5 P's to build and sustain political will on inclusive data
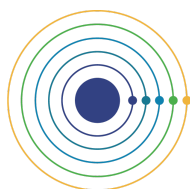
Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data

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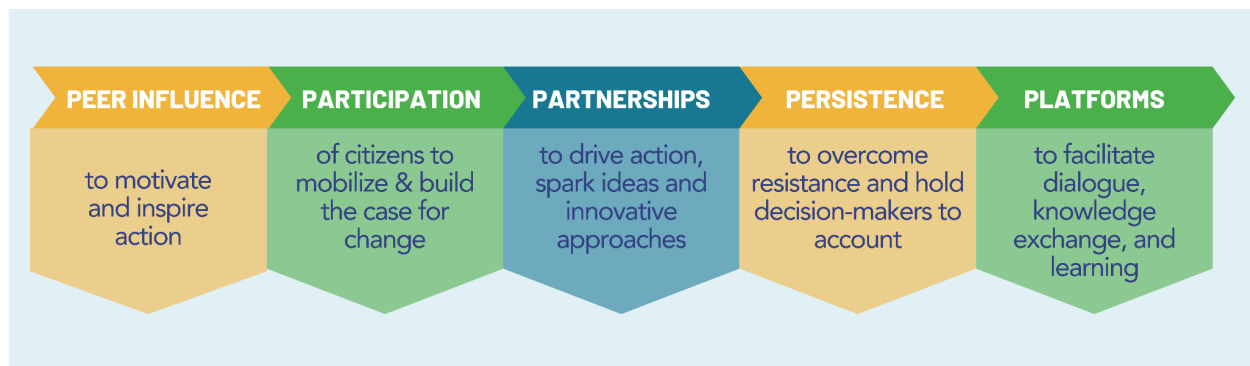# Introduction

The recent Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024 highlights the ongoing challenges in the collection and use of accurate, timely, and disaggregated data and the need to strengthen partnerships on inclusive data. As such, as part of the pledge to leave no one behind (LNOB), mobilizing political support and investments for data is crucial as we strive to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

July 2024 marks six years since the launch of the Inclusive Data Charter (IDC) which set out to encourage political commitments and meaningful actions to advance inclusive and disaggregated data. IDC Champions have used a range of approaches to build and sustain political will on inclusive data over the years, with many learnings along the way.

Thanks to their years of effort and insights we developed this guide to support others looking to build and sustain political will on inclusive data, summarized as the 5 P's: peer influence, participation, partnerships, persistence, and platforms. Additionally, from the 5 P's, we have created a list of approaches for overcoming common challenges.

Introducing the 5 P's

PEER INFLUENCE	PARTICIPATION	PARTNERSHIPS	PERSISTENCE	PLATFORMS
to motivate and inspire action	of citizens to mobilize & build the case for change	to drive action, spark ideas and innovative approaches	to overcome resistance and hold decision-makers to account	to facilitate dialogue, knowledge exchange, and learning

Common challenges

Political will can be considered as the commitment of political leaders to undertake actions to achieve a set of objectives and to sustain the costs of those actions over time (source: Transparency International, 2014). And it can be difficult to achieve. IDC Champions have met challenges and barriers to building and sustaining political will on inclusive data, including:

Resource and capacity constraints

- Getting governments to prioritize inclusive data against competing demands can be challenging due to limited resources, technical skills, and capacity.

Institutional coordination

- Limited coordination and communications both within and across institutions can make advancing inclusive data issues challenging, with institutional silos sometimes preventing the flow of data between different areas.
- Lack of clarity on where responsibilities sit sometimes results in tensions and conflicts around institutional mandates and how data should be collected and used.

Political cycles

- Political changes and subsequent transition periods, including elections, reshuffles, or staff changes in government alongside shifting priorities, can make it difficult to keep inclusive data on the agenda.

Limited knowledge and understanding

- Decision makers may lack understanding of what inclusive data is, its value, and its benefits. This may include perceptions of inclusive data being complex, lacking clear outcomes, and being difficult to measure.
- The existence of many competing advocacy issues in the development sector can also make it challenging to reinforce the message to decision-makers on why data is critical and integral to the effectiveness of development interventions.

Sensitivities around data and its use

- In some contexts, data is not always seen as a public good. Whilst data can be a powerful tool for change, it can also be contentious and political.
- Decision-makers may not want to collect more accurate data on certain marginalized population groups due to political and contextual sensitivities and concerns about the implications of the use of this data.

Paving the way to inclusive data commitments

Below is a short list of approaches that can be used to navigate the challenges in building and sustaining political will for commitments on inclusive data. Read on for examples from some of our IDC Champions who put these approaches into action.

PEER INFLUENCE	PARTICIPATION	PARTNERSHIPS	PERSISTENCE	PLATFORMS

DEVELOP RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

Harnessing existing will, including institutional leaders at all levels such as line ministries and national statistics offices, alongside partners, enables more openness to engagement and collaboration.

CONNECT TO STRATEGIC PRIORITIES INCLUDING THE SDGS AND LNOB AGENDA

Aligning the importance of inclusive data to governments priorities including broader commitments to the SDGs / LNOB fosters more engagement.

GENERATE AND SHARE EVIDENCE

Connecting inclusive data with users' needs and priorities, as well as sharing positive examples of why inclusive data matters increases demand and uptake.

BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Building data literacy and decision-makers capacity enables a better understanding of inclusive data so they can take informed action. This should include capacity building of data collectors so they can advocate for the issues.

BUILD COALITIONS AND ALLIANCES

Working with in-country coalitions and partners helps to tackle barriers to inclusive data and create momentum to strengthen production and use of inclusive data.

EMPOWER AND MOBILIZE LOCAL LEVEL ACTORS

Engaging local level actors to strengthen their capacity on inclusive data is key to facilitating linkages between local and national level.

In action: examples from IDC Champions

Develop relationships and trust

Supporting development partners to use the [P20 approach](#) to identify those at risk of being left furthest behind, has been an entry point for Development Initiatives to build political will and trust in countries like Benin.

Building on this existing engagement enabled Development Initiatives to encourage partners they work with to actively think about how they incorporate inclusive data and embed inclusive processes within their organizations, including in the development of guidance and tools to support programmatic interventions.

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Connect to strategic priorities, including the SDGs and LNOB agenda

Nigeria aligned its national statistical systems to SDG indicators, which helped get buy-in to join the IDC, as the relevant decision-makers could see how the charter could support the Nigerian government's work on the SDGs.

Kenya's IDC action plan was jointly signed off by senior decision-makers at the ministry and national statistics office level, reinforcing alignment with existing government priorities and commitments. Because of this high-level endorsement, activities from Kenya's IDC mobilization strategy are being integrated into institutional work plans, ensuring the budget is allocated to deliver the work.
[More](#)

Generate and share evidence

In Colombia, showcasing what is possible and setting an example have been successful strategies used by DANE, the national statistics office, in mainstreaming intersectional approaches to data across the national statistics system.

Using case study examples to demonstrate approaches and what works has helped to create more demand from decision-makers and data users.
More

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Build knowledge and skills

The UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office, Office for National Statistics and partners conducted data masterclasses with policymakers and data users in the UK government to put data and evidence at the heart of their decision-making.

The data masterclasses have been adapted for implementation in other countries such as Rwanda, Ghana, and Bangladesh.

Empower and mobilize local level actors

In Cameroon, where there is an increased focus on localizing the SDGs, civil society worked with local councils to pilot inclusive data approaches and strengthen their capacity to collect and use data through a Voluntary Local Review.

The findings were shared with national-level actors, including the government, to advocate for more action on inclusive data and inform national-level reporting on SDG progress. More

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Build coalitions and alliances

The CONGAD civil society forum in Senegal mobilized a coalition of over 200 community members and 40 civil society organizations to begin a national conversation about what inclusive data means to different communities and why it's a critical building block of fair and equitable policymaking.

They worked with the government and ministerial agencies to strengthen data collection, including reviewing data collection instruments to ensure they are inclusive and establishing monitoring mechanisms to review progress regularly.

Conclusion

The approaches used to build and sustain political will vary depending on considerations such as advocacy objectives, political context, enabling environment, resources, and capacity and these factors must be taken into account by the advocates of inclusive data.

But six years into the Inclusive Data Charter our extensive IDC Champion network has distilled their experience to support others to overcome challenges to succeed in building and sustaining political will.

The key takeaways for inclusive data advocates are:

- **Engage institutional leadership at all levels** to build political will, including statistical offices, line ministries, and legislators
- **Equip teams and departments beyond the leadership level** to champion the inclusive data agenda within institutions, to promote shared accountability and responsibility for the work
- **Develop cross-sectoral collaboration** between government and non-state actors to build understanding, tackle barriers, and catalyze action on inclusive data
- **Ensure that decision-makers are well briefed** and that they understand the issues on inclusive data and how it enables them to advance their strategic priorities and commitments
- **Promote the embedding of inclusive data** within institutional strategies to encourage commitments to budget for inclusive data in government work plans for sustainability
- **Keep up the momentum and continued advocacy** on inclusive data to hold decision-makers to account to follow through on their commitments

Learn more about the work of the IDC and how you can become an IDC Champion [here](#).