In-Focus:

Trust for the Americas’ Role Catalysing Public-Private Initiatives in the Caribbean
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Main author
Maurice McNaughton, *Mona School of Business and Management of the Universidad de las Indias Occidentales*

Suzana Russell, *Mona School of Business and Management of the Universidad de las Indias Occidentales*

Lila RaoGraham, *Mona School of Business and Management of the Universidad de las Indias Occidentales*

Edition
Nicolas Marin, *Cepei*
Ricardo Corredor, *Cepei*

Executive office
Philipp Schönrock, *Director, Cepei*
Alexandra Roldán, *Strategic Planning, Cepei*

Translation
Interpreting Colombia

Graphic design
Karen Huayta, *Cepei*

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The SDG Acceleration Roadmap was developed in partnership with LIRNEasia and the support of the Mona School of Business & Management at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, Local Development Research Institute (LDRI) in Kenya, and the Center for Continuing Education (CCE) at Birzeit University in Palestine.
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Executive Summary

In 2021, Cepei and LIRNEAsia launched the SDG Acceleration Roadmap project¹, supported by the International Development Research Centre² (IDRC), and in partnership with the Local Development Research Initiative (LDRI) in ³Kenya, the Caribbean Open Institute (COI) in ⁴Jamaica, and the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) in ⁵Palestine. With the midway point of the Sustainable Development ⁶Goals (SDGs) fast approaching, the project aims to understand how far the private sector’s data-related contributions to public policy in the Global South extend. Our primary research question is: what is the private sector doing to make more and better data available to achieve and monitor the SDGs in the Global South? To answer this question, over the course of 2022 and 2023, we are undertaking and publishing research and fostering global dialogues about the value of public-private initiatives in the data and digital policy spaces.

This Executive Summary provides insights into the facilitative role of Trust for the Americas in establishing public private initiatives in the Caribbean. It was produced by Maurice McNaughton, Suzana Russell and Lila Rao-Graham from the Mona School of Business and Management at the University of the West Indies.

¹ Visit the SDG Acceleration Roadmap homepage at: https://cepei.org/en/products/sdg-acceleration-road-map/
² Visit the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) homepage at: https://idrc.ca/en
³ Visit the Local Development Research Institute homepage at: https://www.developlocal.org
⁴ Visit the Caribbean Open Institute homepage at: https://caribbeanopeninstitute.org
⁵ Visit the Center for Continuing Education homepage at: https://www.birzeit.edu/en/community-affairs/institutes-centers/center-continuing-education
⁶ Visit the Sustainable Development Goals at: https://sdgs.un.org
There is a significant shift taking place within the world of business. In recent years, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) has risen in prominence among an increasingly socially and environmentally conscious consumer base. ESG investing has attracted substantial interest with reporting on environmental and occasionally social metrics, becoming a must-do in many companies’ annual reporting and at shareholder meetings. Viewed from a public policy perspective, the turn towards more socially and environmentally conscious capitalism creates opportunities for alignment between business and government; for instance, between ESG metrics and political targets such as the SDGs that center on people, planet, and prosperity as the three pillars of sustainable development.

One area of alignment is in the field of data and digital transformation. Whether framed as ESG, the SDGs, or corporate social responsibility (CSR), companies around the world are providing support to public sector institutions in ways that help to improve their capacity for evidence-based decision-making. Activities - or data actions - being taken range from the transfer of actionable data to the public sector directly, through to the provision of tools or services that help improve the public sector’s ability to capture and utilize insights from data repositories.7

Examples of public-private data actions abound. Our Mapping Private Sector Contributions to the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development: Insights from the Global South report (“mapping report”) is based on insights from 394 data actions that have been mapped across 94 countries. These data can be analysed and accessed directly through the project’s website. What our mapping work uncovered is that there is a vibrant ecosystem of public-private activity around data.

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7 See here the full list of ‘data actions’ identified within this project: https://cepei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Terminologia_Data_Actions-ENG.pdf
9 Visit the homepage of the project at: https://cepei.org/en/initiatives/sdg-acceleration-road-map/
Our Case Studies

To further explore the themes identified in our mapping report and uncover how the mechanics of public-private data initiatives operate – what the incentives for partnership are, how impact is measured, what enabling environment needs to exist, and other factors – we undertook a series of eight case studies in late 2022 and early 2023.

Our case studies showcase examples of public-private data initiatives and document how companies’ data actions can help public institutions in the Global South to respond to major public policy challenges such as climate change, the promotion of gender equality, improving employment opportunities and digital literacy, among others.

We selected our case studies in a way that ensured that we covered multiple types of data, types of initiative/initiative facilitation, types of data action, company size, and thematic area. Thereafter, each project partner independently produced their case studies using a common semi-structured interview guide and desk-based research. Case study-specific methodological considerations are explored in more detail within each study. Through our case studies, we have further developed and refined the themes identified in our mapping report and proposed recommendations based on them. Recommendations emanating from our case studies can be found here. In summary, the five overarching themes that have emerged from our case studies are:
There is real-world value being produced from public-private data initiatives in the data revolution for sustainable development.

Governments are more likely to engage with companies that can support data actions across multiple policy areas.

The most successful examples of public-private data initiatives are ones in which partners have invested the time and effort needed to establish proof-of-concept, build trust, and adapt and iterate the value proposition over time.

Supporting public policy objectives and maintaining profitability do not have to be mutually exclusive for companies seeking to engage in public-private initiatives.

The most significant challenge to initiating, completing, monitoring and scaling-up public-private data initiatives is the lack of coherence across and under-development of the standard operating procedures needed to develop them.
In-Focus: Trust for the Americas’ Role Catalysing Public-Private Initiatives in the Caribbean: Findings and recommendations

The Trust for the Americas\textsuperscript{10} (The Trust) is a non-profit organization affiliated with the Organization of American States\textsuperscript{11} (OAS) and was established in 1997 to promote public and private initiatives. The Trust has a distinctive operating model, in terms of its affiliation with, and commitment to the OAS mandate, as well as its private sector DNA that makes it uniquely suited for convening and mobilizing private sector actors around a development agenda. This institutional configuration is reinforced by the accumulation of social capital, name-recognition, and reputational goodwill that the organization has cultivated since its inception.

Many public and private sector actors - policymakers and decision-makers - regard capacity building as a priority data action for the Caribbean, especially as part of wider digital capacity-building programs. This has become an important thematic focus for the regional development agenda, considering the harsh realities exposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. There is a strong emphasis on youth education/training (SDG4), employability (SDG8) and community development (SDG11) within the region. This has created strong resonance and support for the kinds of digital capacity building programs emphasized by The Trust through their Democratising Innovation in the Americas (DIA) initiative.

Through desk research and semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives from The Trust and private/government partner organizations in the three participating countries: Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Belize, we were able to distill several insights, and propose recommendations, for others in the region who may want to enter public-private data initiatives in future. Our findings and recommendations include that:

\textsuperscript{10} Visit the Trust for the Americas homepage at: https://www.trustfortheamericas.org
\textsuperscript{11} Visit the OAS home page at: https://www.oas.org/es/
It is apparent that organizations participating in the DIA program did not have the SDGs as an explicit motivating factor, although it was relatively easy to align programs focused on quality education and youth employability/livelihoods with the corresponding SDGs. **Governments in the region need to actively create opportunities and vehicles for dialogue with the private sector and other key partners** regarding their contributions to measuring, monitoring and ultimately achieving the SDGs.

**Social capital and established relationships are powerful factors in private sector engagement** and mobilizing initiatives.

**The Trust’s role as a convenor was instrumental in creating the conditions and enabling environment needed for mobilizing and implementing effective public-private- initiatives.** However, a multiplicity of other partner roles were identified that are essential for the successful execution of these partner initiatives.

A deliberate ecosystem approach that facilitates active well-defined roles and collaboration involving private, public-sector and civil society lends itself well to a more conducive, scalable and ultimately self-sustaining data for development environment. These efforts should centre on data capacity-building, with defined roles, shared methods / learning resources, and active government and private sector initiatives that provide connectivity and coherence between digital/data skills demand, capacity-building and employability.

As structured data capacity-building initiatives become more pervasive and human capital deficits in digital and data skills are addressed systematically, **the region should seek to encourage the expansion of the 'data actions' of private sector actors**, beyond capacity-building, to include more value-added interventions.
References

SDG ACCELERATION ROADMAP
UNLEASHING THE POWER OF PRIVATE-SECTOR DATA IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Please get in touch with us at direccion@cepei.org

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