

FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT_CENTRO DE PENSAMIENTO ESTRATÉGICO INTERNACIONAL

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1. Basic Project Information

1.1 Abstract

The calls for the private sector to participate in the data revolution for sustainable development were followed by their public commitments to contribute to the data revolution and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The need for private sector participation was even more critical in developing countries, where most public statistical systems are less developed, and institutions need more capacity. Since the SDGs were agreed upon, there needs to be more documentation or understanding of how far the private sector’s data-related contributions to public policy in the Global South extend and how private sector data contributes to strategic decision-making related to sustainable development, particularly in the regions of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean. No systematic study of contextual factors that might determine success or failure in the Global South has occurred. Therefore, Cepei and LIRNEasia conducted a project to understand the extent to which and how the private sector has contributed to the data revolution, the challenges they face, the enabling factors bringing positive results, and how to scale up. Cepei and LIRNEasia implemented this project to:

- Identify commitments on data actions for sustainable development companies have made in the Global South and document the progress made so far towards their commitments —achieved through a thorough and structured mapping exercise.
- Present the impacts of such data actions, the environment and contextual factors that contributed to the success or failures, the challenges they faced —and how they were overcome, if applicable. Our series of eight case studies is a key tool for this analysis.
- Engage with the private sector, governments, and multilateral organizations to find ways to overcome the identified challenges and replicate the successes. A series of events and engagements through 2023 will anchor this engagement.

Furthermore, the content of this final technical report will traverse the project’s primary achievements, research framework and methodology, along with the lessons learned and significant challenges identified by the research institutions during the entire implementation cycle of the activity, spanning from January 2022 to December 2023.

Keywords: Sustainable development, SDGs, data revolution, data actions, Global South, private sector, Public-private data partnerships, public policy.

2. The Research Problem

A significant shift occurs within the business world. In recent years, environmental, social, and corporate 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 sometimes social metrics becoming necessary in many companies’ annual reporting and 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, the 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 worldwide support public sector institutions in ways that help improve their capacity for evidence-based decision-making. Activities, or ‘[data actions](#),’ range from directly transferring actionable data to the public sector to providing tools or services that help improve the public sector’s ability to capture and utilize insights from data repositories.¹

Examples of public-private data interactions abound. Our *Mapping Private Sector Contributions to the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development: Insights from the Global South report* (“mapping report”)² is based on insights from 394 data actions mapped across 94 countries. What our mapping work uncovered is that there is a vibrant ecosystem of public-private activity around data. However, many disconnects still exist between businesses and governments in this space. Incentives often do not align, the language used to describe and define data actions is vastly different, and the enabling environment for public-private data partnerships is often suboptimal. Lastly, measuring what success should look like in a public-private data partnership remains vague and ill-defined.

Within this context, we launched the *Exploring the Private Sector’s Role in the SDG Data Revolution* project. With just seven years remaining to achieve the SDGs, the project aims to understand how far the companies’ data-related contributions to public policy in the Global South extend.

Our initial project proposed to catalyze companies’ participation in data for development by asking the following research question:

- How have companies contributed to the data revolution, and how do they plan to continue contributing to it in the Global South?

However, once the research started progressing, and still contend that this is broadly the right question, we further refined it following the mapping undertaken last year. The primary research question is

- What are companies doing to make more and better data available to achieve and monitor the SDGs in the Global South?

3. Objectives

From the outset, Cepei and LIRNEasia crafted and orchestrated a series of activities in alignment with programmatic objectives aimed at enhancing the current understanding of the private sector’s involvement and contributions to the data revolution and sustainable development within the Global South. Therefore, Table 1 provides a brief description of both the general outcomes achieved under

¹ 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

² Read the document Mapping Private Sector Contributions to the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development: Insights from the Global South at:

<https://cepei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Mapping-private-sector-contributions-to-the-data-revolution-f-or-sustainable-development.pdf>

each project-specific objective and the degree of fulfillment reached by each component. (Further detailed information on impacts, activities, challenges and lessons learned will be presented within the report's sub-sections of *Projects Activities and Outcomes*, respectively).

Table 1. Project objectives progress

General objective: Catalyze responsible private sector engagement in data for sustainable development in the Global South.

Completed: From its inception, the project was strategically oriented towards comprehending the private sector's engagement and data-driven endeavors to advance the international sustainable development agenda within the Global South. The project unfolded across three distinct phases: i) research, ii) facilitation of advocacy processes, and iii) fostering multi-stakeholder engagement. To do so, by conducting activities such as developing case studies highlighting the positive outcomes of public-private partnerships and disseminating research results on various international platforms.

For instance, with the help of the research hubs, the project identified 394 data initiatives supported or initiated by the private sector across 94 countries. This work generated publicly accessible evidence, raising awareness about the private sector's significant role in advancing the SDGs.

3.1 Identify commitments on data actions for sustainable development (data-sharing, funding, implementing good data governance, or other data-related contributions) that the selected companies have made and document the progress made towards these commitments.

Completed: During the project's first phase, the research partners successfully mapped 394 cases on the different ways companies are supporting public sector data use and governance across five regions. As described in section 4, we have categorized our findings and reflections into four areas: the incentives for data philanthropy, factors that enable successful partnerships, challenges and limitations, and cross-cutting gender issues. All our findings were based on examples mapped in the underlying dataset.

Similarly, to facilitate the dissemination of the data collected throughout the project's research process and provide users with a user-friendly interface for exploring each case study, the project developed an interactive [Tableau-powered visualization](#) tool within the [project's web page](#). This tool compiles descriptive data regarding basic information about the data initiatives implemented by the companies and the resulting impact on specific SDGs.

Moreover, the project's research partners have contributed to disseminating preliminary findings and data collected during the mapping exercises within each region by producing five regional blogs and a synthesized [mapping report](#) (See Annex. 6).

3.2 Produce case studies presenting the impacts of such data actions (i.e., what improved and to what extent, what didn't work), under what conditions (contextual factors that contributed to the success or failures), challenges faced (and how they were overcome, if applicable). Particular attention will be paid to issues of data governance and the extent to which good data governance practices were adopted or used in the case studies

Completed: During the period spanning from July 2022 to mid-2023, the project diligently developed eight case studies (See table 3) with the primary objective of examining policy, capacity, and other factors that pose challenges and hinder the implementation of private sector data actions for attaining and assessing progress towards the SDG's.

In pursuit of a distinctive methodology for evaluating consistent variables and study parameters across the cases, the project formulated a methodological guideline ([See Annex 1](#)) to facilitate the research hubs in implementing a

standardized investigative approach. The project compiled case studies encompassing various data action typologies, company sizes and economic sectors. This comprehensive approach aimed to ensure thorough coverage of the primary contextual and structural challenges confronted by companies in the Global South.

Furthermore, following the comprehensive data-finding process, research institutions produced a set of eight infographics for each case study, offering users clear and concise insights that encapsulate the primary challenges and findings uncovered in each region (See [Annex 6](#)).

3.3 Engage with the private sector (and their representative associations), governments, and multilateral organizations to find ways in which to overcome the identified challenges and to replicate the successes. The work with the stakeholders aims to develop a roadmap that removes identified barriers and scales up data actions.

Completed: During the last phase of the project, we succeeded in promoting and participating in global discussions on data philanthropy and demonstrating the value of public-private partnerships that center on the exchange of data know-how. Events such as the UN World Data Forum in Hangzhou, China; the UN SDG Summit in 2023; the Internet Governance Forum in Kyoto, Japan; the GPSDD Data Festival in Punta del Este, Uruguay; OCEC-PARIS 21 Fall meetings, and the UN Guyana SDG Partnership Forum provided a platform to present the findings and recommendations on an international scale, thus shaping future public-private partnerships with a focus on data-related initiatives. (See table 4).

3.4 Guide stakeholders (funders, governments, private sector organizations) on the gaps in private sector engagement and actions required to bridge the gaps.

Completed: In light of the research process and drawing upon the key findings, research partners developed [recommendations](#). These recommendations are designed to strengthen internal processes and capacities for developing multi-stakeholder data initiatives. Likewise, the presented information fosters cooperative processes and partnerships among stakeholders, including the public sector, private enterprises, civil society, funders, and NGOs, while stimulating private sector engagement and contributions in accelerating progress toward the 2030 SDG agenda.

4. Methodology

Engaging a structured remotely coordinated mapping exercise, as exemplified in the foundation of this research, required balancing regional differences and unique researcher expertise with the need for a degree of standardization that ensures the data collected are comparable between regions. Hence, throughout the project, endeavors were directed at discerning best practices and optimizing data collection procedures for mapping initiatives, with the intent of addressing the subsequent changes:

- i) To enhance the current understanding of local governments and the private sector regarding the progress of public-private data initiatives aimed at both accomplishing and monitoring progress toward the SDGs in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.
- ii) To enhance the identification and overcoming of policy-related barriers, thereby stimulating the design of data initiatives from the private sector within the Global South.
- iii) To engage governments, researchers and the private sector in developing and committing to a roadmap that provides a concrete way forward to removing said barriers and accelerating and scaling up private sector data actions.

The following section outlines the project’s methodology for mapping private sector initiatives along with the design and analysis of the eight case studies, delving into the general challenges encountered by research partners during the development of these activities.

4.1 Mapping of data actions (data sharing, data governance, other actions) by the private sector

Based on the project’s timeline and implementation cycle ([See Annex 2](#)), throughout the first phase of the activity, research partners and coordinator institutions successfully established baseline evidence in an attempt to answer the following research question: What is the private sector doing to make more and better data available to achieve and monitor the SDGs in the Global South?

To achieve this particular objective while balancing regional uniqueness with the need for internationally comparable data, we adopted the following methodological parameters or steps, which are also compelled within the project report *“Mapping Private Sector Contributions to Mapping Data Philanthropy the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development: Insights from the Global South”*³.

4.1.1 To focus the mapping efforts on a subset of SDGs, which included:

1. (4) Quality Education;
2. (5) Gender Equality;
3. (3) Good Health and Wellbeing;
4. (8) Decent Work and Economic Growth;
5. (9) Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure;
6. (11) Sustainable Cities and Communities;
7. (13) Climate Action;
8. (17) Partnerships for the Goals.

By identifying and selecting data initiatives and actions carried out by the private sector on specific subjects of the SDGs, the project focused better resources and time on areas considered urgent and universally comparable.

4.1.2 Standardize and establish key concepts and definitions

During the project’s research and evidence collection phase, we established key concepts to encompass terms within a unified narrative, including concepts like data action, capacity building, and philanthropy, among others. For instance, the project embraced the term “data philanthropy,” originally introduced by UN Global Pulse, which defines collaborations and partnerships between public and private entities sharing data for the public good. Our utilization of this term goes beyond mere “data sharing” to encompass various data-related actions. This usage implies no affiliation between our project and UN Global Pulse or other wider discussions concerning data philanthropy⁴.

³ Read the document Mapping Private Sector Contributions to the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development: Insights from the Global South at:

<https://cepei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Mapping-private-sector-contributions-to-the-data-revolution-f-or-sustainable-development.pdf>

⁴ Idem.

4.1.3 Consistent Core Data Collection with Additional Insights Across Research Hubs

As part of this methodological framework, the project selected different parameters and metrics that could be compared consistently across the five study regions, which included the regional hub collecting and inputting data; The region where the data action(s) took place; Company background information and a brief description of the initiative undertaken; Primary and secondary types of data actions (data sharing, data reporting, etc.)⁵; and the data or information URL source.

4.1.4 Consistent Approaches in Identifying Data Actions Across Research Hubs

As a first step, the research hubs gathered information from primary data sources, which included the SDG compact website, Member State Voluntary National Reports (VNRs), annexes, etc., and government websites. Moreover, researchers leveraged their regional expertise by pursuing familiar leads and introducing an element of randomness through keyword searches and scrutiny of corporate reports, among others. This approach enhanced flexibility and adaptability across the regions, harnessing the regional and local knowledge of the research hubs.

4.2 Case Studies

The case studies showcase examples of successful public-private partnerships and document how companies' data actions have helped public institutions in the Global South respond to significant public policy challenges such as climate change, the promotion of gender equality, increased innovation, and employment opportunities, and digital literacy among others. They examine the factors that have made the partnerships succeed while exploring challenges overcome along the way and lessons that can be learned and replicated elsewhere.

Concerning the project's methodology for identifying and selecting cases, a methodological framework was devised during the initial phase to establish a unified analytical structure spanning various regions ([See Annex 1](#)). Simultaneously, each research hub created case studies through key interviews with selected companies. This approach aimed to gather evidence regarding the operational environment of these companies, the data actions and initiatives they engaged in, and the challenges impacting the progress of those actions.

4.2.1 Methodological challenge

From the standpoint of conducting these case studies in-house, we encountered challenges in two distinct domains. Firstly, it proved to be exceptionally challenging to identify companies willing to engage in this study, even though clear affiliations existed with well-established and esteemed international development research centers and funding entities. Secondly, national political dynamics exerted a direct influence on the companies' capacity and caused delays in the process.

5. Project Activities

⁵ 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

The project’s implementation process comprised three distinct categories of activities. In the initial two phases, research partners conducted i) desk-based research, ii) undertook information-gathering exercises through semi-structured interviews, and iii) conducted data analysis to generate comprehensive insights into private data governance practices and public-private initiatives contributing to the SDGs. Subsequently, during the project’s final phase, the activities centered on enhancing stakeholder engagement and advocacy endeavors to disseminate and broaden awareness regarding the private sector’s pivotal role in the data revolution and sustainable development.

Moreover, while identifying valuable lessons from activity management and implementation, the project fostered seamless communication channels between the research hubs and coordinating organizations. The principal objective was to facilitate evidence generation by developing methodological tools and to enhance program-related endeavors to ensure timely completion. Likewise, the necessity of pre-establishing corporate networks before embarking on case studies was recognized. This was instrumental in securing access to reliable data and strengthening the research processes.

The next section of the report will outline the activities conducted along with the challenges encountered and lessons learned during its implementation.

5.1 Mapping Private Sector Contributions to the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development

Leveraging the project’s methodological framework tailored for a comprehensive mapping of the private sector’s role in sustainable development and public data actions between May and December 2022, we successfully addressed efforts to produce the following results. First, we developed five regional blogs (See [Annex 6](#)) introducing region-specific findings; second, we created a consolidated [mapping report](#) that not only summarized the project’s initial research outcomes but also detailed the methodological guidelines applied by the research hubs.

Additionally, a dedicated web page was established to host our research findings, featuring an embedded interactive [Tableau-powered visualization tool](#). This tool was designed to aid users in navigating the 394 mapped data actions.

5.1.1 Mapping report findings: An overview

As noted in section 4, the data within our project’s online repository are generally comparable among the five regions. For a comprehensive examination of the interplay between variables, please refer to the [online repository](#).

Table 2 provides an overview of the comprehensive count of identified cases categorized by region and further delineates the proportion of cases attributed to individual countries. Some of the most significant findings include:

- Data sharing was companies’ most common data action to support governments, with one hundred forty-eight (148) mapped, 36,7% of the total.

Category	Total	% of total
Total data actions mapped	394	
Data actions per region		
• Latin America	75	19 %
• The Caribbean	26	6,6%
• MENA	134	34%
• Asia	111	28,2%
• Africa	48	12,2%
Total companies identified	270	
Companies per region		
• Latin America	40	15,6%
• The Caribbean	15	5,6%
• MENA	89	33,0%
• Africa	29	10,7%
• Asia	95	35,2%
Types of data actions		
• Data sharing	80	43%
• Impact assessments/ measurement	38	20,5%
	2	1%

Table 2. Findings in numbers

- Capacity building was the second most common support area, with fifty-five 55 mapped, 17,5% of the total.
- Funding was the least common data action area, with just one example, which was 0,4% of the total.
- SDG 13 on Climate Action was the most common thematic area, with seventy-nine (79) mapped examples.
- Conversely, SDG 15, Life on Land, was the least common thematic area for partnerships, with just six mapped examples.

We categorized our findings into four areas:

1. Incentives for data philanthropy
2. Factors that enable successful partnerships
3. Challenges and limitations
4. Cross-cutting gender issues.

5.1.2 Incentives for Private Sector Involvement in Data Philanthropy

Our mapping exercise indicated that incentives for data philanthropy are similar across the global south. Two threads for companies' engagement emerged from the mapping exercise.

Firstly, our research indicates that many companies engaged in data philanthropy still require external incentives to do so. Secondly, several researchers noted that a further incentive for companies to engage in data philanthropy in emerging markets appeared to be the opportunity to promote their proprietary services and intellectual property.

The findings and reflections on incentives offer insights into the structural realities and constraints of the data revolution for sustainable development. They point to the fact that for many private sector actors, engagement with public authorities in emerging markets is still primarily driven by

- a) A desire to capture a market share for their products and services in those countries
- b) An aversion to the risks of engaging in emerging markets without the security and certainty of external financing and support; and
- c) A preference to invest their resources and brand in an already established, structured initiative facilitated by an external, reputable convenor, thus providing them with a ready business case with specific goals, objectives, and timelines and reduced risks.

From the perspective of the data revolution community, these insights raise essential questions about the enabling economic, political, and regulatory environment that is necessary to reduce companies' perceived levels of risk to a point at which they would be prepared to initiate public interest data partnerships, alongside their core investments and business operations in the Global South.

5.1.3 Factors that enable successful partnerships

Researchers across all regions identified three common factors that enable successful public-private data partnerships.

First, engaged convenors and partnership brokers are critical enablers within the data revolution ecosystem. Second, coalitions within data philanthropy often rally around specific ‘pain points’ or common challenges. For example, several regions identified COVID-19 as a whole-of-society challenge that created a clear need and opportunity to consolidate data partnerships. The degree to which those partnerships materialized varied considerably across and within regions. In some regions, the pandemic exposed the weaknesses of public sector data systems. Thirdly, the final common factor that emerged from our research is that technology companies with a global reach are more likely to engage in data philanthropy.

5.1.4 Challenges and limitations

A common limitation identified across all regions’ mapping efforts related to how the private sector documents its support to initiatives designed to tackle issues that they deem to be of public importance –for instance, companies’ contributions to reducing carbon emissions– versus support that can be classed as data philanthropy.

A further observation across all regions is that “there is little evidence that data actions are being implemented or used at any significant scale, let alone that the impact of any such actions is being tracked.” (Abed Khooli, Birzeit). This observation raises the issue of public sector institutions’ role in providing supporting frameworks and *translating* companies’ contributions into public policy language. This remains a serious gap. It also feeds a further limitation: the duplication of efforts and lack of coordination over how companies’ data philanthropy is delivered and used by public sector institutions.

Our mapping exercise has shown that there is often a sudden cliff edge in the availability of information and data about specific public-private data partnerships following their initial announcement. Regular updates on progress, developments, and impact are severely lacking, making measuring success and impact in many instances impossible.

5.1.5 Gender Considerations in Data Philanthropy

The most important observation regarding gender in data philanthropy is the extent to which it is absent. The overwhelming majority of mapped data actions did not mention gender issues. The overwhelming majority of mapped data actions did not disaggregate data by gender.

5.2 Regional Case Studies

As reported in section 4, to further explore the issues addressed in this project and discover how the mechanisms inherent in public-private data partnerships work, we analyzed eight case studies (See Table 3 below) that provide examples of public-private data partnerships in late 2022 and early 2023. Based on our [mapping report](#), the case studies illustrate how companies’ data initiatives can significantly contribute to addressing vital public policy challenges in the Global South. In addition, the identified challenges encompass multifaceted issues such as climate change mitigation, the

advancement of gender equality, the enhancement of employment prospects, and the promotion of digital literacy, among others⁶.

Furthermore, through our case studies, we have further developed and refined the themes identified in our mapping report and proposed recommendations based on them. The five overarching [findings](#) from our case studies were:

- There is a real-world value 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 does 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.

5.2.1. Case Studies Summary

Aligned with the methodological framework defined in our eight case studies, the allocation of cases among research partners in each region is as follows: Three hailing from Latin America and the Caribbean, two from Asia, two from Africa, and one from the Middle East and North Africa. Table 3 offers an extensive overview of each case, encompassing their geographical origin, business type, executed data actions, and the contributions fostered by the corresponding public-private initiatives toward specific areas of the SDGs. Moreover, this chart also features direct hyperlinks to each case study, ensuring a concise and compelling narrative accessible to a broader audience:

Table 3. Case Studies Summary

Key Elements	Cepei	LIRNEasia	Birzeit University	University of the West Indies	Local Development Research Institute
Case of study and Hyperlinks:	Dymaxion Labs: Satellite Imagery for the Public Good.	Microsoft's Support to the Public Sector in Asia.	The Opportunities and Challenges of Using Meta's Data for Good Products in MENA.	Trust for the Americas' Role in Catalysing Public-Private Initiatives in the Caribbean.	Improving Sub-National Spatial Data Analytics in Kenya Through Public-Private Initiatives
Business size	Satellite imagery	Transnational	Transnational	Regional	Transnational

⁶ Read the document: Eight cases showing progress on public-private data partnerships for the SDGs in the Global South, in: <https://cepei.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Progress-on-public-private-data-partnerships-for-the-SDGs-in-the-Global-South.pdf>

	provider				
Business type	National	Digital services	Social media	NGO	Telco
Country/ies	Argentina	Regional, multiple countries	Global, focus on MENA	Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad	Kenya
SDG sector	SDG 1 and 11	SDGs 4,8,13,16	SDG 3, 5, 13, 17	SDG 4, 5, 8,17	SDG 3
Data actions	Big data analysis AI and computer vision to analyze geospatial data	Data analysis Data reporting Data visualization Data sharing	Data sharing	Data capacity building Data analytics Data sharing	Data sharing Data analysis
Case of study and Hyperlinks:	Using Retail Scanner Data to Estimate CPI in Chile	Pulse Lab Jakarta's Role Catalysing Public-Private Initiatives in Asia.			Accelerating Development of Improved Cowpea Varieties Through Artificial Intelligence and Drone Data.
Business size	National	Accelerator	N/A	N/A	National
Business type	Retail	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Country/ies	Chile	Indonesia	N/A	N/A	Ghana
SDG sector	SDG 8, 17	SDG 8,11,13,17	N/A	N/A	SDG 12
Data actions	Data sharing	Data analysis Data reporting Data visualization Data sharing	N/A	N/A	Big data analysis AI Data collection

5.2.2 Challenges identified

During the case study development, we identified common challenges that hinder the consolidation of public-private partnerships, regardless of geographical region or research context. As detailed in section 4.2.1, we also encountered difficulties in identifying companies willing to participate and share relevant information on the data actions they have conducted. These barriers were influenced by their stance on collaborative initiatives with think tanks and the absence of structural and contextual incentives to motivate their engagement in such research endeavors.

Therefore, our [outcomes report](#) summarizes the key findings stemming from the case studies and delineates the challenges associated with forging public-private partnerships for the development of data initiatives:

- 1) **Limited or non-existent data collaboration:** While there is an abundance of data and numerous initiatives, a noteworthy absence of data collaborations between public and private sector persists. Companies often focus on reporting their individual SDG impact through data collection and analysis.
- 2) **The Private Sector needs an SDG 2030 Agenda focus:** Although many data initiatives impact the SDGs, they have not been designed as contributions to the 2030 Agenda but to sustainable development in general. The 2030 Agenda needs greater awareness and positioning in the private sector.
- 3) **Challenges in the Public Sector for Interpreting and Monitoring Private Sector Contributions:** In the Global South, governments often face constraints in their ability to monitor and document data actions carried out by companies effectively, let alone the comprehensive assessment of their impact on a significant scale.
- 4) **Lack of Public Incentives and Government Legal Frameworks:** In a broader context, regions need legislative frameworks that facilitate enhanced collaboration between public and private sectors in generating and sharing data, thereby enriching the data sources for general statistics.

5.3 Stakeholder Engagement and Advocacy

As part of the project’s advocacy strategy, we designed a [social media toolkit](#) to effectively disseminate the project’s key messages and main findings while promoting broad awareness about public-private data partnerships’ role in advancing SDG progress in the Global South. This toolkit harmonized the project’s communicational content into a singular narrative, emphasizing the main findings identified by regional hubs during the implementation phase.

As illustrated in Table 4, through multi-stakeholder events at global fora, the project successfully presented the findings and recommendations and influenced future public-private partnerships centered on data actions:

Table 4. Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement activities summary

Event	session in which members of the project participate	Description
UN World Data Forum, April 2023 (Hangzhou, China)	Demonstrating the Power of Private Sector Data for Sustainable Development	In the framework of the 2023 UNWDF, held in Hangzhou, China, in April 2023, Cepei hosted a session (April 25) to present research data findings from our landmark regional mapping and eighth select case studies with companies, despite the challenging time differences. Cepei managed to convene 32 participants from 12 countries who became part of the urgent discussion on the use and value of public and private data partnerships for decision-making. For further information, see here .
UN SDG Summit - General Assembly September 2023	1. SDG Summit 2023	1) During the SDG summit, Cepei and its research partners actively participated in various sessions to disseminate the project’s findings and enhance understanding of the private

(New York, USA)	<p>2. Unleashing the Power of Data for Sustainable Development</p> <p>3. Alliance Action Forum on the side-lines of UNGA 78, 2023</p>	<p>sector's role in furthering the 2030 Agenda. For further information, see here.</p> <p>2) On the sidelines of the SDG Summit on September 18, 2023, Cepei, PARIS 21, Open Data Watch, the Global Partnership For Sustainable Development Data and SDSN TRenDS presented the Data Action Plan to 2030 in which they set out their vision for a roadmap to harness the transformative potential of data for the SDGs. The discussions centered around three priority areas outlined in the Data Action Plan: i) Scaling up/diversifying funding, ii) Connecting data with the digital agenda and iii) domestic and national level prioritization.</p> <p>3) The Alliance Action Forum was an annual meeting organized by the World Benchmark Alliance, set within the multi-lateral context of UNGA. During the event, Cepei highlighted the primary outcomes and recommendations from the project's eight case studies in South America and the Caribbean.</p>
18th annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, October 2023 (Kyoto, Japan)	<p>Public-Private Data Partnerships in the Global South</p>	<p>Cepei and LIRNEasia presented the research findings and their experiences related to pre-conditions for data sharing and public-private data partnerships, as well as the challenges that limited the success of partnerships. This included challenges such as complying with privacy requirements of data protection laws, the lack of institutional capacities to develop partnerships, the absence of operational procedures that facilitate data sharing at a technical level, and differing incentives for various stakeholders. See a summary of the session here.</p>
GPSDD Data Festival, November 2023 (Punta del Este Uruguay)	<p>1) Countdown to 2030: A new vision for the data revolution</p> <p>2) D4D LATAM & Caribbean Side event: ILDA and CEPEI</p> <p>3) Inclusive Data Partnerships for the 2030 agenda</p>	<p>1) Organized by Cepei and partners, the session offered a panel discussion on key Data Action Plan to 2030 areas such as gender, poverty, multi-stakeholder partnerships and private sector engagement within the vision of this new initiative for accelerating the 2030 agenda.</p> <p>2) Work meeting led by Cepei and Iniciativa Latinoamerica de Datos Abiertos (ILDA) with representatives from IDRC, D4D and GDB. During the session, Cepei presented the project's evolution for the next 24 months, which will focus on three tracks: a) an evidence-based consolidation track, lessons learned and research track, and active facilitation and co-learning track</p> <p>3) Organized by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Cepei shared a civil society perspective on national data partnerships, while highlighting links to other initiatives and opportunities such as the Data Action Plan and the 2024 World Data Forum.</p>
PARIS21 Fall Meetings 2023	<p>Work session with PARIS21 Board Members</p>	<p>Cepei presented the main milestones and strategic events leading up to the launch of the Data Action Plan to 2030, along with the results and relevance of the private sector's role in the 2030 SDGs agenda.</p>
UN Guyana SDG Partnership Forum	<p>UN Guyana SDG Partnership Forum</p>	<p>During this work session, partner organization, University of the West Indies (UWI), presented the research findings and their</p>

		<p>experiences related to pre-conditions for data sharing and public-private data partnerships, as well as the challenges that limited the success of partnerships, this included the common challenges identified during the mapping exercises.</p>
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6. Project Outputs

The outputs delineated in [Annex 6](#) substantially reinforced both internal and organizational processes throughout the project cycle. To illustrate, the methodological tools wielded by implementing partners empowered research processes by enabling the parameterization and formulation of research problems tailored to the specific features of each region. Furthermore, engagement in multilateral platforms afforded the research centers the opportunity to showcase their capabilities and establish strategic contacts via networking initiatives.

6.1 Lessons Learned

Based on inputs from participants involved in the [project's assessment](#), the following lessons learned summarize insights and experiences gathered by project partners throughout the project's research and advocacy phases. Likewise, the ensuing lessons encapsulate the primary insights and potential pathways for enhancing the development of future projects employing the same methodology as employed in our project.

- **In a multi-regional project, it is imperative to cultivate a common understanding of the main research subjects from the project's inception.** While the project has made efforts to create a methodological framework intended to consolidate the case studies into a coherent narrative, the input from assessment participants underscores the necessity for a more comprehensive synthesis of the research scope applied and implemented by the project's research hubs. This is an ongoing process of continual adaptation and realignment due to the differing contextual factors inherent in each region. As a result, project coordination plays a pivotal role in proposing a unified research subject and scope, thus harmonizing the interests of all project partners.
- **Enhancing the Visibility of Public-Private Data Initiatives through Research Processes:** The project successfully disseminated the case studies' findings in different multilateral scenarios (see section 5.3). Nevertheless, to promote greater engagement of companies in fostering data actions for sustainable development, project evaluation participants deem it essential to raise public awareness regarding the importance and contributions of this type of action towards accelerating the SDGs. This, in turn, aims to facilitate knowledge-sharing processes between the private and public sectors, laying the groundwork for implementing incentives (legal or structural) to foster the development of data actions.
- **Enhancing Private Sector Engagement for Data-Driven SDG Projects:** While the project successfully engaged in multilateral discussion scenarios, such as the SDG summit and the World Data Forum, the project evaluation results unveiled limited involvement in private sector-led venues. Thus, for future forthcoming projects focused on assessing private sector contributions through data actions to the SDGs, it is crucial that implementing organizations proactively encourage companies' involvement by designing activities such as

i) Structuring knowledge-sharing initiatives involving non-traditional institutional actors, such as chambers of commerce; ii) Increase the project's active participation in business forums or platforms established by companies and; iii) Conducting capacity-development activities directed towards public sector institutions to enhance their capacities to collect and monitor data-related actions conducted by companies.

- **Balancing Project Timelines and Regional Contexts:** In multi-regional projects, it is crucial to recognize how challenges related to public information access can affect research data gathering processes in different regions and countries. This understanding is particularly vital during the project's implementation phase given the significant difficulty in identifying companies willing to participate in the study, even though solid connections exist with well-established and esteemed international development research centers and funders.
- **Communication as an Essential Coordination Tool in Multi-Regional Projects:** The project evaluation participants emphasized the significance of communication between project partners and coordinators in facilitating the development of activities. To enhance the design of technical and interim reports along with conceptual notes, among others, we established effective communication channels that enabled us to promptly identify key challenges, refine our methodology, and seize opportunities for improvement throughout the research process.

As one interviewee stated, "The project's communication flow and channels were centralized within the project coordination. As a research center situated in a different region, we greatly benefited from ongoing feedback and methodological support provided by LIRNEasia and Cepei, as they remained attuned to the barriers and distinct challenges we encountered in accessing information during the case study development."

7. Project Outcomes

The project's implementation activities yielded outcomes categorized into two overarching subjects: research and stakeholder engagement and advocacy. These focal areas aimed to enhance governments and private sector understanding of the challenges and the progress of private sector data initiatives in Asia, Africa, and South America and the Caribbean towards SDG achievement and monitoring. Therefore, the following section underscores the project's key research and policy contributions, along with recommendations to promote sustainable public-private data partnerships.

7.1 Research Impacts

Based on our in-depth regional case studies findings and mapping endeavors, we developed a set of [recommendations](#) for key constituents, including partners in public-private data initiatives, multilateral bodies and the UN, funders and donors, think tanks, and civil society. The recommendations encompass a range of strategies aimed at fostering private sector engagement within the data revolution ecosystem and sustainable development, including the proactive participation of companies within multilateral forums or platforms such as the UN's [Global Compact](#) initiative or the design by governments of public incentives to foster knowledge and data sharing actions with private entities.

For instance, in terms of policy processes, our findings stress the need for local governments to consider regional nuances and local context when formulating public-private data initiatives for sustainable development. This entails the development of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) that address data-sharing security measures for companies and the development of standardized statistical procedures for data collection within institutional databases. Moreover, as registered in section 6.1, public authorities should cooperate with local chambers of commerce, statistics offices, and companies to create registries for public-private initiatives, including data-related projects, to monitor progress toward SDGs.

Similarly, the UN's [Global Compact](#) initiative, a prominent action in the realm of corporate sustainability, serves as a fundamental platform for cataloging initiatives related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including collaborations involving public-private data initiatives. To enhance its monitoring capabilities, we propose the development of an "initiative tracker" for comprehensive coverage of diverse public-private initiatives, particularly in the realm of data, spanning from local to global levels. This entails collaborating between the UN Global Compact and the UN Statistics Division to explore the feasibility of a standardized statistical module for public-private SDG initiatives, ensuring comprehensive and standardized global data collection. Moreover, synchronization with the [UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology](#) and the evolving [UN Digital Compact](#) process is imperative. This would incorporate suitable tools for capturing data on the scope and nature of public-private data and digital initiatives, ensuring public accessibility.

Our recommendations also underscore the importance of engaging civil society, think tanks, and researchers in conducting research to bridge knowledge gaps, contributing to the development of training materials, and offering open-source guidance. This collaborative effort is instrumental in enhancing the design and implementation of public-private data initiatives.

Finally, as documented in Section 6, the project confronted distinct phases in acquiring information, prompting required adaptations in the research process. Given the multi-regional foundation of our research scope, it became crucial to tailor our approach to the unique dynamics of each region. This adjustment was essential to uphold the quality of the information and data evidence, thus demanding the formulation of a cohesive methodological framework.

7.1 Advocacy and Stakeholder Engagement Impacts

Since the project's inception and throughout its implementation, we harmonized all research endeavors with advocacy and stakeholder engagement actions. In pursuit of this objective, Cepei, LIRNEasia and research partners proactively participated in several multi-stakeholder platforms (see Table 4) to disseminate the key findings from the eight case studies and mapping initiatives. Moreover, our involvement in such forums was driven by the dual purpose of fostering engagement within the global data community and inspiring government interest in the private sector's role in measuring and achieving the SDGs.

For instance, In January 2023, Cepei was invited to present our project's mapping findings and emerging themes at ECLAC's Community of Practice on Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for Latin American and Caribbean countries. The Community is the main regional peer platform for the 2030 Agenda implementation and VNRs. Organized by ECLAC and the UN Global Compact, this meeting

centered on the role of the private sector in said themes. Cepei presented to more than 100 participants from 24 countries.

Thus, the project's active engagement in prominent events, including the 2023 United Nations World Data Forum, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit, and the Data Festival, played a foundational role in catalyzing support for the [Data Action Plan to 2030](#)⁷. This roadmap developed by a global coalition will address the unfinished business of harnessing the Data Revolution to achieve the SDGs within the next six years. To this end, we are coordinating and co-creating a process with various stakeholders across the data revolution space to produce a Data Action Plan that establishes what success for the Data Revolution looks like in 2030 and suggests evidence-informed recommendations to help achieve that vision of success. The Data Action Plan will reflect progress, concerns, and opportunities from the grassroots to the global level.

Finally, a crucial lesson in advocacy stresses the importance of utilizing corporate platforms led by companies to enhance private sector involvement in data-driven sustainable development initiatives. While disseminating project outcomes in multilateral spaces remains essential, future projects should focus on creating strategies that engage companies, such as corporate social responsibility strategies or initiatives that elevate the visibility of the data actions they spearhead.

8. Overall Assessment and Recommendation

The project primarily engaged in research activities with a central focus on producing novel, readily accessible, and pragmatic evidence to enhance the understanding of civil society, public stakeholders, and non-governmental organizations concerning the involvement of companies and their contributions via data-driven actions in furthering the objectives of the 2030 agenda. Consequently, the mapping endeavors of various initiatives, coupled with the execution of case studies in the project's designated priority regions, played a crucial role as knowledge-generation actions aimed at enhancing public policy processes and offering recommendations for promoting public-private partnerships.

Moreover, as mentioned in section 6.1 and by the [project's assessment](#) participants, the process of planning, implementing, and monitoring activities within a multi-regional project presented notable challenges. These challenges were compounded by various factors, including internal deadlines, divergent research methodologies, distinct regional characteristics, and structural obstacles that hindered the timely access to critical information. Nonetheless, certain elements, notably a high degree of coordination, dependable communication channels, and the development of participatory methodologies that harmonized the interests of all research centers, served to alleviate the challenges encountered throughout the project's lifecycle.

Recommendations for IDRC

Finally, based on previous reports we recommend:

- Support from IDRC in finding synergies with data initiatives supported by IDRC like the Data for Development Network -D4D- and connect mapping initiatives.

⁷ For further information on the Data Action Plan to 2030 initiative see Annex 5.

- Facilitating connections as we head into the LAC SDG Regional Forum (April, Santiago de Chile), High-Level Political Forum (July, NYC), the Future of the Summit (September, NYC), UNWDF 2024 (November, Medellín, Colombia).
- Supporting connecting with companies, as needed and if appropriate (see section 6.1).
- Support the systematization and dissemination of best practices among data practitioners.