cepei's policy work is informed by data and other complementary sources of evidence. And that all of our project partners have the data capacities to do likewise. Specific functions of the Data Lab include:

Communicating Cepei's data assets

The data lab does this by consolidating and communicating Cepei's data on one Open SDG Data Portal. This portal will include SDG data at the country and regional level, thematic data relating to the five dimensions of sustainable development articulated in Agenda 2030 (people, prosperity, planet, partnership, and peace), and further information on SDG data availability across different stakeholders/sectors (private, public, civil society, academia, multilateral organization, etc.). This Portal will feature all of the data currently available across Cepei's other project platforms, aiming to centralize and ease access to our various data resources. It will automatically feed relevant information into the regional SDG tracker.

Building internal data capacity

A key objective for the data lab is to increase the data abilities of Cepei staff and across project management. To this end, the DataLab provides the Executive Office with monitoring and evaluation tools to track the progress of different projects. To improve Cepei's ability to make data-driven insights, the DataLab also provides an end-to-end process to map, clean, analyze, and visualize data. We aim to ensure every project that Cepei and its partners undertake can use data to the best effect, derive insights, and inform policy conclusions.

Providing data services

To staff, including data compilation, cleaning, analytics (with the programmatic teams), and visualization, as required.

Establishing data partnerships

To enhance its south-south and south-north capabilities in addressing sustainable development issues, the data lab will establish partnerships with data and technology providers and other institutions working on sustainable development data challenges. The African Institute of Mathematical Science (AIMS) and Cepei partnership perfectly illustrates this kind of south-to-south collaboration, working together to solve sustainable development issues in Latin America and Africa.

2 Have modern and transparent program management procedures

We intend to employ a clearer and more dynamic system to track activities, performance, impact, outcomes, and team responsibilities. We have chosen Salesforce to continue our efforts toward operational efficacy. We will publish our financial statements in a comprehensive annual report, and, with the support of our internal data team, we will continue to make our organizational and administrative data and information available to the general public via our website. This will include key performance data, project details, financial data, staff numbers, etc.

3 Further the impact of our work through first-class communications

In Cepei's 2022 key informant and partner survey, the centrality of communications was strongly emphasized. Cepei currently undertakes a broad range of innovative and high-level activities but it has been suggested these could be more widely promoted. With additional investment and attention to communications, Cepei aims to increase its brand awareness and the impact of its policy products.

In 2023 Cepei will look to achieve this by developing a comprehensive communication and engagement strategy. Going forward, this strategy will articulate not only our communications channels, partners, and key messages, but Cepei's different audiences and how we will tailor messages to each group. Cepei will execute this strategy, prioritizing fundraising for communications activities and staff. A core ambition is to ensure all of our communications, like our policy work, are data-oriented. We will prioritize data literacy and training for all communications staff.

4 Promote sustainable business practices

Cepei looks actively to lower the carbon emissions of team operations and programs. We do this through a range of strategies, including travel guidance and employing more dynamic, shared office-working procedures.

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