What is the Open Algorithms (OPAL) project?

The Open Algorithms (OPAL) project is a socio-technological innovation to leverage private sector data for public good purposes by “sending the code to the data” in a privacy preserving, predictable, participatory, scalable and sustainable manner.

It has two main objectives:

- providing a far better picture of human reality to official statisticians, policymakers, planners, businesses, and citizens,
- while enabling greater inclusion and inputs of all members of societies on the kinds and uses of analyses performed on data about themselves.

OPAL, developed by a consortium composed of DataPop Alliance, Imperial College London, the MIT Media Lab, Orange and the World Economic Forum, builds on years of work of this group and others, and is a key milestone towards realizing a vision where data is at the heart of societal development around the globe, in support of the UN Sustainable Developments Goals and democracy.

How can Open Algorithms strengthen statistical capacity?

The vision is to strengthen the accuracy, timeliness and reliability of key development indicators and statistics of relevance for an array of users.

- Unlocking the potential of private data for public good, improving long-term decision-making and support tactical operations
- Leveraging the value of open-source, agile and scalable technologies
- Addressing multiple privacy and security challenges
- Catalyzing a vibrant and inclusive local data ecosystem
- Strengthening accountability and accuracy for the ethical use of data

How will Open Algorithms work?

OPAL’s core will consist of an open suite of softwares and open algorithms providing access to statistical information extracted from anonymized, secured and formatted data. These algorithms, accessed by an API, will be run on OPAL servers of partner companies, behind their firewalls. The project will start with APIs to access indicators such as population density, mobility, approximations of poverty indices, or literacy rate based on mobile data from telecom operators as well as a library of certified open algorithms to extract these indicators in a governed and trustworthy manner.