MOBILISING DATA FOR THE SDGS:

HOW COULD A DATA ACCELERATION FACILITY HELP, AND HOW MIGHT IT WORK?

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PARIS21 DISCUSSION PAPER Nº. 15

JANUARY 2019
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This work was commissioned by PARIS21. Generous support was provided by the Swiss Confederation.

1 Respectively, Senior Research Officer and Senior Research Associate, ODI. The authors are grateful for the helpful comments provided by Annalisa Prizzon, Rolando Avendano, Johannes Jütting and Barbara Baredes. We are also grateful for suggestions provided anonymously by many expert interviewees. This work was commissioned by PARIS21. Neither PARIS21 nor ODI bears responsibility for any errors of fact or interpretation, which is solely the authors’. 
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**Please cite this publication as:**
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Executive Summary

This note considers options for systemic improvements in the global funding of data for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including the rationale, scope and organisation of a “Data Acceleration Facility”. Two questions motivate it. First, as the OECD Development Co-operation Report 2017 has thoroughly documented, to implement and monitor the SDGs more and better data are urgently needed, yet statistical and administrative systems, in particular in poor countries, have been seriously underfunded for years: how might a new funding approach help close this gap? Secondly, other thematic initiatives in areas like health, education and the environment have demonstrated that mechanisms like Global Funds can successfully support both resource mobilization and the drive for results: is this a good option for data also?

The paper builds on and develops in more detail a recent report requested by the UN Statistical Commission on the financing of the Cape Town Global Action Plan (CTGAP) for sustainable development data and associated work of the High Level Group on Partnership, Co-operation and Capacity-Building (HLG-PCCB).

We estimate the costs for the implementation of CTGAP for 144 low- and middle-income countries to sum to $5.6 billion per year. Developing country governments are assumed to cover over three-quarters of this, or $4.3 billion, from their own resources, including an assumed 50% share for low-income countries, ambitious by historical standards. The remaining gap of $1.3 billion is left for external assistance providers. If entirely covered by “traditional” donors this implies doubling the current data share of official development assistance, from 0.33% to 0.7%.

The funding landscape for development data today exhibits many of the systemic challenges of development finance more widely, and some in more acute form. Quantitatively we note the relatively high share of domestic resources, as in health and education. Official assistance is a minority partner, except in low-income contexts. It is also widely spread across investments in other thematic areas, like health, and concentrated on relatively few (proximate) donors: five, of which four are multilaterals, supply two-thirds, with a very “long tail” for all the rest. Philanthropy has a higher share of data funding than do official providers. Loan financing is more frequent than in education or health, and slightly higher than for aid on average.

Qualitatively, development data faces a lack of political awareness, and low visibility in country as well as internationally-linked to insufficient understanding of uses to which better data could be put. Second, there is high aid fragmentation, as many activities consist of small-sized technical assistance, often in kind, with poor harmonisation across providers. Third, there is poor alignment to national priorities, due both to multiple donor reporting requirements and excessive emphasis on data instruments over underlying systems-building. Finally, assistance for development data is as likely to be unpredictable, unsustainable and non-transparent as aid provider performance is in general.
We used these broad lenses to review different data funding types, channels and modalities. The plausibly first-best choice is *domestic public finance*, due to its inherent stability and alignment, and generally positive links to political awareness. Nonetheless, there may be disincentives for governments to invest if better data strengthens the hand of their critics. *Global Funds* are also valid tools, based on the experience in health in particular, especially given their advantages in terms of results focus and transparency. These benefits however depend on specific institutional design choices, which cannot be taken for granted. Also relatively favoured options are *pooled multi-donor trust funds (MDTF)*, like those hosted by the World Bank, the IMF and the UN in the data area for years. Integration within their hosts’ structures and procedures has been known to create some tensions and rigidities however.

There are some recent *hybrid possibilities*, especially “Financing Facilities” which also act as a convening mechanism to improve the fit of existing sources of support around country compacts, and to service a larger multi-stakeholder partnership. One exemplar is the Global Financing Facility (GFF) for (maternal and child) health, established under the mandate of Every Woman Every Child, hosted by the World Bank, and just recently replenished. This also seeks to leverage both additional long-term domestic resources and development bank loans for its core goals. More recently, the Data to End Hunger Initiative, still under development, brings together several actors including national governments, UN specialised agencies, the World Bank, and foundations around innovative, solution-driven data collection in support of struggling subsistence farmers.

The headline aim of a comprehensive funding response at global, cross-sectoral level could be to help *close the SDG data gap for countries and population groups otherwise left behind*, for which specific time-bound metrics need to be developed (e.g. X countries able to deliver Y results by year Z) and tailored to different country contexts. A complementary aim could be *transforming the delivery of essential services to citizens*. Its four development effectiveness aims could be to: raise political demand for development data; improve alignment to national priorities; improve donor co-ordination around them; and speed up access to finance at scale for promising investments.

Within this framework, we envisage a pooled Data Acceleration Facility (DAF) with two distinct windows. The main one would provide *match funding for national data capacity* within accredited nationally owned multi-year investment plans, produced by country platforms, with clear end-use objectives and results metrics, and an element of peer review. This would support both domestic resource mobilisation, where feasible, and additional concessional lending and other external assistance. Funding would cover a wide basket of both local and foreign inputs. Eligibility could be limited to specific country groups, and/or the maximum match funding shares could vary by country income and other criteria. A second window would provide *seed money for data innovation and new partnerships*, which could subsequently be brought to scale, subject to independent review, project preparation leading to larger funding on a loan or grant basis, as well as “smart funding” to encourage that scaling up.

PARIS21, as the permanent issue partner for the HLG-PCCB, is well placed to play a significant role in both the CTGAP and DAF implementation arrangements, especially around national data investment design. It has valuable assets in terms of legitimacy, technical knowledge,
and coordination experience to bring to the table, in conjunction and close co-operation with the Facility’s secretariat. With its technical tools to assess the support for statistics and identify data gaps for policymaking, and its assessments on capacity development, PARIS21 could help ensure a light touch donor co-ordination at the country level and avoid duplication and fragmentation.

There are several possible options for hosting and governance of the DAF, based on such specifications, and respecting the overarching mandate of the UN Statistical Commission. In practice, only two realistically emerge from the above analysis: (1) an MDTF hosted by a major multilateral agency and accountable to stakeholders via a fully representative Steering Committee, or (2) a freestanding DAF institution with its own board, including adequate representation of the same groups of actors.

We also agree with the current report to the UNSC that only a World Bank hosting sub-option under (1) fully takes “advantage of the institutional set-up and experiences dealing with large financial mechanisms as well as leverage of the institution’s operational capability and provide unique access to ministers of finance”, so set aside alternative hosting options within the UN system.

In Option 1, the Steering Committee would have oversight of DAF strategy and policy, including guidelines for proposal assessment, but would ideally delegate the assessment itself to an independent panel and the World Bank-led Secretariat, to avoid politicising the approval process. The panel could be constituted from rosters managed by existing partnerships e.g. PARIS21, subject to UNSC oversight. In option 1, existing MDTFs for data managed by the World Bank would also be progressively folded into the DAF.

In favour of the first option are its relatively low set-up costs, and the already-mentioned proximity to World Bank country operations, its wider financing capability, and high-level dialogue with national governments. Possible disadvantages include the relative rigidity of some World Bank procedures when dealing with small and/or non-governmental project implementers, the risks of tensions between the Secretariat and Steering Committee, and the risk of the Facility being distracted from its wider aims by becoming too tied to World Bank operations.

Option 2 would see a new independent body set up as a non-profit foundation under the laws of a host nation, such as Switzerland in the cases of Gavi and the Global Fund (GFATM). The voices of the main groups of stakeholders then get hard-wired into the composition of the (manageably sized) Board. The World Bank could still perform discrete financial management tasks as Trustee, and have a Board seat, but would no longer participate significantly in proposal selection, hiring of staff etc. The main advantages of such a route would be, arguably, its potentially greater global visibility, and flexibility from having a “blank sheet of paper” for its Facility operations. There may also be a lower (real or perceived) risk of bias toward World-Bank-led operations as such. However, start-up costs and delays could be prohibitive, and the Option 1 advantages of proximity to the Bank would be lost or seriously reduced.
1. Purpose, methodology and structure

This paper considers options for systemic improvements in the global funding of data for development, required to achieve the Cape Town Global Action Plan for sustainable development data (CTGAP). It includes analysis of the rationale, scope and organisation of a possible new pooled funding mechanism, which we provisionally title the Data Acceleration Facility (DAF)”. Two questions motivate it. First, as the OECD Development Co-operation Report 2017 has thoroughly documented, to implement and monitor the SDGs more and better data is urgently needed. However, statistical and administrative systems, in particular in poor countries, have been seriously underfunded for decades to deliver such outcomes: how might new funding approaches and mechanisms help close this gap? Second, other thematic initiatives in areas like health, education and the environment have demonstrated that mechanisms like Global Funds can successfully support both resource mobilization and the drive for results: is this a good option for data also?

This paper builds on two related work streams. First, it refers to our previous work, published as PARIS21 Discussion Paper No 14, on recent costings and financing gaps associated with different scenarios and coverage of the CTGAP. We also assessed the current landscape of domestic and external financing in this area and the strengths and weaknesses of the main instruments deployed to date vis-à-vis the main challenges for funding of statistical capacity, and summarised lessons from global funds operating in other thematic areas. This analysis was discussed in an experts meeting hosted by the Partnership for Statistics in the 21st Century (PARIS21) on 4 October in Paris, and in a series of semi-structured interviews, conducted between late September and early December 2018. A list of interviewees (for this latter phase) is annexed.

Second, starting several months earlier, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (HLG-PCCB), a subsidiary body of the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC), convened a task team on implementing and financing the CTGAP. The HLG-PCCB has recently issued a consultation note (HLG-PCCB, draft September 2018, unpublished) proposing inter alia the establishment of a Development Data Financing Facility, under the oversight of the UNSC but the day-to-day management of the World Bank. We try to build on the HLG-PCCB approach in the proposals offered below. In particular, we examine Facility objectives, scope, structure and governance options in more detail.

**Structure.** Sections 2 and 3 summarise, respectively, the results of the CTGAP costing review and the challenges of the current data financing architecture, which any proposals for change need to address. Information, which became available after our earlier report on, in particular, the (health-related) Global Financing Facility and the Data to End Hunger “50 x 2030 Initiative”, models that appear particularly relevant to this phase of the work, is also introduced. Section 4 considers the major building blocks needed to deliver a comprehensive response to these funding challenges, and the respective contributions to them of different actors. Section 5 looks at what catalytic role a pooled central instrument – the Data Acceleration Facility – could play within this larger collective. Section 6 discusses two archetypal options for hosting and governance of such a Facility. Section 7 concludes with some suggested next steps.
2. Development data needs and gaps: towards 0.7% of ODA?

There are huge, and growing, gaps in the data underpinnings needed to implement, let alone track, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Up to 77 countries remain unable to provide poverty data in a timely manner, and 44% of all countries are assessed as not even having basic functioning civil registration and vital statistics systems (CRVS) that are 90% complete (Jütting and McDonnell, 2017 p. 24). As a result, to quote the HLG-PCCB consultation note,

“accurate and timely information about people’s lives is lacking, numerous groups and individuals remain “invisible” and many development challenges still poorly executed and evaluated.”

Juxtaposed with this structural data deficit, the SDGs are raising the data expectations bar very significantly, in at least two dimensions. First, many new indicators are, or should soon be, in play. Jütting and McDonnell (2017) report that nearly two-thirds of 232 SDG indicators have no available data. While 88 indicators have no defined methodology and are thus uncollectable, a further 55 have a methodology but data is not yet being collected and reported for them in most countries. That means that even relatively sophisticated national statistical offices may have hands-on familiarity with only some 40% of the eventual full range of SDG indicators.

Second, the specific data-related SDG target, linked to the overarching SDG ethos of “leave no one behind”, calls for data that is not just high-quality, timely and reliable, but also “disaggregated by income, gender, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts” (SDG Target 17.18). This aspiration adds new layers of complexity, and in some cases political sensitivity, to longstanding national data-gathering challenges.

This growing gap between expectations and capacity argues for a massive effort in data generation, collection, and statistical capacity development at country level, particularly with regard to national statistical offices but also involving new partnerships with other actors, users and data generators. New technologies, like mobile data, remote sensing and geocoding, ultimately provide exciting leap-frogging opportunities, but initially they will actually need additional resourcing, to be fully understood, adapted, and integrated alongside the demanding daily challenges of existing methods, before the burden of the latter can be significantly reduced.

Our current costings of the full CTGAP aggregate to $5.6 billion per year through 2030 for 75 Low-Income (IDA) and 69 Middle-Income (IBRD) countries (see Calleja and Rogerson, 2018). Using the heroic assumptions, as in earlier published estimates (SDSN et al., 2015; GPSDD, 2016), that 95% of middle-income country costs will be covered by domestic resources, but only 50% for low-income countries, developing country governments are estimated to cover a share of $4.3 billion (77%), from domestic resources, leaving a gap of $1.3 billion (23%) for external assistance. This gap equals a little over twice the current level of ODA scored for
statistics and development data, roughly $600 million, i.e. calls for an outright doubling from its current 0.33% share of ODA (PARIS21, 2018) to about 0.7%.2

Another perspective on these numbers is to set the aggregate development data costs (which are only partially incremental to current expenditure levels) against the orders of magnitude estimated for overall incremental SDG costs. For low-income developing countries, (LIDC) 3 IMF (2018) estimates these costs at $520 billion per year. Adequate data is equivalent at most to a 1.1% investment stake in the success of these countries’ whole SDG endeavour. We cannot predict which countries will miss which specific SDG targets as a direct, or contributory, result of their data deficits, if their relatively modest (in absolute terms) data financing gap is not closed. We do know however that many LIDC and population segments within them remain among the most vulnerable and least able to bear the consequences of failure.

A more positive perspective, which we discuss below as a complementary rationale for any new global data funding mechanism, is the potential for better data, combined with powerful algorithms, to galvanise wider systemic change in key spaces between states and their citizens, thereby accelerating better development outcomes-as it is already doing in some thematic areas like health. Some of these transformative effects, which include but go far beyond conventional definitions of “statistics”, are not yet well enough understood or communicated anywhere.

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2 This is slightly higher than previous estimates (see SDSN et al., 2015 and GPSDD, 2016) due to differences in terms of scope and coverage. Prior costing exercises have primarily identified the cost of measuring the SDGs. Our estimate is higher due to the broader scope of costing the CTGAP, which includes the cost of measuring the SDGs and adds costs for coordination on data for sustainable development, innovation and modernization of national statistical systems, dissemination and use of sustainable development data, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and mobilizing resources and coordination efforts for statistical capacity development.

3 Roughly speaking, LIDC countries are those below $2700 per capita annual income, and some island states. The category goes well beyond IDA countries, but it does not include all IBRD ones.
3. Challenges of the current development data financing architecture

3.1 Quantitative and qualitative challenges of development data funding

Development data funding presents many of the same challenges of development finance in other “sectors”, quantitatively and qualitatively, but some in even more pronounced form.

Quantitatively, salient features include:

1. *Domestic resources* fund the overwhelming bulk of the statistics/data effort-as we have seen in the costing assumptions. These proportions are at least as high as in social services like education and health.

2. *External assistance*, the minority partner here except in some low-income country contexts, also includes a large number of project components primarily aimed at monitoring donor-supported investments in many other thematic areas, like health.

3. *Funding is concentrated* in relatively few donors, with just five, four of which are multilaterals, supplying over two thirds. Statistical assistance has a much higher-than-average multilateral content (considering both core and non-core funding).

4. *Philanthropic funders*, primarily the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), provide a much higher share of their total support for development data (2.3-2.6%) than do DAC donors (0.33% of ODA).

5. *The share of loan financing is significant*. At 38%, it is only slightly higher than the ODA average across all sectors (33%) but much higher than for education (4%) or health (15%).

Qualitatively, development data funding exhibits some unique problems as well as others in common with the broader international development effectiveness agenda:

i. *Lack of awareness and blurred attribution chains*. National statistical systems tend to have unusually low visibility, internally as well as externally, and attribution of tangible outcomes to improved capacity is especially difficult.

ii. *Fragmentation and lack of harmonisation*. Many data-related aid activities consist of small volumes of earmarked technical assistance, often linked to multiple donor-driven reporting requirements.

iii. *Poor alignment to country systems and strategies*. Funding for national data systems has often been seen as an add-on to other sectoral projects. External support also often prioritises data instruments and products (e.g. surveys) over underlying systems building and transformation.

iv. *Poor sustainability, predictability and transparency*. In common with other sectors, ensuring long-term sustainability of funding, predictability of disbursements and transparency of donor activities are serious challenges.
3.2 How well do different financing instruments rise to these challenges?

No financing instrument, or channel, suits all possible applications, nor matches all desirable criteria. Moreover, funding instruments cannot exist in an institutional vacuum. Reading across to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), for example, arguably the most deliberately focussed global fund design case, a “pure” financing mechanism must exist alongside an “ecosystem” of other actors. Therefore, country proposals are generated locally by inclusive bodies independent of the GFATM, assessed by an independent technical panel, implemented and audited by third parties and assisted in implementation, as well as evaluation and dissemination of results as needed, by technical agencies independent of the Fund, though networked with, and sometimes funded by it. We return to this wider ecosystem concept in section 4.

With the above challenges in mind, our earlier report, reviewing available literature, assessed the pros and cons of five broad funding types: a) *domestic resources*; b) *budget support*; c) *parallel single-source aid (in grant or loan form)*; d) *pooled multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs)*; and e) *global funds*, (the latter drawing from the experience of health and other sectors). Note that this hybrid list includes some sources (domestic resources, bilateral aid, multilateral assistance leveraging multiple sources), some channels (trust funds and global funds) and some aid “modalities” or instruments (budget support, grants and loans). Therefore, they are not mutually exclusive, and comparisons should not be taken too literally.

We rated these five funding types against eight stylised effectiveness criteria, based on their potential for addressing the main systemic challenges noted above:

- Improved awareness/demand
- Predictability
- Sustainability
- Alignment to national priorities
- Harmonisation (across channels/donors)
- Transparency
- Manage for results
- Incentivise capacity development

A snapshot of the results is shown in the table below, in traffic-light form. PARIS21 Discussion Paper 14 elaborates on the evidence and analysis for each mechanism, source and channel. These should be considered only as rough approximations involving a degree of subjective appreciation, also given the inherent limitations of the source materials on which our desk review was based, some of which are dated and/or fragmentary in their coverage.
Summary table assessing funding instruments for statistical capacity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Awareness/ demand</th>
<th>Predictability</th>
<th>Sustainability</th>
<th>Alignment</th>
<th>Harmonisation</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Manage for results</th>
<th>Incentivise capacity development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Domestic Resources</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Budget Support</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) parallel single-source aid</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loans</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) pooled multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs)</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) Global Funds</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
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</table>

Unsurprisingly, the first-best funding type to be encouraged is *domestic public finance*, thanks in particular to its relative size, stability and integration with national priorities and systems. Sustained national political demand for answers, which good data can provide, is also a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for closing the data capacity gap. A potential area of weakness, however, also relates to awareness and political demand, in the sense of *reluctance to promote accountability*, i.e. the presence of perverse incentives to ignore data capacity, if and when improved data availability is seen as strengthening the hand of government critics. What is ultimately a virtue can also have stifling effects.

The second-best channel, rather more surprisingly, is *global funds*, based in particular on the experience of the two largest health-related ones, GFATM and the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi). These have the potential for: raising awareness; driving for innovation, results and learning; building on country ownership; engaging with multiple stakeholders including the private sector; and raising innovative financing. However, these advantages are contingent on deliberate institutional design choices, i.e. they are by no means automatically captured by any global fund, a point we return to below.

For present purposes a somewhat less favoured, but still interesting, third best channel consists of *pooled multi-donor trust funds (MDTF)*, such as those already hosted by the World Bank, the IMF and the United Nations Statistical Department in the data area for many years. The obvious difference from a fully-fledged global fund is the MDTF’s integration within its host’s structures, procedures and management. That has been known to create tensions around the roles and responsibilities of various actors (such as steering committees and secretariats). It can also introduce rigidities, such as burdensome fiduciary and procurement requirements, especially when dealing with relatively small amounts and/or non-governmental implementation partners. More generally, MDTFs tend to have less positive transparency and results-management evaluations than do (the best) global funds.
3.3 A more recent hybrid possibility

Again, though on past performance evidence unlikely, an MDTF could in principle be specifically designed and successfully implemented to mitigate such risks, without necessarily incurring some of the larger transaction costs and lead times for the initial set-up of a fully-fledged global fund. Some global funds have emerged from what started out as MDTFs, and then progressively outgrew the original hosting arrangements (e.g. the cases of Gavi (immunisation), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund (environment) and to a large extent the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) (education)). Indeed, the ODA scoring rules for thematic fund contributions, for rating them as “core” multilateral funding versus “multi-bi”, or earmarked bilateral funding channelled through multilaterals, depend in large part on the assessed degree of institutional autonomy and visibility of the mechanism. We will be using the shorthand of Option 1 and Option 2 to mark this boundary, in section 6 below.

The Global Financing Facility (GFF), for example, hosted by the World Bank to accelerate progress in reproductive and child health, aims to achieve more flexibility than traditional MDTFs, including in its outreach to civil society and its working in explicit alignment with country strategies. It is also structurally focussed on leveraging additional long-term financing from domestic as well as international sources. Its emerging track record and at least partly successful (November 2018) recent replenishment therefore deserve close continuing attention.

This GFF example – and the very term “Facility” as against “Fund” – also draws attention to a broader dimension of the governance challenge in financing data for development. The GFF is the “financing arm” of a pre-existing and high-level global partnership, in this case, the global movement Every Woman Every Child (EWEC), with near-universal governmental membership and wide support across other stakeholders. EWEC is particularly focussed on awareness-raising, impact assessment and learning, co-ordination and political oversight.

Potentially this type of “facility”, in the sense of not just one more funding channel but also an opportunity for structured dialogue around national priorities, and a principle-based mechanism to improve financial sustainability and coordination for a set of thematic priorities, fits closely with the intent of the HLG-PCCB’s “Development Data Financing Facility”.

3.4 The Data to End Hunger “50 x 2030 Initiative” as a possible additional model to build on?

Launched at the United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) in late September 2018 and still under development, the “50 x 2030 Initiative” is targeted at 500

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The announcement of pledges totalling $1 billion, compared to a previously declared goal of $2 billion, on November 6, 2018 received many positive reviews, yet troubled some observers (see e.g. ONE press release, [https://www.one.org/us/press/global-financing-facility-replenishment-sends-troubling-message-about-global-health/](https://www.one.org/us/press/global-financing-facility-replenishment-sends-troubling-message-about-global-health/))
million struggling farmers around the world, aiming to bring better farm-level information to bear on sustainable solutions for them. 50 low- and low-middle income countries will benefit from comprehensive, timely and accurate farm-level data over the next decade, enabling tailored solutions and support.

The Initiative’s partnership brings together many of these countries, a set of major bilateral and foundation donors and a collective of technical agencies, including FAO, IFAD and the World Bank, sharing their respective expertise (for example, in farm-level production data as well as household-based surveys).

Among the likely distinctive features of this Initiative’s funding mechanism, currently being discussed, which may resonate in our broader case, are as we understand them so far:

- A clear time-bound achievement goal (per the title);
- End-uses of data are considered from the outset;
- Builds on proven instruments; as well as
- Strong international partnerships and technical standards;
- A shared long-term funding commitment from all actors; and
- Robust coordination arrangements.
4. A comprehensive CTGAP funding response

This section looks at the major components of a comprehensive funding response supporting CTGAP, and the roles of key actors or categories of actors in delivering them. It first tries to sharpen the headline aims and major “tracks” of such an overall funding deal, in terms, which are readily actionable. It then divides up the tasks for the existing “ecosystem” of data funding, and its main actors, into which a new facility can be fitted. Both parts—the overall funding response and the role of a pooled facility within it—must work together. We discuss the specifics of the facility in section 5 and 6, the last two sections.

4.1 Aims and major tracks, derived from CTGAP

The headline aim of a comprehensive data funding response at global, cross-sectoral level could be to help close the SDG data gap for countries and population groups otherwise left behind⁵. (This goal needs to be made as SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based) as possible. Something like 50 X 25, i.e. 50 countries meeting a given standard by 2025, or achieving X data objectives by Y date, can serve as a place-filler, and help focus further discussion on that specific standard or those named output objectives). There also needs to be explicit recognition that the data-for-development challenge varies considerably across country contexts, and different types of initiative and nature of support will be required across these contexts.

A complementary aim could be more aggressively couched, in terms like “unleashing a data revolution” transforming the delivery of essential services to citizens, both in the above subset of countries as well as across a wider range, which would engage that broader participation. It could refer specifically to public services transparency and accountability benefits, but also more broadly to their greater reach, equity and effectiveness. This approach would draw more attention to new end-uses, and the bigger governance systems changes, made feasible with improved data and algorithms. It could drill down to specific application clusters, such as civil registration, biometric ID and social benefit access, complementing thematic initiatives like Data to End Hunger and EWEC/GFF, which are already active in some of these spaces.

The next level of specificity should address the main challenges, other than raw funding availability, arguably holding back development data acceleration in the existing funding architecture, as reviewed above. Summarising from both our earlier analysis (page 6) and subsequent interviews, the main ones were seen to be:

- I. Lack of political awareness and demand
- II. Poor alignment to national priorities
- III. Inadequate donor co-ordination
- IV. Fragile transition from promising innovations to sustained investments at scale

⁵ CTGAP could also reference “Close the Gap”, long used as a meme for, e.g. campaigns for tackling the digital divide
This should help define the major development effectiveness objectives the CTGAP funding response as a whole should aim for. We suggest three such objectives, which are inter-related but conceptually separable:

1) Raising greater political awareness/visibility through: defining and publicising development data results metrics and performance-based data capacity approaches; mobilising headline political commitments (e.g. new ODA share thresholds); engaging with new partners; overall progress monitoring, independent impact assessment, results dissemination and accountability; learning and advocacy.

2) Improving assistance coordination and alignment around balanced country compacts, behind firm long-term national commitments to accelerate data results (perhaps organised around the three planning, accountability and advocacy “baskets” suggested in 4.2 below) and invest in added capacity, supported by improved light-touch, country-led co-ordination processes. These should focus in particular on sectors or topics, like vital records or administrative data for macroeconomic statistics, where better data has secured greatly increased attention both domestically and from donors and discuss how best to leverage that success. There are considerable complementarities between existing multilateral and bilateral initiatives in capacity development, which could be captured in an inclusive approach on these lines.

3) Seeding of new data technologies and innovative partnerships, to the point they can be taken to scale, and helping with their funding plans. This includes leveraging existing financing opportunities and making other investments in data work better, through e.g. project preparation assistance, speeding access to development bank loans and other sources, including the private sector, and “smart financing” where opportunities for synergies can be exploited or critical gaps need closing. The constraint here can be as much on the demand side (lack of readily implementable investment proposals) as on the funding supply side.

4.2 What would be the main functions in this funding “ecosystem” and what roles could different actors have?

An important, but frequently ignored, development finance premise is that no single institution, let alone an effectively focussed pooled financing facility, can take on by itself the entire development challenge, in our specific case revolving around closing the data funding deficit in all its dimensions. Any global financing instrument, or facility, always has to be set within a wider “ecosystem” or partnership, which spearheads a global initiative of which the facility is one part-and not necessarily even the largest funding element.

This type of model should resonate with the international data/statistics community also, which already has well-established mechanisms, such as the UNSC or PARIS21 for some of these separable functions.

What, and who, are they?

A. Country compacts and data plans. National governments and their international partners could voluntarily commit to “data acceleration investment plans”, linked to
the National Strategies for Statistics and involving increased multi-year budget allocations, for which credible external match funding would be raised in both parallel and joint/pooled forms. These compacts, which would be explicit agreements between country authorities and external sources of assistance to achieve tangible data outputs, could be supported by independent peer review. The overall compact could be built up from manageable “stepping stones” involving different data end-uses (and constituencies), for example (1) data for effective development planning and implementation (2) data for accountability and (3) data for advocacy purposes.

B. **Light-touch co-ordination.** Countries would also convene (with support from their main in-country partners and PARIS21) regular but light-touch *country-level co-ordination platforms*, for both financial and in-kind support, and consult them in making their investment proposals. This function is not easily centralised, nor well manageable entirely within a financial vehicle like the Facility, discussed below. However, some central platform, or database of interests and capacity, especially for actors who are not yet present in-country, might play a useful adjunct role. The HLG-PCCB proposals, which place such a platform within the funding facility, need further development in this respect. A key opportunity would seem to be to trigger effective collaboration across several relevant data-related multi-donor funds, including those mainly active in specific thematic areas like health. PARIS21 could be a default option to assume a substantial part of the co-ordination and overall design burden at country level, by agreement with the Facility administrators. This should capitalise on its core strengths, for example: legitimacy and neutrality; technical expertise; and coordination (as in the context of National Sustainable Development Strategies, (NSDS)).

C. **Standard-setting.** The UNSC and its national constituencies and specialised centres of expertise elsewhere in the UN system and the International financial institutions (IFIs), would come together to define and refine results metrics and identify new data funding opportunities and promising approaches and technologies, and monitor progress.

D. **Funding commitments.** *OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors* could commit to overall funding goals such as 0.7% of ODA, to spend on an agreed improved and trackable basket of data capacity for development. This target, under current definitions, would be sufficient in aggregate to close the (CTGAP) gap—but a stretch goal of 1% may have broad appeal and could help bridge gaps faster for poorer countries. They could also provide additional pooled funding, discussed below, and support ambitious and coherent data activities within all other thematic funds they support.

*Non-DAC sovereign assistance providers*, like Brazil, China, UAE and India could be invited to make analogous commitments, in terms and metrics suitable to them, and of course to participate in country platforms under (B), in agreement with their national partners. A possible “triangular co-operation” funding window could part-fund their sharing of (mostly in-kind) expertise with interested countries.
Foundations, who already have proportionally much higher data spending shares than official donors, could maintain and improve on those commitments, especially by supporting data development within existing and new thematic initiatives, and helping join up knowledge and software developed by data institutions they support. They could also contribute to specific pooled facilities—as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) has announced it intends to do within Data to End Hunger.

Other global funds could continue their high levels of data commitment and develop and share open-source software relevant to their mandates.

Developing country governments could announce long-term commitments of their own public expenditure for data acceleration investments, covering at least their minimum agreed cost-sharing arrangements under country compacts (discussed below) but ideally going beyond them.

E. Partnerships and advocacy. Civil society and multi-stakeholder organisations like GPSDD, the private sector and other partners could be included as relevant in the country-level platform under (A), be invited to bid for as implementers, and/or help execute as technical partners, specific investments of the Facility, and of course play a full part in development of metrics R+D, evaluation, learning and advocacy for the Initiative as a whole.

The major multilateral funders of development data, such as the World Bank, the EU (Eurostat) and the UN system, could also participate in global discussions on data development policies, innovation, metrics, targets and their monitoring and advocacy. These would often be convened by the UNSC, and supported by partners, especially on the advocacy front. The larger funders, especially the multilateral banks, could take on and fast-track viable large data investments, including those designed and/or piloted through the Facility project preparation window. Options for governing the Facility itself are discussed below.
5. What could a Data Acceleration Facility (DAF) focus its funding on?

Within this broader funding partnership framework, there is likely to be scope for a medium-sized, catalytic pooled arrangement, which we provisionally title a **Data Acceleration Facility (DAF)**. We envisage this gradually over time consolidating some of the functions, and residual funding, of several existing data-related MDTFs already in place. However, it is not intended to replace, or to control, the much larger parallel flows of assistance from both bilateral donors and international agencies.

Like the GFF introduced earlier, it is deliberately couched as more than one new funding channel among many. It hopes to act in the service of, and under guidelines set by, a wider stakeholder community to help mobilise a better aligned and co-ordinated funding response to national development data plans from all sources. Collecting and disbursing its own funds is a means to that end. The counter-factual, of just setting up yet another “fund” as such, is unlikely in our view to generate much enthusiasm.

The DAF would benefit from having, say, two distinct windows, grouped for ease of management (e.g. of diverse implementing entities) as well as to appeal to different potential funder interests. The following 2 are presented as a starting point. They map directly to the second and third main CTGAP development effectiveness objectives suggested above (Page 16), namely, (2) **improving data assistance coordination and alignment** and (3) **leveraging existing financing and seeding new opportunities**. We leave open the possibility of the Facility also directly funding global awareness/standards, metrics and advocacy etc. (Aim 1). This would presumably imply relatively small amounts spent mainly within a relatively specialised circle of agencies, for which adequate alternative funding channels perhaps exist. Any such Facility must also demonstrate that it helps to consolidate, not further fragment, the already dislocated data funding architecture.

**Window 1: Match funding for national data capacity** within accredited nationally owned multi-year proposals or investment plans, produced by country platforms as above, with clear results and end-use objectives. Funding could potentially cover a broad basket of salaries, technical assistance, IT and software development, other essential infrastructure and additional data collection costs This would, as in the case of the GFF, build on both domestic fiscal space for data capacity, with national commitments to increase public spending in the medium and longer term, and opportunities to mobilise, and blend, concessional finance such as IDA credits, especially in the shorter term and for resource-constrained countries. Eligibility would either be limited by formal country classification to, say, LICs, LIDCs or LDCs, or alternatively the maximum match shares could taper off as country income rises. Accreditation of proposals would necessarily involve some element of peer review, but on a light-touch basis, brokered by legitimate full-membership bodies like the UNSC. More important would be progressively introducing internationally agreed results metrics and evaluation of performance against them, and maximising opportunities for cross-country learning.
Window 2: Smart funding and seeding for data innovation and new partnerships, designed to establish proof-of-concept for untested approaches, adaptation to different contexts, or radical new technologies, but which could potentially be brought to scale. This portfolio would deliberately take on higher than average risks, but a small independent expert panel should assess the individual technical merit of proposals, also to help spread knowledge. Disbursement and fiduciary arrangements should be as flexible as possible. Under this window, triangular cooperation projects with South-South providers (not requiring panel approval below a given limit) could also be funded. This window would also fund feasibility studies for subsequent presentation to larger funders, primarily multilateral lenders, but also large grant providers like the EU. Execution would probably need to be contracted out to qualified civil society and/or private organisations. It could also “smart-fund” some larger investments, perhaps by subsidizing or de-risking those programs, and/or making them come on stream faster, more reliably, and /or for greater impact.

**A reminder of desirable characteristics of data funding instruments** (from Section 3):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved awareness/demand</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictability</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alignment to national priorities</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonisation (across channels/donors)</td>
<td>Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage for results</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentivising capacity development</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A quick scan of the proposed windows, taken as a whole, against these eight, could arguably produce something like the above traffic-light ratings, where the green colour means “likely to be achievable” and amber “possibly achievable”, depending of course on design and implementation specifics we do not yet know. We also cannot tell in advance what features might become most problematic during implementation, i.e. potentially red, but some of the ambers, such as predictability and transparency, will need to be kept under close watch in case they pose particular challenges over time. Whereas this configuration for the Facility is by no means perfect, it is worth noting that it is by some way the best of the alternative instruments/channels considered so far. Subject, again, to governance and organisational options to which we now turn.
6. Leading options for governance and hosting of the Data Acceleration Facility

In addition to the meeting the general criteria above, the specific design of a Data Acceleration Facility (DAF) should ideally have the following six operational characteristics—these have been repeatedly suggested during interviews as well as in our literature review of successful global financing instruments:

1) Works to time-bound goals and widely agreed results metrics
2) Can work closely with all main sources of domestic and international public finance
3) Fast, transparent and robust approval and disbursement processes
4) Technically sound, credibly independent investment assessments
5) Equally accessible to different types of recipient/implementer partners
6) Learning- and innovation-driven

There are several potential management and governance options for a facility with such a mix of objectives and features, but only two really stand out as leading alternatives for the Data Acceleration Facility. They are in fact, the two main variants of the multilateral (pooled) funding instruments reviewed in detail earlier, i.e. either a multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) managed and hosted by an existing international organisation, or a stand-alone new global thematic fund (or facility, or partnership), analogous to those in health for example. Note that both options can also involve a high degree of UNSC oversight and of participation by its wider membership, as proposed by the HLG-PCCB. Note that the UNSC, which has no operational capacity of its own, is mainly required to provide overall legitimacy, and to discuss and establish new data standards: this should be complementary to the ability to operate and manage any Facility downstream.

Now in theory, the first option also offers as many sub-options as there are capable international institutions to act as hosts, and we know of several, including the IMF and the UN Statistical Department, which both manage multi-donor trust funds. However, we share the views of the HLG-PCCB that the hosting choice should “take advantage of the institutional setup and experiences dealing with large financial funding mechanisms as well as leverage the institution’s operational capability, and provide unique access to ministers of finance”, which narrows the likely field considerably, essentially to the World Bank Group, certainly with reference to Window 1 and probably also Window 2. Potentially, there could be equally good, or perhaps better, alternative institutional options for Window 2, but the costs and complexity of splitting the windows up could become prohibitive.

Option 1: Facility and Secretariat managed by an independent body (say, a Global Data Acceleration Fund or Partnership) with an autonomous multi-stakeholder Board.

Here, the UNSC mandate and the voice of all country categories and other stakeholders gets hard-wired into the institutional structures. The body’s legal form could be a non-profit foundation under the laws of a country of establishment, as for example Switzerland in the case of Gavi and GFATM. The World Bank could still perform discrete financial management
tasks as Trustee, and have a non-voting Board seat alongside other partner organisations, but would not participate significantly in proposal selection, hire or manage Secretariat staff etc.

**Pros:**

1) “Blank sheet of paper” allows for greater innovation in terms of rulebooks, representation and voting structures etc.;
2) Greater global visibility;
3) Able to disburse more easily, by design, to non-government and UN-based partners;
4) Tensions between management and political leadership/board are more easily resolved in-house, also by design;
5) Arguably more transparent and results-focused, and lower risk of actual or perceived behind-the-scenes dominance by smaller groups of funders, or of bias toward World Bank-led operations.

**Cons:**

1) Suspicion that a Global Fund, as such, will focus inward, on collecting and disbursing its own funds, not on the bigger partnerships and results embraced by an (idealised) Facility. Evidence from, e.g. GFATM does not support that view, but perceptions matter.
2) “Blank sheet of paper” downside. i.e. more inertia and initial start-up delays – unless there is major external political pressure to move much faster;
3) Up-front and continuing governance costs of any substantial new organisation, especially if amortised over a relatively low volume of funding in the early years;
4) Loses advantage of proximity to Bank lending operations for Window 3;
5) Loses advantage of easier access to Bank geographical and thematic expertise for Window 1;
6) Several global funds have started in-house (in the Bank or a UN specialised agency, like WHO) and later “spun out” into independent entities, but none have done the reverse-the institutional risk may therefore be higher taking this route.

**Option 2: Facility and Secretariat Managed by World Bank (WB), reporting to CTGAP partners via a Steering Committee (SC) and thence the UNSC:** This builds on the HLG-PCCB proposal that the Facility be under a UNSC mandate, by creating a specific institutional link to a large subset of its legitimate stakeholders-national governments, usually in the form of statistical offices or the equivalent. The SC, which would have oversight of Facility strategy and policy, is assumed to have balanced multi-stakeholder composition, including representative subsets of UNSC. However, it should not, preferably, approve individual funding proposals. These should typically be handled by the Secretariat, on recommendation of an independent assessment panel, within guidelines, and arbitration procedures if necessary, set by the Steering Committee (the model followed by the GFATM, for example, substituting the SC in Option 2 for a Board with similar composition in Option 1). Such a panel could be selected from existing rosters of experts participating in partnerships such as PARIS21 (also in the case of Option 2), subject to UNSC approval. In Option 1, at least, existing MDTFs lodged with the World Bank in the data for development field would be progressively wound down and/or consolidated, with their in-house expertise, into the DAF. That might be harder to arrange in Option 1, but not impossible.
**Pros:**

1) Low set-up costs (could also build on existing WB-hosted multi-donor trust funds);  
2) Proximity to mainstream WB operations makes links easier for part of Window 3 (preparatory facility);  
3) WB’s solid country presence and fiscal expertise assists with platforms under Window 1 (match funding for national data capacity);  
4) WB has deep knowledge and skills based on data for development, to draw on in-house.

**Cons:**

1) Risk of tensions between Secretariat and Steering Committee, especially if the latter relinquishes single project/programme approval powers, or of politicising approvals and overriding technical panels/peer reviewers if it does not;  
2) WB’s fiduciary safeguards (e.g. procurement, financial assessment) are onerous and may effectively exclude, or seriously delay funding for, both non-governmental and UN recipients/executors, especially for small amounts under Window 2 and maybe 3;  
3) More broadly, there is the risk that the WB management views the Facility funding first and foremost as adjunct to its own operations and does not open up funding opportunities evenly across other deserving channels or implementing agencies.

**Further considerations in comparing Options 1 and 2.** The choice ultimately depends on potential funder and other major stakeholder preferences, including funding appetite, projected size of operations, hence weight of overheads, (see below) and risk aversion. So, for example, if the short-to mid-term expectation is an annual “own” disbursement of only, say, $50 million, establishing and servicing a full resident Board of 25-30 or more seats adds an additional annual charge on deliverables of say 7-10% or more, over and above the unavoidable costs of country dialogue and co-ordination and proposal and fund administration, etc. That alone could prove a major obstacle to securing funding for Option 1.

If a variant of Option 2 (World Bank Facility hosting) were possible, in which the World Bank is prepared to adopt more flexible contracting and disbursement approaches, especially for Window 2, perhaps in partnership with one or more independent umbrella organisations, then the balance arguably tilts in favour of Option 2. A transition to Option 1 could also be revisited after some initial years of implementation experience (or on the occasion of a subsequent Facility replenishment), or if serious internal/external governance tensions ever really surface.

**Size indicators.** There is, roughly, an external funding gap of $700 million a year for data for development, broadly defined, after accounting for domestic contributions, existing ODA and foundation grants. If aid to development data, including the majority share now routed through multilaterals, rose to 0.7% of ODA (allowing also for some likely under-counting of the current data aid spend), the aggregate problem would largely be solved, even before approaching non-traditional providers.

This extra effort is however needed above all for LICs, who in CTGAP costing assumptions are already projected to contribute 50% toward their own data investment needs, as against 95%
for IBRD countries. In fact, and based also on past PARIS21 experience, it is quite exceptional for any low-income countries to be able to contribute anything like a majority share of the costs of national data strategies—much smaller fractions occur. A critical parameter for Window 1 will therefore be the range of cost-sharing (or match funding) arrangement. Meanwhile, as we have suggested, a top-level DAC commitment to spending 1% of ODA for data would greatly enhance overall funding credibility and room for manoeuvre.

In terms of pooled funding arrangements, there is already an annual value of disbursements of some $150m from multi-donor trust funds in place for development data (Open Data Watch 2016) with the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the IMF.

As a level of ambition, doubling that to around the $300 million threshold, meaning an additional $150m of annual pooled trust fund disbursements (21% of the $700 million external data financing gap), seems potentially reasonable. A facility with the capacity to disburse $150 million a year would need settled commitment authority of $450-$500 million or more, depending on average disbursement profiles. This ignores any initial phasing-in period, which could take 3-5 years to reach full development, and any transfers of balances from existing funds.

**Final Remark:** We stress that these relatively crude initial size indicators would anyway need to be retro-fitted to the actual preferred composition of the three (or more) “windows”, and above all, market-tested in more specific confidential conversations with potential funders, a process which we have not engaged in so far.
7. Areas for further investigation—some “known unknowns”

(1) **Clear time-bound goals and results metrics for the CTGAP funding initiative** and the DAF within it. Perhaps inspired by the Data to End Hunger Initiative, with its 50 (countries) x 30 (2030) headline aim, a high priority would be to formulate simple but powerful and memorable metrics for CTGAP implementation and funding, and in particular identify some specific end-uses or outcomes related to data capacity development as an intermediate output. These should include tangible development results and administrative innovations made possible by better data, not just better monitoring of SDG progress after the fact.

(2) **Clarification of the country “compact” approach** and in particular of its country-based coordination mechanism or platform. How would this operate in practice, in a light-touch networked way with what improved incentives to harness disparate streams of support, including focussed thematic funding as well as broader technical and financial co-operation? What support for this could be expected from the Facility itself, as well as other actors?

(3) Specifically, how could the Facility encourage more effective **collaborative approaches across all major multi-donor thematic funds** already active in supporting better data and statistical capacity development
References


Annex: List of interviewees

Rachael Beaven, DFID
Michael Borowitz, Global Fund
Grant Cameron, World Bank
Haishan Fu, World Bank
Johannes Jütting, PARIS21
Francesca Perrucci, UNSD
Guido Schmidt-Traub, SDSN
Stefan Schweinfest, UNSD
Jenna Slotin, GPSDD