Policy briefing

Unlocking Data For A Better, Greener, Safer Future

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"Today, nearly 250 million people are in urgent need of international assistance and protection...If we want to change course and get back on track, these 250 million are the people who matter most. Yet, they are often the people who are counted least...Data gaps hinder our operations and make them less effective than they should be. With better data, we can do better."

Amina Mohammed
United Nations Deputy Secretary-General

"Bridging the data divide is critical to support poor and vulnerable people hit hardest by crises, from COVID-19 to climate change, and chart a course for green, resilient and inclusive development. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the UN and partners to maximize the value of data for people and planet."

Mari Pangestu
World Bank Managing Director Development Policy and Partnerships

"Mobilizing political will and moral courage is not going to be enough if we do not have the right evidence—evidence that points us to making the right and most impactful decisions."

H.E. Mahamudu Bawumia
Republic of Ghana Vice President

"Forging a new social contract for data is a pressing domestic policy priority that will require strengthening national data systems and engaging all stakeholders at the national level. Because of the global scale of data, some of the most challenging aspects of the social contract also call for closer international cooperation to harmonize regulations and coordinate policies— bilaterally, regionally, and globally… The World Bank stands ready to support its client countries on this important and challenging agenda."
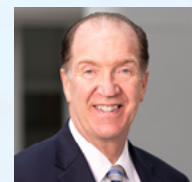
David Malpass
World Bank President, Foreword to the World Development Report 2021

"Now is the time to end the 'infodemic' plaguing our world by defending a common, empirically backed consensus around facts, science, and knowledge. The 'war on science' must end. All policy and budget decisions should be backed by science and expertise."

António Guterres
United Nations Secretary-General, Our Common Agenda 2021

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FOREWORD

With brute force, the COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the need for better data capabilities to protect people and planet.

This briefing reminds us of the evidence for why high-quality data must be the foundation of investments in sustainable development, pandemic recovery, climate action, and emergency response. It also reminds us of the huge gaps in data and data use that exist.

We shouldn't need such reminders. We have known about the power of data for a long time, but the world is failing collectively to act on this knowledge in lower-income countries. Investment in data is flatlining, dismally low, and damagingly fragmented.

This is why in Spring 2022 the United Nations and the World Bank, working with the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, are launching a unique new campaign grounded in Our Common Agenda and centered around two revolutionary new financing instruments: the Global Data Facility and the Complex Risk Analytics Fund.

The campaign will launch with a ministerial roundtable at the Spring Meetings of the World Bank and will culminate in a high-level event at the 2022 UN General Assembly. Its aim is to rally the global community in raising US$500 million over 10 years for greater scale, insight, and impact from *data with purpose*. Significant increases in domestic resource mobilization for data are also urgently needed.

To help people and planet break through to a better, greener, and safer future, the global community will need trillions in investments to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals during the Decade of Action. Unlocking better data will be critical for navigating the complex risks and choices ahead and to ensure that funds are spent wisely.

Please join us as we lift global ambition, build an advocacy platform of champions of data with purpose, and work together to transform investment in data as part of overall policy and program decision-making and planning.

High-quality data must be the foundation of investments in sustainable development

Greater scale, insight, and impact from *data with purpose*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recommendations for policymakers

We invite all partners committed to improving data systems to join us and support through:

- Committing funding to help us reach our target of US$500 million over ten years
- Helping to shape the operations of the Global Data Facility and the Complex Risk Analytics Fund
- Helping support the campaign through advocacy, communications and strategy

DATA FOR A BETTER, GREENER, SAFER FUTURE

Better collection and use of data is transforming how lower-income countries are responding to crises, with the urgency of the COVID-19 pandemic leading many countries to innovate with data, including by partnering with the private sector.

Better collection and use of data also provides a huge opportunity for governments to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by improving service delivery, increasing accountability, and increasing the impact of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and other investments. In this way strengthened and ethical data systems are a key part of a powerful, autonomous vision for lower-income countries.

Strengthening data systems can accelerate economic growth rates, in part because data transparency can reduce the cost of borrowing, and strong data systems create opportunities for companies in the digital technology sector, which is the most dynamic sector in the global economy.

WHERE WE ARE

We are failing to take advantage of the huge opportunities created by new technologies which, combined with existing approaches, can deliver more timely and comprehensive data than ever before.

In early 2020, across many countries COVID-19 data simply did not exist, and data on key aspects of the ongoing climate crisis is similarly scarce. Policymakers are left to make decisions at moments of crisis without key evidence, impeding effective decision-making—including for the countries most affected. This is disastrous for the world as a whole.

When it comes to the SDGs, it is almost impossible to know if the world is on track. **There are only six goals for which more than two thirds of countries have data to**

report, and only 19% of the gender-specific SDG indicators are widely available.[1] An estimated 230 million children worldwide are unregistered. Perhaps most shockingly, only four in 10 of the world's deaths are registered.[2]

Simply collecting the numbers is not enough. Fulfilling the potential of data to drive progress also requires analysts and decision-makers with the knowledge and skills to extract useful information from it and to act on it. It requires systems and proto-cols for effective data use. And it requires governance arrangements to be in place to ensure data collection and use is safe, ethical, unbiased, and secure. All of these things are currently in scarce supply in many lower-income countries.

Meanwhile there is an annual financing gap of an estimated US$1.3 billion for data and statistical systems in low-and middle-income countries and ODA support for data has flatlined for nearly ten years, accounting for just US$551 million in 2019, representing a meager 0.3% of total ODA in 2019.[4]

The shortage of resources is made worse by increasing fragmentation of support to data and statistics and a tendency to focus on funding data and analytics that supports individual projects and programmes, rather than strengthening national data systems overall. There are opportunities to make better use of existing resources through increased coordination as well as a need to increase the overall amount.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

In Spring 2022, we are launching a campaign to unlock the power of data for a better, greener, safer future. The campaign is being led by the UN and World Bank at the highest levels, and will break down silos and drive collaboration, effectiveness, and scale at a global level.

The campaign is seeking at least $500 million over ten years for two new funds (see Box 1). This investment will pay for itself many times over by scaling up and improving the effectiveness of existing ODA and investment by governments, donors, and the private sector. It will catalyze billions of dollars of additional resources to help fill the world's most critical data, data capacity, and data systems gaps.

We are also seeking champions at the ministerial and heads of state level across

> ❝ A child not registered at birth is invisible—nonexistent in the eyes of the government or the law. Without proof of identity, children are often excluded from education, healthcare and other vital services, and are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse."
>
> — UNICEF[3]

[1] United Nations Statistics Division. (2021) The Sustainable Development Goals Report: Investing in Data to Save Lives and Build Back Better. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/investing-in-data-to-save-lives-and-build-back-better/.

[2] Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data; Sustainable Development Solutions Network Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics. (2018) Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Benefit Health, Child Protection, and Governance. Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b4f63e14eddec374f416232/t/5c06e14fc2241b2779ca96a9/1543954772402/CaseStudy_CRVS_Dec2018.pdf.

[3] UNICEF. (2019) Despite Significant Increase in Birth Registration, a Quarter of the World's Children Remain 'Invisible'. Available at: https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/despite-significant-increase-birth-registration-quarter-worlds-children-remain.

[4] Calleja, R. and Rogerson, A. (2019) Financing challenges for developing statistical systems: A review of financing options. Available at: https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Financing%20challenges%20for%20developing%20statistical%20systems%20%28DP14%29.pdf.

low-and-middle-income countries to drive advocacy and ensure country-led approaches to make the funds as targeted, results-focused, and impactful as possible, while maintaining a strong focus on data ethics.

Box 1: Data financing mechanisms

The **UN-hosted Complex Risk Analytics Fund** (CRAF'd) will support diverse stakeholders in open data ecosystems for crisis anticipation, prevention, and response—grounded in shared principles. Focused on fragile settings, CRAF'd will help secure critical data and insights for faster, more targeted, and dignified support to lives and livelihoods in the moments that matter most.

The **World Bank-hosted Global Data Facility** (GDF) will invest in data systems and capacity in low- and middle-income countries. It will catalyze financing from across international organizations (including World Bank International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/International Development Association), serve as a coordination mechanism for global data support, and enable increased domestic financing for national and subnational data and statistical systems. Through the GDF, countries can work with development partners to invest in the data and capacity that underpins progress across all the SDGs, increasing the coordination and efficiency of other investments, enabling accountability, and accelerating progress.

The two funds will be informed by, connected to, and build upon key work of partners. This includes initiatives such as the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and its Principles for Data and Statistics, and the Bern Network's Clearinghouse, which maps investments in data. We will build on the collective track record and comparative advantages of the World Bank and UN as global centers of expertise when it comes to investing in data.

Our campaign will kick off with a ministerial roundtable at the World Bank Spring Meetings and will culminate in a high-level event at the UN General Assembly in September 2022. Join us on this exciting journey to invest in data with purpose.

DATA FOR A BETTER, GREENER, SAFER FUTURE

Improvement in the effective collection and use of data is transforming how lower-income countries are responding to crises.[5] Data is also driving innovations to both deliver on and track the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), increasing the impact of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and other investments, and fueling economic activity.

> ❝ Statistics deliver both good and bad news, but effective governments need to hear both."
>
> — **Dr. Mahamudu Bawumia, Vice President of the Republic of Ghana**

Box 2: 12 reasons to invest in data

1. Good data will be the first line of defense against future pandemics.

2. With better data, we can more effectively respond to protect communities from the consequences of climate change.

3. With better data, we can determine the most effective investments to drive progress towards the SDGs.

4. Better data can be used to forecast humanitarian crises, triggering anticipatory action and reducing impact.

5. Investments in data systems can have multiplier effects, improving service delivery across all government functions.

6. Strengthening data systems can raise economic growth rates.

7. Data transparency can reduce the cost of borrowing.

8. Investment in data systems will catalyze significant additional financial flows from national governments, development banks, and the private sector.

9. Strong data systems create opportunities for companies in the digital technology sector, which is the most dynamic sector in the global economy.

10. Strengthened and ethical data systems are a key part of a powerful, autonomous future for lower-income countries in the global community.

11. Transparent data provides citizens with information and knowledge they need to hold governments accountable.

12. A coordinated, cross-sectoral and global effort can overcome fragmentation and deliver economies of scale and greater efficiency.

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[5] Hoogeveen, J. and Pape, U. (2020) *Data Collection in Fragile States : Innovations from Africa and Beyond.* Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/32576.

DATA IS CRITICAL FOR EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO CRISES

Without a vaccine, in early 2020 the first line of defense against the pandemic was good data. Citizens across the world studied graphs and became transfixed by the R number as the COVID-19 data became perhaps the most famous data of all time. Governments needed to see where the virus was spreading and where vulnerable populations were concentrated, and to monitor the stocks of medicines and equipment available.

The urgency of the situation supercharged innovation in data collection and use, as countries used new data sources such as satellite, mobile, and retail scanner data to fill critical gaps. In some cases silo walls crumbled and collaboration flourished between government departments and with the private sector.

New data partnerships were catalyzed to respond to the pandemic, bringing together public and private sector and sharing knowledge:

- In **Ghana**, a partnership between the national statistics office, Vodafone Ghana, and the Swedish nonprofit foundation Flowminder was adapted to provide insights into Ghanaians' mobility, and to help in public health emergency planning, disaster preparedness, and response.[6]

- In **Vietnam**, Facebook mobility maps were used to compare the impact of lockdowns on movement.[7] They showed that localized and regional lockdowns caused a greater and sharper decline in mobility than the national lockdown, enabling Vietnam to both limit economic impact and spread of contagion from continued resurgence of infections.[8]

- Officials in **Somalia** first gained new skills in using geospatial data to estimate the impact of the virus and were able to use those skills later for cyclone prediction and recovery efforts.[9]

- In **Latin America and the Caribbean**, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, entrepreneurs provided solutions for education, mental health, logistics, management and other sectors. However, most of these efforts were decentralized and fragmented. In response, the Inter-American Development Bank Group created an open, united, and consolidated database of the diverse efforts in the region, stimulating collaboration and innovation.[10]

- In **The Gambia**, policymakers were able to use records of mobile phone calls to map people's movements to understand how well lockdowns were working in reducing movement, and to identify factors linked to compliance and noncompliance and plan accordingly.[11]

> " Tackling the pandemic requires data and information to ensure that policies, resources, and technology are deployed in the right place and time to make the biggest possible impact."

— **Vera Songwe, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa**

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[6] United Nations Economic Commission for Africa; Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data. (2021) Data for a Resilient Africa. Available at: _l://www.data4sdgs.org/data-resilient-africa._

[7] Meta, Data for Good. Movement Maps. Available at: https://datafor-good.facebook.com/dfg/tools/movement-maps.

[8] Kaiser K., Morisset J., and Khan, M.F. (2020) Tackling COVID-19 Second Wave using Facebook Mobility Data in Vietnam. Available at: https://datapartnership.org/updates/tackling-covid19-second-wave-using-facebook-mobility-data-in-vietnam/.

[9] _Ibid._

[10] Collaer, J. and Nolasco, C. (2021) Mapping Entrepreneurs' Response to COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean. Available at: https://datapartnership.org/updates/mapping-entrepreneurs-response-to-covid-19-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean/.

[11] World Bank. (2021) _World Development Report 2021: Data for Better Lives._ doi:10.1596/978-1-4648-1600-0.

Data and analytics are also helping countries and the international community anticipate, prevent, and respond better to other crises:

- Effective collection and use of data is helping to understand where to target humanitarian aid to increase the impact of limited resources.[12]

- AI models are being trained to recognize patterns in satellite imagery from camp formations to unusual weather.[13]

- Incident and patrol data is being used to tailor peacekeeping deployments.[14]

- Machine learning is helping the World Food Programme to predict food security months earlier with 90% accuracy in 90 countries, despite only being present in 45 countries.[15]

- Modeling toolkits are simulating displacement and refugee flows and predicting the impact of different possible policy choices.[16]

- Satellite and ground data are being used to predict the spread of disease, helping to prevent more than two million cases of cholera in Yemen alone.[17]

DATA DRIVES PROGRESS FOR PEOPLE

New data and new methods provide a huge opportunity for governments, companies, and civil society groups to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

- The Government of **Tanzania** was able to increase the resolution of the poverty map of Tanzania eightfold and increase its coverage from just 20 regions to all 169 districts of the country by augmenting household survey data with satellite imagery data.[18] Greater resolution will help governments target services more effectively and anticipate where communities will be most affected by changes in prices or other shocks.

- In **India**, the "I paid a bribe" online initiative launched by the Janaagraha Center for Citizenship collects citizens' reports of corrupt behavior and merges them with geospatial data to highlight problem areas. In doing so, it empowers individuals, civil society, and governments to fight corrupt behavior.[19]

- In **Vietnam**, a survey on gender-based violence revealed that more than half of women have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, and that seven in eight did not seek help. This data motivated the National Strategy on Gender Equality, and resulted in counseling and shelters becoming available to women experiencing domestic violence.[20]

- In **The Philippines**, the newly established Philippine Statistics Authority is overseeing the implementation and management of a biometric ID program, expected

> ❝ Investments on creating data ecosystems to understand the drivers of disaster risks from natural hazards from a country high with risks like Nepal is very important. High resolution, disaggregated data is key to understanding past events. It provides the foresight to anticipate disasters better. It also helps us to make effective decisions for targeted responses to reach marginalized and vulnerable communities."
>
> — Anil Pokhrel, Chief Executive, National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority, Nepal

> ❝ Data is a critical ingredient to creating an inclusive recovery and informed decision-making. Without timely, accurate, and inclusive collection and analysis, policymakers cannot make the best and most efficient use of funds by investing in the sectors, geographies, and populations where interventions are most needed or consistently track the progress of such efforts."
>
> — Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

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[12] European Commission Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Center, INFORM.
[13] United Nations Global Pulse, PulseSatellite.
[14] Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, ViEWS.
[15] World Food Programme HungerMap.
[16] European Commission CORDIS, Horizon 2020, Enhanced Migration Measures from a Multidimensional Perspective.
[17] Patel, K. (2020) Predicting Cholera Risk in Yemen. Available at: https://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/images/147101/predicting-cholera-risk-in-yemen.
[18] *World Development Report 2021.*
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Ibid.*

to result in efficiency savings of as much as 2% of GDP (approximately US$6.09 billion) over five years.[21]

- In **Nicaragua**, a World Bank-sponsored study showed that sewerage projects were highly regressive, while latrines and primary education projects were progressive, reaching 17% of the population classified as extremely poor. This led to an immediate decision to focus on improving outreach to, and investments in, extremely poor communities.[22]

Investing in data is spending to save. Small investments in national data systems can have multiplier effects, improving service delivery across all government functions.

DATA FUELS THE ECONOMY

Strengthening data systems can raise economic growth rates.[23] There are several mechanisms that can drive this:

- Countries with strong data systems are more likely to attract investment and that investment is likely to have greater impact.[24]
- Data transparency has been shown to reduce the cost of borrowing for lower-income countries.[25]
- Strong data systems create opportunities for companies in the digital technology sector, which is the most dynamic sector in the global economy.[26]
- Strong data systems attract research, helping to expand the frontiers of knowledge and catalyze innovation.[27]
- In general, strong data systems contribute to strong institutions which have been linked to economic growth.[28]

Evidence from around the world shows how investments in data can pay for themselves many times over:

- Over 25 years, the New Zealand Census will return to the national economy NZ$5 for every NZ$1 invested.[29]
- In the United Kingdom, every GB£1 invested in producing statistics on schools'

66 ...data-driven anticipatory action—combined with better preparation—will make it possible to reduce the severity of hazards, and thus limit their consequences and cost of care: saving lives and reducing vulnerabilities."

— **Lawan Magagi, Minister of Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Management, Niger**

[21] Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Sustainable Development Solutions Network Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics. (2018) Improved Data Governance Leads to Better Economic Outcomes for Philippine Citizens. Available at: https://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/PSA%20Case%20Study.pdf.

[22] Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, Sustainable Development Solutions Network Thematic Research Network on Data and Statistics. (2018) Household Surveys Shape Policy Investment. https://www.data4sdgs.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/LSMS%20Case%20Study.pdf.

[23] Kennedy, J. (N.D.) Big Data's Economic Impact. Available at: https://www.ced.org/blog/entry/big-datas-economic-impact.

[24] Islam, A.M. and Lederman, D. (2020) Data Transparency and Long-Run Growth. Available at: http://hdl.handle.net/10986/34915.

[25] Kubota,M. and Zeufack, A. (2020) Assessing the Returns on Investment in Data Openness and Transparency. Available at: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33295.

[26] Big Data's Economic Impact.

[27] *Data Transparency and Long-Run Growth*

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] Neuner, J. (2018) What is the True Value of Data? New Series on the Return on Investment of Data Interventions. Available at: https://www.sdsntrends.org/blog/2018/9/27/return-investment-data-case-studies-launch.

performance leads to academic improvements equivalent to a GB£16 increase in GDP.[30]

- Earth observation data from the NASA and US Geological Survey Landsat satellites produce an estimated benefit of US$2.19 billion a year from applications such as smarter land-use planning and more timely responses to natural disasters.[31]

Satellite imagery of flooding in Lake Baringo, Kenya. Credit: NASA

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[30] Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data. (2018) Making the case: More and Better Financing for Development Data. Available at: https://www.data4sdgs.org/makingthecase.
[31] Espey, J. (2019) 'The Missing Ingredient for a Better World: Data', Nature, 571, 299. Available at: https://media.nature.com/original/magazine-assets/d41586-019-02139-w/d41586-019-02139-w.pdf.

DATA CHALLENGES

Unfortunately, despite strong examples of countries using data to respond effectively to crises and to drive Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) innovation, and despite the strong evidence linking strong data systems to economic growth, there are major gaps in terms of both the collection and effective use of data in lower-income countries. These gaps are perpetuated by a large and chronic funding shortfall for data, data systems, and data capital, as well as persistent deficiencies in countries' data governance.

Box 3: 10 critical data challenges

1. Two thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries lack sufficient resources to meet the demands for data caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.[32]

2. Only one in six countries have sufficient data to report on SDG 13: Climate Action and, on average, the latest data available is from 2015.[33]

3. Two thirds of countries in Africa have been forced to postpone a planned census due to the pandemic.[34]

4. Nearly a third of relevant data to address crises across 27 humanitarian operations is missing.[35]

5. Only four in ten of the world's deaths are registered.[36]

6. More than a quarter of children overall, and more than half of children in Sub-Saharan Africa, under the age of five were not registered at birth.[37]

7. There are only six (out of 17) SDGs for which more than two thirds of countries have data to report.[38]

8. Current ODA for data is less than half of what is needed to deliver SDG data requirements.[39]

9. ODA for data in lower-income countries has remained static for nearly 10 years and is increasingly fragmented.[40]

10. Given that support for data and statistics has accounted for approximately 0.3% of ODA in recent years, an increase in relative support by even one or two percentage points could unlock billions in needed financial assistance.

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[32] World Bank. (2020) Monitoring the State of Statistical Operations Under the COVID-19 Pandemic. Available at: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/covid19-response/covid19-nso-survey-report-2.pdf.
[33] The Sustainable Development Goals Report.
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2022) The State of Open Humanitarian Data. Available at: https://data.humdata.org/dataset/2048a947-5714-4220-905b-e662cbcd14c8/resource/56bb190e-fd43-4573-898c-76aaedb7e10a/download/state-of-open-humanitarian-data-2022.pdf.

DATA COLLECTION AND QUALITY

While COVID-19 pandemic data and related analytics helped to draw global attention to the urgent need to collect and use timely data for immediate decision-making, across many countries, the data—and the capacity to collect and analyze it—simply did not exist. Policymakers were left to make decisions without key evidence. Two thirds of low- and lower-middle-income countries lack sufficient resources to meet the demands for data caused by the pandemic.[41] The consequences of this COVID-19 data gap are devastating for the countries concerned and they also represent a significant danger for whole regions and to the wider world, faced with a pandemic that will only end anywhere when it ends everywhere.

Huge data gaps also exist when it comes to tackling the climate crisis. Only one in six countries have sufficient data to report on SDG 13: Climate Action and, on average, the latest data available is from 2015.[42] Just like the COVID-19 data gaps, the climate data gaps are an issue for the countries concerned, and they are disastrous for the world as a whole.

When it comes to the data needed to address humanitarian crises, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that, across 27 humanitarian operations, nearly a third of relevant, complete data is missing.[43] This is an improvement from the missing 54% in 2009, but still leaves a significant data gap.

For tracking the SDGs, the globally agreed blueprint for social, economic, and sustainable development progress for all of humanity, the picture is worse. It is almost impossible to know if the world is on track. There are only six goals for which more than two thirds of countries have data to report, and only five for which the most recent year available in the average country is 2018 or later.[44] Perhaps most staggeringly of all, only four in ten of the world's deaths are registered.[45]

The data is most scarce where the challenges are biggest: there are gaps in gender data across all areas of development—economic opportunities, education, environment, health, human security, and public participation.[46] Only 19% of the gender-specific indicators in the SDGs are widely available,[47] yet there has been a stagnant trend in financing for gender-related projects in data and statistics for the last six years.[48] See Box 4 for examples of the importance of gender-disaggregated data.

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[36] PARIS21. (2021) The Partner Report on Support to Statistics. Available at: https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/PRESS%202020%20Final.pdf.
[37] World Development Report.
[38] The Sustainable Development Goals Report.
[39] The Partner Report on Support to Statistics.
[40] *Ibid*.
[41] Monitoring the State of Statistical Operations Under the COVID-19 Pandemic.
[42] The Sustainable Development Goals Report.
[43] The State of Humanitarian Data.
[44] The Sustainable Development Goals Report.
[45] The Partner Report on Support to Statistics.
[46] Data2X, Where Are the Gender Data Gaps? Available at: https://data2x.org/where-are-the-gaps/.
[47] World Development Report: Data for Better Lives.
[48] The Partner Report on Support to Statistics.

Meanwhile most lower-income countries lack the capacity and resources to make the most of new sources of data, including by integrating private intent data from mobile phones, satellites, and internet use with more traditional data sets from censuses and administrative data collection.

Low- and middle-income countries are often deeply affected by data quality issues. For a variety of reasons—from insufficient funding to staff capacity or bandwidth constraints to lack of equipment and up-to-date analytical software and more—data-producing government agencies may be unable to identify and correct data quality problems, such as eliminating biases and and correcting inaccuracies.[50] The old statistical adage "garbage in, garbage out" remains true. And the insights that can be gleaned from data are only as good as the data itself. Poor data quality does not just mean missed opportunities in terms of improving outcomes, it can also lead to suboptimal outcomes.

DATA USE

Fulfilling the potential of data requires analysts to have data science and analytics skills necessary to extract useful information to support forecasting and decision-making from the data concerned. And it requires decision-makers to have a reasonable level of data literacy. Maximizing the benefits of data also requires systems and protocols to be in place to facilitate effective data use through data repurposing, sharing, and combination. All of these things are currently in relatively short supply in most lower-income countries.[51]

> ❝ ...less than 20 percent of low- and middle- income countries have modern data infrastructure such as colocation data centers and direct access to cloud computing facilities. Even where nascent data systems and governance frameworks exist, a lack of institutions with the requisite administrative capacity, decision-making autonomy, and financial resources holds back their effective implementation and enforcement."
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> **— David Malpass, President of the World Bank Group**

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[49] United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development. (2020) Note for Policy Makers: Collecting and Using Gender-Disaggregated Data for Financial Policymaking. Available at: https://www.unsgsa.org/sites/default/files/resources-files/2020-09/UNSGSA_Gender-Disaggregated_Data_Summary_Report_Final.pdf.
[50] World Bank. Statistical Performance Indicators. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/statistical-performance-indicators.
[51] World Development Report: Data for Better Lives.

DATA GOVERNANCE

Data governance arrangements are needed to support the generation and use of data in a safe, ethical, and secure way while also delivering value equitably.

If data is increasingly being used for decision-making, we cannot exclude that it may also increasingly be misused either intentionally or by accident. Governments can not only use data to improve public services, they can also use it to increase political surveillance. Meanwhile complex data analytics can introduce accidental biases and discrimination into decision-making.

No country in the world has developed perfect data governance systems, but lower-income countries tend to be the furthest away from doing so. They often lack the institutional policies and regulatory frameworks and resources to ensure equitable outcomes and to create trust in the integrity of data systems, for example through protecting privacy. The 2021 World Development Report called for a new social contract for data and suggests that trust in data transactions can be supported through a set of both *safeguards* and *enablers* in lower-income countries.[52]

Data is a resource, and, since the Industrial Revolution, lower-income countries have too often historically been subjected to processes of inequitable and aggressive resource extraction by foreign governments and private sector actors. As lower-income countries engage with the current intelligence revolution, it is essential that this process of extraction is not repeated, but rather that countries are supported in developing the data systems necessary to ensure that the huge potential benefits are maximized for their own citizens and shared equitably. As it stands, countries are faced with difficult choices around foreign investment in data infrastructure and whether to accept less democratic systems of data governance as models they could adopt.

> ❝ High-quality risk data and analytics is crucial to inform political, development, and peacebuilding action and financing."
>
> **— Ambassador Anna-Karin Eneström, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations**

DATA FUNDING

There is a range of calculations of the funding gap that needs to be filled to allow lower-income countries to collect and use the data needed to achieve the SDGs and respond effectively to crises. Estimates vary based on methodology and the scope of investments covered. Whichever estimate one uses, however, it is clear that significant increases in domestic resource mobilization, ODA, and investment by other actors will be required.

The non-governmental organization PARIS21 has calculated that the cost for more comprehensive support for data and statistical systems could be up to $5.6 billion per year between 2019 to 2030 for 75 low- and lower-middle-income countries and 69 upper-middle-income countries, of which $4.3 billion (77%) of costs would be expected to be covered by domestic resources.[53] They continue that, should current levels of ODA remain the same, this will leave an annual financing gap of $1.3 billion (23%).
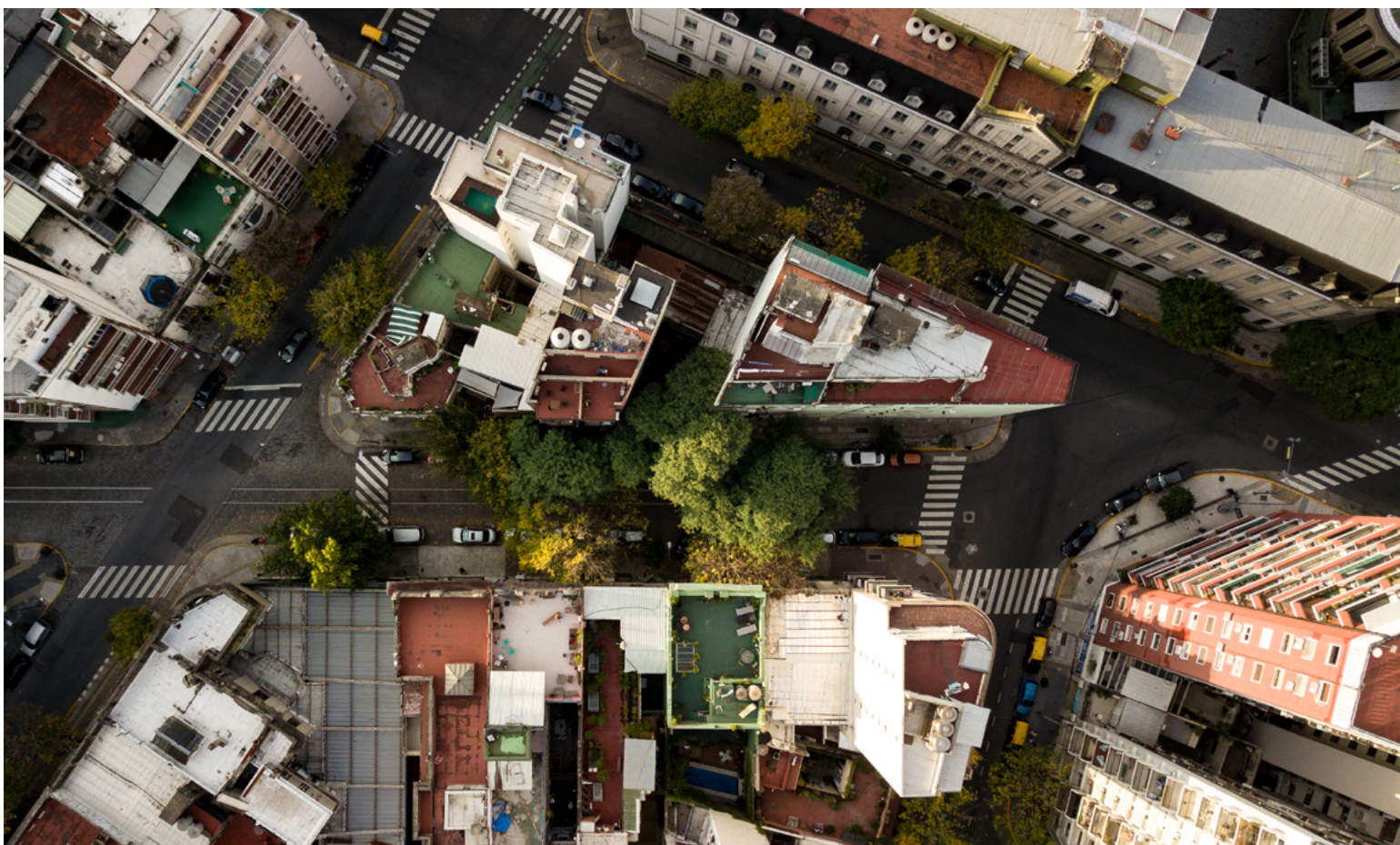
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[52] World Development Report: Data for Better Lives.
[53] Financing challenges for developing statistical systems.

According to the 2021 Partner Report on Support to Statistics, investments in data from external sources have remained static for nearly 10 years. Annual ODA to data and statistics accounted for US$551 million, representing 0.3% of total ODA in 2019.[54] The COVID-19 crisis saw a sharp increase in funding to health-related data, but a precipitous drop in data relating to other sectors.

There has also been increasing fragmentation of support to data and statistics and a tendency to focus on funding data and analytics that supports individual projects and programs, rather than strengthening national data systems overall.[55] There is also greater fragmentation in terms of the number of countries receiving ODA for data. All this fragmentation makes it more imperative for mechanisms to coordinate action and enable learning between projects, programs, and countries.

Increasingly, private foundations are also investing large amounts in data and analytics in lower-income countries, but these investments tend to also be spent on assessing the impact of individual projects rather than on strengthening data systems overall.

Aerial view of rooftops of the Palermo district in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Credit: Qualtagh Visuals/Shutterstock.

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[54] The Partner Report on Support to Statistics.
[55] *Ibid.*

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF DATA WITH PURPOSE

No single actor is able to unlock the full data and analytics potential on their own, and siloed work limits potential and creates unnecessary risks. So, in Spring 2022 we are launching a new campaign to unlock the power of data for a better, greener, and safer future.

The campaign is being led by the UN and World Bank at the highest levels, and supported by the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, which brings together over 600 partners from tech giants, to governments, to grassroots civil society groups.

Through this partnership, we will break down silos and drive collaboration and effectiveness at a global level.

A NEW DATA FINANCING ARCHITECTURE

The global consensus on the need for smarter data investments is growing. In 2021, the UN World Data Forum adopted the Bern Data Compact for the Decade of Action on the Sustainable Development Goals on stronger data systems, capacity, and capital in support of the Cape Town Global Action Plan and the 2030 Agenda. And at the UN High-level Humanitarian Event on Anticipatory Action, global leaders called for increased investment in risk and crisis data.

Over the course of 2021, the UN and World Bank worked with global partners to design two new financing instruments to support coordinated investments at scale and to build systems, not silos.

COMPLEX RISK ANALYTICS FUND

The UN-hosted Complex Risk Analytics Fund (CRAF'd) will support diverse stakeholders in open data ecosystems for crisis anticipation, prevention, and response—grounded in shared principles. Focused on fragile settings, CRAF'd will help secure critical data and insights for faster, more targeted, and dignified support to lives and livelihoods in the moments that matter most. It will build data sets, close data gaps, grow data literacy, develop analytical capacity, and connect silos.

Every year, international partners invest more than $30 billion to respond to urgent needs in fragile and crisis-affected settings. Small investments in better data collection and use will make this money go further and do more. CRAF'd aims to leave no one behind.

> 66 Data plays a crucial role in crisis prevention, in sustainable development and humanitarian action. It is key if we are to fulfill the promises of Agenda 2030. No single state or organization can tackle this problem alone, therefore a collaborative ecosystem is absolutely key."
>
> — Thomas Gass, Ambassador and Assistant Director-General, Swiss Development Cooperation

> ### Box 5: CRAF'd principles for fair, open, inclusive, and responsible approaches
>
> 1. Prioritize the interests of populations in vulnerable situations to leave no one behind in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda and share the conviction that this is only possible with a strong emphasis on broad stakeholder engagement, local capacity building, data/model validation, and expert analysis in the field.
>
> 2. Unite behind the notion that the CRAF'd ecosystem can only be sustainable if partners share risks, burdens, and benefits.
>
> 3. Commit to the responsible use of data, including principles of fairness, transparency, and privacy.
>
> 4. Provide open access to outputs funded by CRAF'd using interoperable and open data standards.
>
> 5. Incentivize data providers to not exclusively rely on financial support from CRAF'd.

GLOBAL DATA FACILITY

The Global Data Facility (GDF) is the new World Bank-hosted fund to support data and statistics priorities at the global, regional, national, and community levels. It is designed to enable exponential improvements of—and strengthen human capacity for—data collection, data management, data governance, data analysis, data sharing, and data use and reuse for transformational social and economic development. The GDF will support investments in both the fundamentals and at the frontier of data and statistics. This includes key support to modernize data systems and tap into a range of new data sources for better decision-making, improved efficiency, and strengthened information integrity at scale.

The GDF is country-led in every sense. It was designed in collaboration with low- and middle-income country partners based on country priorities, including prioritizing flexibility and adaptive approaches, and to serve as the primary implementation mechanism for the Cape Town Global Action Plan, a global declaration that enshrines an optimal national data system.

The GDF has likewise been designed to catalyze significant additional financing and support from across international organizations—including from the World Bank International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/International Development Association (IBRD/IDA) funds, International Monetary Fund, and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development—and to incentivize countries to increase domestic financing for data and statistics systems, infrastructure, institutions, and human capital. For example, the GDF can enable results-based financing, twinning with complementary resources and technical assistance from an array of development partners. The GDF resources could also be used to pay down interest on a World Bank loan for data and data systems transformations (by increasing conces-

sionality and softening IBRD/IDA terms). GDF resources could also support "first mile" collaborative landscape assessments, diagnostics, and reform or strengthen strategies which could also pave the way for a package of IBRD/IDA support for holistic, years-long collaborative implementation and country ownership.

Importantly, the GDF has also been designed to serve as a global coordination mechanism for a spectrum of partners, practitioners, and country clients to join forces in support of the global data revolution.

The GDF will build on and learn lessons from the World Bank's decades of experience as a trusted fiduciary and in the management of global trust funds.
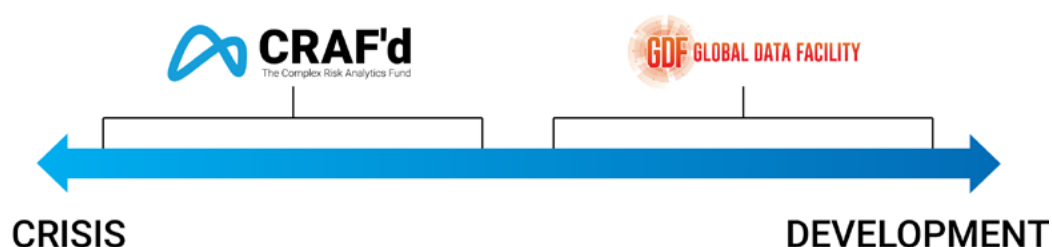

Box 6: GDF: Lessons learned from the management of previous data trust funds

1. Agility in the grants process is key (quick disbursement, simple governance structure).

2. It is important to consider the entire statistical system/systemic support.

3. Completing larger projects is critical.

4. Grants work well to introduce best practices and open engagement.

5. Small grants (less than $500k) can have big impacts and catalytic effects.

6. Enable country ownership early on and continued country commitment.

7. Collaboration with partners is critical.

8. Communications and visibility through building narratives and an evidence base are essential.

COMPLEMENTARITY AND SYNERGY: THE COMPLEX RISK ANALYTICS FUND AND THE GLOBAL DATA FACILITY

A key benefit of this new partnership between the World Bank and UN has been to ensure complementarity in the design and functions of the GDF and the CRAF'd. As a result, both financing mechanisms can leverage the respective comparative advantage of each institution to cover the entire landscape of data-driven country support and systems transformation—from crisis response and humanitarian interventions to scaling up social, economic, and sustainable development. This also enables synergy through new forms of value-creation for fragile, low-income, and middle-income countries.

Both funding mechanisms will be closely coordinated to ensure efficiencies, including in collaboration with the broader UN family, and they will align support as appropriate to enable economies of scale. The ambition of this new partnership is to open the door for more development partners to join this collective, collaborative effort, and to more efficiently and effectively align, allocate, and trigger greater levels of resources and technical support for countries' data priorities.

BUILDING MOMENTUM

Our new campaign is seeking to raise at least $500 million over 10 years to drive investments in a greener, better, and safer future with stronger data. This investment will pay for itself many times over by improving the effectiveness of existing spending and investment by governments, donors, and the private sector. It will also catalyze significant additional spending from the World Bank's lending portfolio and trigger more domestic financing and other investment to fill the world's most critical data gaps.

Joining forces presents development partners with a unique opportunity to not only be at the forefront of a key initiative of global significance, but also improve allocative efficiency and scale the impact of existing resources for countries' data priorities. There is potential, for example, to design GDF window allocations to address targeted regional or thematic priorities, to support global initiatives, and/or to enable experimentation or prototyping to achieve proof of concept and to seek to catalyze complementary resources to scale solutions.

The campaign will kick off with a ministerial level roundtable at the World Bank Spring Meetings co-hosted by the United Nations and World Bank leaders and will culminate in a high-level event at the UN General Assembly in September 2022. We hope you will join us on this exciting journey.