SDG ACCELERATION ROADMAP

UNLEASHING THE POWER OF PRIVATE-SECTOR DATA IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The Opportunities and Challenges of Using Meta's Data for Good Products in MENA

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The Opportunities and Challenges of Using Meta's Data for Good Products in MENA

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Acronyms

CEE	Center for Continuing Education in Palestine
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COI	Caribbean Open Institute in Jamaica
ESG	Environmental, Social and Governance
GPSDD	Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data
HKH	Hindu Kush Himalaya
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
KI	Key Informant
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LDRI	Local Development Research Initiative
NLP	Natural Language Processing
ODC	Open Data Campaign
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WHO	World Health Organisation

Introduction: The Data Revolution for Sustainable Development

The Data Revolution for Sustainable Development[1] ("data revolution") was launched by the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in 2014 through a report produced by an Independent Expert Advisory Group. The release of A World That Counts[2] called for a data revolution "to integrate statistics into decision making fully, promote open access to, and use of, data and ensure increased support for statistical systems." Consequently, numerous data initiatives have emerged around various issues, including capacity building, big data, open data, privacy protection, and filling data gaps for development indicators, among others.

As the world fast approaches the mid-way point of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda, governments are generally lagging behind the commitments made in 2015, bearing in mind the mayhem of the COVID-19 years and the current surge in violent conflict and great power rivalry. Within this context, the data revolution for sustainable development also needs to live up to its full potential. As of 2022, experts estimated that in most countries, comprehensive data exists for just six Goals[3].

Although data was crucial for governments dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and despite the accelerated push and adoption of digital transformation that the pandemic spurred, the data revolution has yet to materialize as a systemic driver for the full achievement of the SGDs[4], despite ample evidence of multiple but disparate, innovative uses of data to drive public policy and fill SDG data gaps[5].

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[1] UN. 2014. UN Data Revolution. Online at: https://www.undatarevolution.org/, accessed March 14, 2023.
[2] UN. 2014. A World That Counts. Online at: https://www.undatarevolution.org/report/, accessed March 14 2023.
[3] World Bank & UN. 2022. Unlocking Impact: Data with Purpose. Online at: https://datawithpurpose.org, accessed March 14 2023.
[4] UN. 2022. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022. Online at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/, accessed March 14, 2023.
[5] See for example: UN. 2022. Bringing Data to Life: SDG Human Impact Stories from Across the Globe. Online at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/flip-book, accessed March 14 2023, and the Map of Private Sector Data Actions produced by this project, here: https://cepei.org/en/initiatives/sdg-acceleration-road-map/, accessed 14 March 2023.

Based on research undertaken by this project[6], a lack of stakeholder capacity, limited financial resources, weak data governance, incoherent as well as inadequate and regulatory environments are the main inhibitors to unleashing the data revolution's full potential. These challenges are well documented; several have been registered in the World Bank's 2021 World Development Report, Data for Better Lives[7].

Within the MENA region specifically, our experience tells us that data actions[8] are still supply-driven, not demand or need-oriented. Moreover, as we found during the production of this case study, even when data are available – such as Meta's Data for Good initiative[9] – they are often not leveraged by regional governments. This case study seeks to identify and map the availability of Meta's Data for Good products in MENA, focusing on their contributions to the humanitarian data exchange (HDX) platform[10] managed by UN OCHA. As a popular suite of social media tools in the region, Meta seems like a natural partner for many governments seeking to improve the quality and timeliness of their insights into multiple public policy issues, including those related to humanitarian relief and emergency response and several SDG indicators; crucial areas in many countries across the MENA region. The case study also highlights the limitations that currently prevent the broader use of Meta's Data for Good products in the region.

[6] Cepei et al. 2022. Demonstrating the Power of Private Sector Data for Sustainable Development. Online at: https://cepei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Demonstrating-the-Power-of-Private-Sector-Data-for-Sustainable-Development.pdf, accessed March 14 2023.
[7] World Bank. 2021. World Development Report: Data for Better Lives. Online at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2021, accessed March 14 2023.
[8] For a complete list of data actions considered in this project, please see: https://cepei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Terminologia_Data_Actions-ENG.pdf, accessed March 14, 2023.
[9] Meta. 2023. Data for Good. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/about, accessed March 14, 2023.
[10] UN OCHA. 2023. The Humanitarian Data Exchange. Online at: https://data.humdata.org, accessed March 14, 2023.

Background and Context

Meta (before Facebook) was founded in 2004 and became public in 2012 as a multinational company headquartered in California, USA. Facebook, the largest social media network in the world, is also connected to other Meta platforms and services, including Instagram and WhatsApp, making it a great source of instant data relevant to various SDGs.

Meta launched the Data for Good initiative in 2017 to empower partners with data for social good. The Data for Good team includes experts with humanitarian backgrounds and experience in the social good field at influential organizations like World Bank, Red Cross, and Peace Corps. Program partners are spread worldwide and include universities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international institutions[11]. Internationally, Meta has been a member of the UN Global Compact[12] since 2021, contributing to the fight against COVID-19. More broadly, Meta's Data for Good Initiative supports a subset of SDGs, including those focused on health, gender, climate action, decent work and economic growth, industry and innovation, peacebuilding, and partnerships for the Goals[13].

Figure :Good's contribution to Gender Equatity

For its gender intervetion Meta not only share relevant data but helps women-owned small businesses grow, works with partners to build entrepreneurial and digital skills among women globally, provides a platform for communities of gender equality advocates and supports researchers with critical insights to advance gender equality. Meta reports that over a million women in 28 countries were and mentor to run their business through the company's platform. It also ran a global survey on gender equality at home covering most countries the company offer a self-paced course on gender data.

Source: https://dataforsdgs.course.tc

[11] Cepei et al. 2022. Demonstrating the Power of Private Sector Data for Sustainable Development. Online at: https://cepei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Demonstrating-the-Power-of-Private-Sector-Data-for-Sustainable-Development.pdf, accessed March 14 2023.
[12] UN. 2023. United Nations Global Compact. Online at: https://unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/participants/148173, accessed March 14, 2023.
[13] Meta. 2023. Meta and the Global Goals. Online at: https://about.fb.com/sdg/, accessed March 14, 2023.

With instant access to detailed data from around three billion users worldwide, Meta's Data for Good initiative builds maps, conducts live surveys, derives insights, and shares them with partners while ensuring user privacy. One of the Data for Good initiative's first data actions was establishing the COVID-19 data mobility network at the beginning of the pandemic[14]. Initially, mobility datasets were shared with trustworthy partners such as scholars and aid workers, and then they were publicly available with additional data protection measures increasing the aggregation of user location data to protect privacy. The dataset was accessible through the HDX platform and has been downloaded over 47,000 times[15].

The Data for Good initiative's contributions extend well beyond health data. Data on climate change[16], gender equality[17], and other areas are produced and shared with partners. In theory, these datasets offer the potential for governments in the MENA region to support policy and decision-making. Overall, there are currently 24 publicly available full or partial datasets that cover 20 Arab countries in the MENA region based on Meta's Data for Good program on the HDX platform. While data use statistics reported by HDX indicate substantial numbers of views and downloads globally, no regionally disaggregated statistics are available, making the identification of regional use trends impossible to measure.

[14] COVID-19 Mobility Data Network. 2023. COVID-19 Mobility Data Network. Online at: https://www.covid19mobility.org/, accessed March 14, 2023.
[15] HDX. 2022. Movement Range Maps. Online at: https://data.humdata.org/dataset/movement-range-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.
[16] Meta. 2020. Climate Conversation Map Provides Insights to Help Global Organizations. Online at: https://about.fb.com/news/2020/04/climate-conversation-map/, accessed March 14, 2023.
[17] Meta. 2020. Helping to Close the Gender Data Gap. Online at: https://about.fb.com/news/2020/03/closing-the-gender-data-gap/, accessed March 14, 2023.
[18] UN OCHA. 2023. Data for Good at Meta (previously Facebook). Online at: https://data.humdata.org/organization/facebook?groups=dza&groups=bhr&groups=dji&groups=egy&groups=irq&groups=jor&groups=kwt&groups=lbn&groups=lby&groups=mrt&groups=mar&groups=omn&groups=qat&groups=sau&groups=som&groups=pse&groups=sdn&groups=tun&groups=are&groups=yem&groups=com&q=&sort=if(gt(last_modified%2Creview_date)%2Clast_modified%2Creview_date)%20desc&ext_page_size=25, accessed March 14, 2023.

Meta's Data Tools within the Data for Good Initiative: A Closer Look

Before analyzing the Data for Good initiative's potential impact and challenges in the MENA region, this section details the existing mechanisms provided by the initiative. Some of these tools and datasets are open to the public, while others are only shared with specific actors based on the intended use.

1 High-Resolution Population Density Maps:[19] developed using satellite imagery and census data, these maps can positively contribute to providing multiple government services and insights for decision-making (for instance, by urban planners). The maps, covering 160 countries and regions, estimate population density disaggregation for women, men, youth, children, women of reproductive age, and older adults at a 30-meter resolution. In the MENA region, data is available for Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Lebanon, Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and UAE. Despite their potential applications, the data may only partially reflect the social and cultural dynamics of community setups in some areas or the impact factors like internal displacement and migration might have on population characteristics.

2 Facebook Population During Crisis Maps:[20] these maps, based on safety checks after a crisis or disaster, "show the number of Facebook users who have enabled location services and are observed in a location following a crisis compared to a pre-crisis baseline period[21]." The data are open for non-profits and researchers who sign a data-sharing agreement. While recent examples of datasets include the massive floods that took place

[19] Meta. 2023. High-Resolution Population Density Maps. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/high-resolution-population-density-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.
[20] Meta. 2023. Facebook Population During Crisis. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/facebook-population-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.[8] For a complete list of data actions considered in this project, please see: https://cepei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Terminologia_Data_Actions-ENG.pdf, accessed March 14, 2023.
[21] Ibid.

in Pakistan in 2022 and the catastrophic bushfires that rocked Australia in 2021, there is no indication that any current datasets from MENA are available.

3. Movement Range Maps[22]: used mainly to inform public health professionals and researchers about community response to lockdowns and physical distancing during COVID-19. This data is shared through the HDX platform[23] but was last updated in May 2022. The dataset is accompanied by metadata, methodology, and specific actions to protect privacy[24]. MENA countries covered by this dataset are Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and UAE.

4. Other Mobility Data and Maps: additional mobility maps are free to certain users that are vetted and agree to the terms of Meta's data-sharing agreement. These maps relate to movement[25], travel patterns[26], colocation[27] and displacement[28].

5. Electrical Distribution Grid Maps:[29] these maps are used for planning infrastructure and community development projects. Data is derived from satellite images at night; only some African countries are covered (no MENA data).

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[22] Meta. 2023. Movement Range Maps. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/movement-range-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.
[23] UN OCHA. 2022. Movement Range Maps. Online at: https://data.humdata.org/dataset/movement-range-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.
[24] Meta. 2020. Protecting Privacy in Facebook Mobility Data During the COVID-19 Response. Online at: https://research.facebook.com/blog/2020/06/protecting-privacy-in-facebook-mobility-data-during-the-covid-19-response/, accessed March 14, 2023.
[25] Meta. 2023. Facebook Movement During a Crisis. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/movement-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.
[25] Meta. 2023. Travel Patterns. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/travel-patterns, accessed March 14, 2023.
[27] Meta. 2023. Colocation Maps. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/colocation-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.
[28] Meta. 2023. Displacement Maps. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/displacement-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.
[29] Meta. 2023. Electrical Distribution Grid Maps. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/electrical-distribution-grid-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.

6. Network Coverage Maps:[30] displays areas where people on Facebook have cellular connectivity to aid in disaster response. This feature is accessible to researchers and non-profit organizations under a data sharing agreement.

7. Infrastructure Route Study[31]: provides a collection of open-source data and tools[32] to help expand fiber routes. The study has only been conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo but could benefit other countries planning infrastructure.

8 Relative Wealth Index:[33] this index forecasts comparable living conditions in countries by analyzing connectivity data, satellite images and other data sources. The MENA countries included in this analysis are Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia.

9 Business Activity Trends[34]: measures how small businesses are affected by crises (e.g., restaurants during COVID-19 lockdowns) based on their posting activity on Facebook. Data is available under a data-sharing agreement for researchers and non-profits.

10 Commuting Zones:[35] these datasets provide data on the geographic areas where people live and work. They can help policymakers understand local economies at a hyper-local scale. MENA states covered are Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen.

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[30] Meta. 2023. Network Coverage Maps. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/network-coverage-maps, accessed March 14, 2023.
[31] Meta. 2023. Infrastructure Route Study. Online at: https://github.com/facebookmicrosites/DRCInfraSurvey2020-21, accessed March 14, 2023.
[32] GitHub. 2021. Facebook Microsites / CRDInfraSurvey2020-21. Online at: https://github.com/facebookmicrosites/DRCInfraSurvey2020-21, accessed March 14, 2023.
[33] Meta. 2023. Relative Wealth Index. Online at: https://data.humdata.org/dataset/relative-wealth-index, accessed March 14, 2023.[25] Meta. 2023. Travel Patterns. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/travel-patterns, accessed March 14, 2023.
[34] Meta. 2023. Business Activity Trends. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/business-activity-trends, accessed March 14, 2023.
[35] Meta. 2023. Commuting Zones. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/commuting-zones, accessed March 14, 2023.

11 Social Connectedness Index:[36] weighs the strength of the social connection between two geographic areas based on friendship ties on Facebook. MENA nations participating: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and UAE.

12 Social Capital Atlas:[37] applies only to the USA. The atlas is a joint effort between Facebook and other research institutions to measure economic connectedness, cohesiveness, and civic engagement.

13 Climate Change Opinion Survey:[38] provides public and non-public datasets (require data sharing agreement) of an annual survey undertaken by Meta and Yale University exploring knowledge, attitudes, policy preferences, and behaviour related to climate change and climate action. This public data survey included MENA countries such as Algeria, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen.

14 Small Business Surveys:[39] Facebook conducts surveys for small businesses in partnership with the World Bank and the OECD to gain insight on their perspectives, challenges, and opportunities. Additionally, the microdata from these surveys is shared with non-profits and researchers under an agreement, and it covers MENA countries´ public data, including Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia.

[36] Meta. 2023. Social Connectedness Index. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/social-connectedness-index, accessed March 14, 2023.
[37] Meta. 2023. Social Capital Atlas. https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/social-capital-atlas, accessed March 14, 2023.
[38] Meta. 2023. Climate Change Opinion Survey. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/climate-change-opinion-survey, accessed 14 March 2023.
[39] Meta. 2023. Small Business Surveys. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/future-of-business-survey, accessed March 14, 2023.[34] Meta. 2023. Business Activity Trends. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/business-activity-trends, accessed March 14, 2023.

15 COVID-19 Preventative Health Survey:[40] was conducted by MIT, WHO, and Johns Hopkins University to explore knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to COVID-19 as a pandemic.

16 COVID-19 Trends and Impact Survey:[41] explored opinions and perspectives on preventive measures, symptoms, and vaccines. No updates after June 2022 and archived data (public and shared) are available, but several MENA countries' data still need to be completed.

17 Survey on Gender Equality at Home:[42] conducted in 2020 and 2021; this survey covers gender standards and household care, agency, and the impact of COVID-19. MENA countries embraced by this study are Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and UAE. Some country data is valid for 2020 only, and microdata is presented to researchers under a data-sharing agreement. There needs to be more specific information on how surveys are conducted regarding sampling and response distribution. Still, according to Meta's methodology, surveys are designed with partners' privacy being assured and results objectively scrutinized. It should be noted that these datasets could be used alone or combined with other datasets from Meta and any other sources to complete the picture and bridge data gaps.

[40] Meta. 2023. COVID-19 Preventative Health Survey. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/covid-19-preventative-health-survey, accessed March 14, 2023.
[41] Meta. 2023. COVID-19 Trends and Impact Survey. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/covid-19-trends-and-impact-survey, accessed March 14, 2023.
[42] Meta. 2023. Survey on Gender Equality at Home. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/survey-on-gender-equality-at-home, accessed March 14, 2023.[39] Meta. 2023. Small Business Surveys. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/future-of-business-survey, accessed March 14, 2023.[34] Meta. 2023. Business Activity Trends. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/tools/business-activity-trends, accessed March 14, 2023.

The data revealed by the Data for Good initiative using the tools just mentioned are accessible through the HDX platform. Meta is the 17th out of 288 contributing organizations to the HDX platform, with 213 uploaded datasets. Usage data shows that Meta's Data for Good datasets have been downloaded over 128,000 times in the previous 24 weeks. Among the most downloaded and used resources are density maps, social capital datasets, movement range maps, and the relative wealth index[43]. Unfortunately, this data cannot be disaggregated by region to determine the usage rate in MENA. Additionally, conflicts have made it difficult to access data, even for relief efforts, and in some cases, private sector policies required an intermediary entity to release data.

The Impact of Meta's Data Actions in the MENA Region

Meta has a detailed section under its Data for Good initiative to demonstrate the impact and how partners use its data for social and economic good.[45] The impact[44] section is divided into nine subjects: disaster, economic opportunity, health, population, infrastructure, mobility, social connection, climate, and gender. Many topics correspond to specific SDGs like economic opportunity, health, infrastructure, climate, and gender. Around 450 resources include op-eds, showcases, research papers, reports, and articles. Some items are listed under more than one theme, but the list seems comprehensive and covers all of Meta's Data for Good initiative references.

A detailed examination of the resources available on the site revealed little evidence of impact in MENA countries compared to other parts of the world, including Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Notwithstanding this

[43] Ibid.
[44] Meta. 2023. Data for Good: Explore examples of how our tools have been used. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/impact, accessed March 14, 2023.
[45] Meta. 2023. Data for Good: Our Partners. Online at: https://dataforgood.facebook.com/dfg/about#partners, accessed March 14, 2023.

overarching trend, there were several isolated examples of use identified. For instance, a World Trade Organisation (WTO) report on small businesses and climate change used Data for Good's Small Business Survey data, including data relating to Egypt.[46] Meta also provided its internet connectivity data to support initiatives aimed at strengthening internet connectivity in Africa, thus benefitting several MENA countries.[47]

The International Medical Corps has leveraged Meta's population density maps to improve disaster response in countries including Libya. UNDP and Direct Relief have also used these maps to assess the post-explosion socio-economic impact of the silo explosion disaster in Beirut, Lebanon,[48] and recently, in the wake of the earthquake that hit Turkey and Northern Syria. The Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021[49] produced by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) also referenced Data for Good datasets relevant to the MENA region. Finally, a Data for Good initiative targeted explicitly to the MENA region was the #LoveLocal campaign.[50] The campaign focused on providing a training hub for business owners to learn how to digitally grow their companies following the economic hit they went through triggered by COVID-19.

One significant feature common to all the examples described above is that they rarely choose governments as partners or primary audiences. We have also found weak public administration usage of Meta's Data for Good products across the MENA region – despite the enormous range of potential applications we

[46] WTO. 2022. Small Business and Climate Change. MSME Research Note #3. Online at: https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/msmes_e/ersd_research_note3_small_business_and_climate_change.pdf, accessed March 14, 2023.
[47] Meta. 2020. Building a transformative subsea cable to better connect Africa. Online at: https://engineering.fb.com/2020/05/13/connectivity/2africa/, accessed March 14, 2023.
[48] UCL. 2021. Post-blast Beirut Socio-economic Impact Assessment Data. Online at: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/casa/news/2021/aug/post-blast-beirut-socio-economic-impact-assessment-data, accessed March 14, 2023.
[49] IDMC. 2021. Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021. Online at: https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2021/, accessed March 14, 2023.
[50] Middle East Campaign. 2020. Facebook introduces a campaign to support local small and medium businesses in MENA. Online at: https://campaignme.com/facebook-introduces-campaign-to-support-local-small-and-medium-businesses-in-mena/, accessed March 14, 2023.

identified previously. Online research and communications with stakeholders at Meta and within governments in the region[51] helped us identifying several reasons why there is so little government use of Data for Good products in the whole area..

The programme initially targeted working with nonprofits and universities in 2017 (through interviews with Meta staff), and then shifted to governments through its publicly available datasets at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. While NGOs and researchers remain the primary intended audiences of many Data for Good products,[52] the initiative has a nascent but evolving stream of work with governments in the region, including the UAE government within the "Data for a better future" initiative.[53]

Throughout further consultation and interviews with Meta staff in the region[54] we identified additional reasons why: reasons why governments should use Data for Good products less. For example, an interviewee from an entity that partners with Meta in the region who wished to remain anonymous reflected that the nature of Meta as a large, multinational company with a rigid structure and hierarchy, combined with a limited understanding of the context and culture in MENA, were two limiting factors to the more outstanding promotion of Data for Good products in the region. Moreover, several countries cannot utilize Data for Good products, particularly those related to emergency datasets shared via HDX. Therefore, researchers and NGOs often analyse the data and provide valuable insights instead of governments.

Individuals we consulted from governments and UN agencies in the region also mentioned that the need for a systemic approach from the Data for Good initiative

[51] See Annex 3 for details of people communicated with.
[52] CrisisReady. 2021. Did data make a difference? Lessons from Facebook Data for Good in 2020. Online at: https://www.crisisready.io/events/did-data-make-a-difference-lessons-from-facebook-data-for-good-in-2020/, accessed March 14, 2023.
[53] Entrepreneurial Libya. 2023. Online at: https://entrepreneuralarabiya.com/2022/02/01/44397/%d8%ad%d9%83%d9%88%d9%85%d8%a9-%d8%af%d9%88%d9%84%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a5%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%88%d9%85%d9%8a%d8%aa%d8%a7-%d8%aa%d8%b7%d9%84%d9%82%d8%a7%d9%86-%d9%85%d8%a8%d8%a7/#.ZBM15-zMJ, accessed March 16, 2023.
[54] See Annex 3 for details of sources consulted.

to engage with regional governments was a major limiting factor to increasing its application. These stakeholders would like to experience broader support from the Data for Good initiative regarding capacity building and providing the data and tools needed to use the Data for Good products better. Moreover, representatives from the Palestinian Authority and Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and their statistician counterparts in Jordan and Egypt have yet to hear about the Data for Good initiative. This is a considerable shortcoming and indicates the opportunity for Data for Good products to be used by countries in the region if the correct information and enabling environment are present.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our main conclusion from this case study is that Meta's Data for Good project appears to be far more limited in the MENA region than elsewhere, despite a fair amount of valuable unrestricted data. However, we did prove the use of Data for Good products was primarily across non-governmental actors and independent researchers. Also, the lack of accessible regionally/country disaggregated data for the MENA region hinders further insights into how frequently and where Data for Good products are being used.

Likewise, there needs to be more awareness across several regional countries about the existence and scope of Data for Good products. We recognize that this is partly weak due to Meta's prioritization of NGO and independent researchers as their main audience. Nevertheless, it was still surprising to learn how unaware government stakeholders in the region were of the Data for Good resources offered to them. Furthermore, it is essential to note that even if awareness of the resources was greater, government partners we spoke to were skeptical about whether they would have the capacity and tools to leverage Data for Good products effectively.

Based on the research done in this case study, there is significant scope for Data for Good products to be leveraged and used by regional governments implementing a data strategy. However, this would require substantive investments of effort, capacity, and financial resources.

To improve the use of Data for Good products in MENA, we believe that Meta should focus on building the capacity of government partners to leverage their datasets better. This goal can be accomplished by providing technical mentorship to government stakeholders directly or through facilitators and technical partners, identifying regional data gaps as a first step. Also, the current practice of releasing globally aggregated datasets and usage statistics means that any regional nuance that might exist is lost, making it extremely hard to monitor how the data is being used. Hence, Meta should shift its focus on having governments in the region as the primary users and ensure that there are processes in place to track the usage of Data for Good products, disaggregated by region and country.

In order for Meta to properly align with local perceptions and contexts when extracting data from Meta users in the MENA region and other areas, it is crucial to involve local stakeholders in the design and application of analytical tools; addressing data gaps and partnering with capable individuals to ensure the projects are relevant enough and reflect local contexts. As a result, we suggest that Meta's Data for Good initiative actively engages with authorized partners who can support and contribute to developing projects tailored to meet local communities needs.

Annex 1: Data for Good Dataset Distribution by Country

Country	Number of Datasets	Country	Number of Datasets
Algeria	8	Bahrain	3
Comoros	7	Djibouti	6
Egypt	8	Iraq	6
Jordan	7	Kuwait	4
Lebanon	6	Libya	4
Morocco	6	Mauritania	6
Oman	5	Palestine	1
Qatar	5	Saudi Arabia	6
Somalia	1	Sudan	1
Tunisia	7	UAE	6
Yemen	1		

Annex 2: Interview Questions

1. What is the current active membership info for Meta users in MENA on Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp? Also, how many businesses are on Facebook by gender in each country? Finally, can we segment by age group and gender for mid-2022?
2. Which of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (also known as the 2030 agenda) can be aided by Meta platforms, such as data, knowledge resources, and technologies like the metaverse? How does Meta determine the best intervention themes and action types to optimize its impact?
3. Was Meta involved in acknowledging, monitoring, or planning the MDGs and SDGs before launching its Data for Good initiative? Meta was founded a few years after the MDGs were set as targets for 2015, which led to the SDGs being added for the next 15 years. If so, what was their involvement, and how did it contribute to the launch of the DFG initiative?
4. Meta (formerly Facebook) joined the Global Compact in 2021, despite launching its DFG initiative in 2017. Given its potential for significant impact, this raises the question of why the company must be on time to take SDG data actions.
5. The availability of Data for Good datasets in the MENA region (referencing the HDX hub) varies among countries, and it does not appear to be correlated with stability versus conflict. For instance, Syria has no datasets available, Libya and Lebanon have six, Bahrain has three, and Yemen and Palestine each have one. What criteria determine the availability of a particular dataset, such as mobility or population density, in a specific country? Is it based on requests from the government or other entities, such as researchers? What other factors are considered?
6. Can you evaluate the level of awareness and capacity of Data for Good partners in MENA regarding the significance and possibility of data actions in accomplishing and overseeing the SDGs? Also, how does this measure up to the capacity of partners from other regions in the global south?
7. How does Meta measure the impact of the DFG initiative across regions or countries? Are there indicators from the MENA region? According to Global Compact, Meta is expected to submit a communication of progress

(COP) this month (Sept. 2022), including "a measurement of outcomes ." Is this COP publicly available?

8. In Project 17, Meta prioritized gender as their primary focus (even though the Global Compact's commitments differ and are related to climate action). Have any measures been taken yet to address gender equality, aside from surveying gender equality at home and the Future of Business survey?
9. One of the biggest challenges to achieving the SDGs is the need for more data in certain areas. However, Meta can quickly gather data under challenging circumstances such as natural disasters or lockdowns. So how does Meta ensure its data collection efforts are inclusive and consider all individuals in its "leave no one behind" approach, regardless of their status as platform members?
10. What are your main challenges when operating in the MENA region? What factors help alleviate these difficulties, such as ease of operations, availability of resources, collaboration from the government, and opportunities? Additionally, which partners and stakeholders have been easy or difficult to work with and have provided a high return on investment, such as government entities, NGOs/CSOs, academia, and the private sector?
11. Do you work with organizations or institutions (such as NGOs or research institutes) to facilitate your data actions? If so, what role do they play and how helpful are they? If not, would partnering with local entities closely aligned with the themes you are working on be beneficial?
12. How do you ensure data quality and counter information disorder (fake news, hate speech, etc)?
13. When implementing data actions, Do you offer support, guidance, capacity building, or technical resources? Does this differ by region?
14. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is akin to public relations. What motivates your data-related decisions - profit, reputation, or a desire to contribute to the community? Do you expect anything in return for sharing your data, such as a partnership or community investment?

15. Many individuals, governments, and data-driven enterprises are greatly concerned about data governance and ethics, particularly privacy, inclusion, fairness, safety, and social well-being. How does Meta manage to balance revenue generation while also taking these concerns into careful consideration?
16. What is your opinion on the impact of the data revolution on driving development? Do you believe it is overhyped? Are we on course to achieve the SDGs by 2030? Please explain your reasoning. If not, what steps should be taken, and when?
17. Meta is essential to data research, particularly in NLP. It possesses vast amounts of valuable data, generates knowledge, and has access to advanced technical resources. Please suggest any tools, datasets, or other resources that Meta would be willing to share with or recommend to the data community in the MENA region.

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2. Haitham Zeidan, Director of the Dissemination and Documentation Department within the Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS)
3. Ahmad Atiah, Director of Statistical Monitoring, PCBS
4. Meta partner entity in the region [wished to remain anonymous and unidentified]

Email consultations:

1. Rama Halaseh, Social Impact and Civic Engagement Officer, Meta Carlos
2. Ahumada, Public Policy Manager, Meta
3. Javier Teran, Statistician, UN OCHA (HDX)
4. Alex Pompe, Research Manager, Data for Good (Meta)
5. Joelle Awwad, Policy Programmes and Partnerships Manager, Meta
6. Laura McGorman, Director, Data for Good at Meta
7. UN Economic and Social Committee for West Asia (UN ESCWA) staff [wished to remain anonymous and unidentified]
8. Staff from the national statistics offices of Egypt and Jordan [wished to remain anonymous and unidentified]
9. Andrew Schroeder, Vice President of Research and Analysis at Direct Relief

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