The power of data and public-private partnerships for sustainable development

Cepei

DATA ACTION PLAN 2030

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1. Introduction

In the quest to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, public-private partnerships play an important role, particularly in the field of data. These alliances allow not only to close information gaps on crucial issues such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), but also to promote innovation and the use of new technologies to improve the quality of the data available for the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies aimed at achieving sustainable development. This paper examines the evolution, challenges, and impact of these partnerships on data management, especially in countries in the Global South.

The analysis focuses on how to strengthen public-private partnerships (PPPs) to improve data collection, management, and use to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. In addition, concrete recommendations are presented for actors such as governments, companies, unions that represent them such as chambers of commerce, and civil society.

These recommendations include creating tax incentives for the private sector, promoting open data policies, and improving the interoperability of data systems through cross-sector collaboration.

In summary, this paper addresses two fundamental challenges: the lack of disaggregated and reliable data, and the need to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration through public-private partnerships. Throughout the analysis, it explores how these partnerships can bridge the data gap and catalyze the fulfillment of the SDGs by leveraging the resources and capacities of the private sector together with the public sector.

a. The value of data and public-private partnerships in accelerating the 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development represents an unprecedented global commitment to address the major challenges facing humanity, including poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation. The 17 SDGs provide a roadmap for governments, the private sector, civil society and other development actors. In this context, the role of data is fundamental for planning, monitoring progress, adjusting strategies, and developing effective evidence-based policies. However, the lack of reliable, accurate, and disaggregated data remains a significant challenge for most countries, especially in the Global South.

According to the *World Bank's Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals 2023*, more than 30% of countries still lack sufficient data to measure at least half of global indicators. Although there has been some progress, the lack of data disaggregated by characteristics such as gender, age or geographical location remains an obstacle. High-quality, disaggregated data are critical not only for informed decision-making, but also for ensuring transparency and accountability in implementation.

b. Relevance of public, private and civil society partnerships for sustainable development

Public, private and civil society partnerships are critical to addressing gaps in available data. The private sector, through its access to advanced technologies and large volumes of data, can fill the gaps that still persist in public statistics. These collaborations make it possible to leverage a greater diversity of data sources, including those generated by citizens, which provide a more accurate and contextualized view of the local reality.

Combining the technology and financial resources of the private sector with the regulatory and executive capacity of the public sector can accelerate the implementation of innovative solutions to development challenges. The biggest challenges remain in developing strategies for data interoperability, establishing inclusive regulatory frameworks, and fostering open data policies that ensure transparency and accessibility.

In addition to providing financial and technological resources, the private sector can contribute advanced technology, including innovations in artificial intelligence and big data, digital infrastructure to facilitate data sharing, and training programs to develop technical skills. He also brings expert knowledge,

helping to design innovative solutions and best practices in data management. Combining these resources with the regulatory and executive capacity of the public sector can accelerate the implementation of innovative solutions to development challenges.

However, important challenges remain, such as creating strategies for data interoperability, establishing inclusive regulatory frameworks, and promoting open data policies that ensure transparency and accessibility. An inclusive and efficient data ecosystem requires the commitment of all actors in the generation and responsible exchange of information.

c. Public-private partnership priorities, challenges and gaps faced

On the path to achieving the SDGs, data management is key, and public-private partnerships emerge as a strategic mechanism to close existing gaps. These collaborations make it possible to mobilize financial and technical resources, facilitate technology transfer and strengthen local capacities. PPPs address challenges such as poor infrastructure and lack of trained data science personnel, promoting the modernization and interoperability of information systems.

To optimize these processes, it is essential to establish regulatory frameworks that encourage the use of open data, improve data literacy, and strengthen the technical capacity to manage large volumes of information. The training of staff in national statistical offices and other public entities is a priority, as is the development of adequate infrastructure and the adoption of advanced technologies. In this way, PPPs play a crucial role in ensuring financial and technological sustainability for efficient data management.

Despite their benefits, these partnerships face significant challenges, such as data fragmentation, lack of technical capacity, and regulatory barriers. Data is often collected and stored in silos that make it difficult to integrate effectively. This problem is compounded by the absence of common standards and regulatory frameworks that promote collaboration across sectors. In addition, low data literacy limits the ability of actors to interpret and use information efficiently.

Effective collaboration between the public and private sectors not only facilitates innovation, but also drives the adoption of tools such as artificial intelligence and big data, improving data-driven decision-making.

2. Opportunities in data management and partnerships for sustainable development

This section will first look at topics where the use of data can be enhanced through public-private partnerships, such as urban mobility, natural disaster management, public health, energy efficiency, and sustainable agriculture. These topics were selected because of their direct impact on people's lives and their relevance to advancing the SDGs, in addition to the private sector's ability to generate large volumes of data in these areas. Second, examples of collaborations in the Global South will be presented, illustrating how these partnerships can improve access and quality of data, promoting solutions more tailored to local needs and improving evidence-based decision-making.

Areas where data can be scaled up through public-private partnerships

Public-private partnerships offer an opportunity to address the challenges mentioned above. The private sector generates large volumes of data that, if used properly, can complement official statistics and improve the accuracy of diagnoses.

One of the topics where the use of data could intensify is urban mobility. Through partnerships with technology and transportation companies, it is possible to analyze large volumes of data on traffic flows, mobility patterns, and public transportation use. This can contribute to the planning of more sustainable cities, reduce road congestion and design more efficient infrastructures.

Another area is the prevention and management of natural disasters. Telecommunications and technology companies can provide real-time data on the location and movement of people, facilitating a rapid and coordinated response to natural disasters. In addition, collaboration with the private sector allows access to advanced technologies, such as the use of satellites and drones, to monitor and mitigate risks.

In terms of public health monitoring, data generated by mobile health apps, wearable devices, and digital medical records can complement public health statistics. Partnerships between governments and technology companies can help detect disease outbreaks in their early stages and improve the distribution of medical resources in vulnerable areas.

Energy efficiency is another field where public-private partnerships can make a difference. Energy and technology companies can collaborate with the public sector to analyze energy consumption through smart grids. This approach makes it possible to identify consumption patterns, optimize the distribution of resources and reduce energy waste, contributing to a more sustainable use of resources.

In sustainable agriculture, the use of satellite data, drones, and sensors makes it possible to monitor water use, soil quality, and crop growth. Partnerships with technology and agricultural companies help governments optimize agricultural production, ensure food security, and promote sustainability in agricultural practices.

Examples of successful collaboration in the global south that show how working together can improve data quality and access

There are several examples of collaboration in the global south that demonstrate how working together has improved access and quality of data. In the initiative carried out in Indonesia, Global Pulse and the Ministry of Agriculture worked together in agricultural innovation and in the fight against climate change to apply big data analysis in the identification of “Positive Deviations” in rice-producing areas. This project involved private technology companies that provided analytical capabilities and access to satellite and climate data. Advanced tools were also provided to process and analyze large volumes of data, thus allowing the identification of successful agricultural practices that were then scaled up to other regions of the country to improve productivity and food security.

In Mexico, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), through the Survey on the Use of Information and Communication Technologies in Households (ETCO), collects data on access to and use of digital technologies in households. The private sector, especially telecommunications and technology companies, play a role in providing information on connectivity and access to digital services, such as internet plans, mobile phones, and devices. This collaborative data helps improve the accuracy of statistics on internet penetration, computer and mobile phone usage, and digital services such as education and e-commerce.

In the agricultural sector, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) has worked with governments and tech companies to develop precision agriculture solutions in sub-Saharan Africa. This effort has allowed local

farmers to access key data on climate, soil quality, and the most efficient growing techniques. By strengthening farmers' capacity to make data-driven decisions, these partnerships have helped improve agricultural productivity and ensure food security in the region.

3. Recommendations segmented by actors

As we mentioned throughout the text, the integration and efficient use of data have become fundamental elements for sustainable development and the monitoring of compliance with the SDGs. Each of the development actors plays a unique and complementary role that, by working in an articulated manner, can enhance the collection, sharing and analysis of data for evidence-based decision-making.

Strengthening the regulatory framework, creating tax incentives, data literacy, and promoting transparency are some of the essential elements to foster an inclusive and efficient data ecosystem. The active participation of all sectors will allow not only the improvement in the quality and accessibility of information, but also the development of innovative technologies that support sustainability and social welfare. This approach requires a shared vision and a robust governance framework, ensuring that technological progress benefits the whole of society, with particular attention to the most vulnerable regions.

Specific strategies and recommendations for each sector are presented below, highlighting their role in creating an environment of collaboration and trust that promotes the use of data for sustainable development.

Government (national and subnational)

Strengthening the policy and regulatory framework

Governments must generate public policies that promote the use and exchange of data, establishing regulatory frameworks that encourage collaboration between private, public, and civil society actors. It is essential that rules be created that oblige public agencies to take advantage of the available data, both from the private sector and from citizens, for the formulation and evaluation of policies.

Create tax and financing incentives
Encourage private sector participation in data generation and analysis through tax incentives. It is essential to create mixed financing mechanisms, in which the public and private sectors collaborate to implement innovative data collection and analysis technologies.

Data literacy
Implement training programs in data science and statistical analysis at both the government (ONEs) level and the citizenry, with a special focus on ONE officials, in order to improve the state's capacity to use data in decision-making.

International articulation
Take advantage of opportunities for international cooperation and knowledge exchange to strengthen capacities in data management and analysis. Through cooperation mechanisms, access, adopt and adapt advanced methodologies used for the monitoring of the SDGs.

Private sector

Data Opening and Exchange
It is essential that companies adopt clear and transparent policies on data sharing, ensuring the implementation of robust ethical and legal frameworks to foster trust between the private sector, governments and citizens.

Partnerships in big data and artificial intelligence projects
To address global challenges through the use of big data and artificial intelligence (AI), it is essential that technology companies continue to lead innovation under a responsible governance framework, such as the one promoted by the Global Digital Compact. This framework seeks to ensure that technological advances are implemented equitably and securely, offering a unique opportunity to establish fairer policies around data management.

Integrating principles such as transparency, inclusiveness, and the protection of human rights within big data and AI projects allows tech companies not only to develop innovative solutions, but also to ensure that they respect global ethical values. Public-private partnerships involving these emerging technologies can benefit greatly from this approach, as a strong governance framework helps mitigate risks such as digital exclusion, algorithmic bias, and privacy breaches.

Chambers of Commerce

Improved interoperability of data systems

To maximize the value of administrative records, chambers of commerce can work on improving interoperability between their data systems and government or private platforms that also manage information about the business sector. Facilitating the secure exchange of data with public institutions (ministries, statistical agencies) and other private organizations, such as banks or insurance companies, will allow a more comprehensive view of the state of companies and productive sectors.

Quality standards and data harmonization

Adopting uniform standards for the classification and coding of economic activities will improve the comparability and quality of data between different regions.

Transparency and access to data

Promoting open data policies and ensuring that information is accessible to the public will foster greater transparency and allow diverse actors, including non-governmental organizations and research institutions, to use data to advance the SDGs.

Guilds

Active participation in data collection processes by promoting transparency and access to data

Business and trade union associations can be more actively involved in the collection of data related to employment, working conditions and workers' rights. This involves strengthening cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure that data on informal employment, wage gaps, job security, and access to education and training are available and updated in real time. In addition, they can promote internal surveys and audits that provide information on the working conditions of their members.

Collaborating with the private sector to improve data quality

Trade unions can work with companies to improve the quality of data on employment and working conditions. This collaboration may include participation in joint initiatives to collect and analyse data on productivity, training, worker well-being and other SDG-related indicators.

Using Data for Labor Policy Formulation

Trade unions can use the data generated to influence the formulation of labour policies that support sustainable development, promoting pay equity, reducing informality, and creating green jobs.

Defending workers' digital rights

In a context where data and technology play an increasingly important role, trade unions have a role to play in defending workers' digital rights. This includes ensuring that data collected about workers is protected and that workers' privacy is respected. Unions should advocate for policies that protect workers from the misuse of data and ensure that the digitalization of work does not compromise fundamental labor rights.

Civil society

Promote the use of unofficial data

Civil society organizations, including NGOs, can play a role in the generation and use of unofficial data. This data, often collected locally by citizens and communities, can complement national statistics and provide a more detailed view of problems in underserved areas.

Grassroots organizations can act as intermediaries between governments and communities, ensuring that the data collected is accessible and understandable to all. This is critical to promoting transparency and accountability in the use of public data.

Strengthening citizen participation

Developing open platforms that allow citizens to access and use data for their own development is critical. These initiatives must play a crucial role in digital literacy, empowering more people to interpret and use the information available. In this way, the active participation of citizens in decision-making related to local development is encouraged, which contributes to building communities that are more informed and committed to their environment.

Academic community and think tanks

Applied research

Universities and think tanks have a role to play in producing evidence that can support the formulation of data-driven public policies. Applied research that documents success stories and challenges in public-private cooperation in the use of data for the SDGs needs to be promoted.

Interdisciplinary training

It is key that universities and educational centers integrate interdisciplinary training programs that address issues of data science, public policies and sustainable development.

In conclusion, public-private partnerships stand out as a timely mechanism to overcome challenges in data collection, management, and use within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. Through collaboration between the public and private sectors, it is possible to mobilize financial and technological resources, close data gaps, and strengthen the capacity of governments to monitor and evaluate progress towards the 2030 Agenda. In addition, these alliances allow for the promotion of trust among the actors involved, promoting an ethical and efficient use of data, which is essential to build more inclusive and effective public policies.

From Cepei's perspective, strengthening these partnerships is essential to build a more inclusive, transparent, and efficient data ecosystem, capable of responding to sustainable development challenges in a comprehensive manner. The recommendations presented in the document seek to guide key actors – governments, the private sector, chambers of commerce, civil society and academia – towards effective collaboration to close the data gap, improve evidence-based decision-making and accelerate progress towards more equitable and sustainable development. To achieve this, it is crucial to establish a robust governance framework that ensures systems interoperability, access to innovative technologies, and the adoption of open data policies that drive innovation and inclusive development in the long term.

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