CALL FOR ACTION

TOWARD BUILDING THE **DATA INFRASTRUCTURE AND ECOSYSTEM** WE NEED TO TACKLE PANDEMICS AND OTHER DYNAMIC SOCIETAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS

#data4covid19

The undersigned concerned individuals, all of whom have worked responsibly to harness the potential of data to address critical societal and environmental challenges, call upon major stakeholders to take seven key actions to unleash the potential of #datacollaboration in addressing the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and to improve preparedness for the future.

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WHY WE NEED ACTION

The spread of COVID-19 is a human tragedy and a worldwide crisis. The social and economic costs are huge, and they are contributing to a global slowdown. Despite the amount of data collected daily, we have not been able to leverage them to accelerate our understanding and action to counter COVID-19. As a result we have entered a global state of profound uncertainty and anxiety.

The current pandemic has not only shown vulnerabilities in our public health systems but has also made visible our failure to re-use data between the public and private sectors—what we call data collaboratives—to inform decision makers how to fight dynamic threats like the novel Coronavirus.

We have known for years that the re-use of aggregated and anonymized data—including from telecommunications, social media, and satellite feeds —can improve traditional models for tracking disease propagation. Telecommunications data has, for instance, been re-used to support the response to Ebola in Africa (Orange) and swine flu in Mexico (Telefónica). Social media data has been re-used to understand public perceptions around Zika in Brazil (Facebook). Satellite data has been used to track seasonal measles in Niger using nighttime lights. Geospatial data has similarly supported malaria surveillance and eradication efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa. In general, many infectious diseases have been monitored using mobile phones and mobility.

The potential and realized contributions of these and other data collaboratives reveal that the supply of and demand for data and data expertise are widely dispersed. They are spread across government, the private sector, and civil society and often poorly matched.

Much data needed by researchers is never made accessible to those who could productively put it to use while much data that is released is never used in a systematic and sustainable way during and post crisis.

This failure results in tremendous inefficiencies and costly delays in how we respond. It means lost opportunities to save lives and a persistent lack of preparation for future threats.

There is a large return to the cross-organizational alignment of goals and leveraging of data resources that results from collaboration and partnerships. Responsible data collaboration also increases trust and ethics in the way data is handled and, importantly, the perceived legitimacy of such efforts.

Today, many public and private organizations are donating and re-using data and expertise and are working tirelessly to generate insight(s) that can inform decision making (See Google Doc of projects) and "flattening the curve" .

However most of these efforts are ad-hoc, poorly funded, and often disconnected from key decision makers who can act upon insights generated. There exists widespread confusion and often misinterpretation of legal provisions, which in turn leads to new hindrances to responsible data collaboration. There is also no strategy on how to connect and transform the energy, expertise and resources provided today into a new data driven approach to address future public threats, including fast-developing public health and climate crises.

The European Commission's Expert Group on Business to Government Data Sharing recently stated that "*much of the potential for data and its insights to be used for the benefit of society remains untapped…Due to organisational, technical and legal obstacles (as well as an overall*

lack of a data-sharing culture) business-to-government (B2G) data-sharing partnerships are still largely isolated, short-term collaborations. "

CALL FOR ACTION — 7 ACTIONS TO MAKE DATA COLLABORATION SYSTEMATIC, SUSTAINABLE AND RESPONSIBLE (AND BUILD THE DATA INFRASTRUCTURE WE NEED)

The below recommendations are based upon the European Expert Group on Business to Government Data Sharing's Final Report and efforts undertaken by The GovLab, The World Economic Forum, GSMA's AI for Impact Taskforce, SDSN TReNDS, Open Data Institute, the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, among others.

A set of concrete pathways to implement the below immediately, in tandem with governments and other actors, is being developed and crowdsourced with the help of the signatories. When signing up please indicate whether you want to be part of the next steps.

1. DEVELOPING A GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK: Public actors, private actors, and civil society, worldwide should work together to develop and/or clarify a governance framework for the trusted reuse of privately-held data toward the public interest. This framework should include governance principles, open data policies, trusted data re-use agreements, transparency requirements and safeguards, and accountability mechanisms, including ethical councils, that clearly define duties of care for data accessed in emergency contexts and do not obligate new and additional data collection by the private sector.

2. BUILDING CAPACITY: Governments should increase the readiness and the operational capacity and maturity of the public and private sectors to re-use and act on data, for example by investing in the training, education, and reskilling of policymakers and civil servants so as to better build and deploy data collaboratives. Building capacity also includes increasing the ability to ask and formulate questions that matter and that could be answered by data. Such a list of priority questions and metrics could facilitate more rapid response by critical data holders.

3. ESTABLISHING DATA STEWARDS: Private, public, and civil society entities should create and promote the position of a Chief Data Stewards within organisations. Data stewards would be mandated to coordinate and collaborate with counterparts toward unlocking the public interest value of data, to protect potentially sensitive information, and to act on insights derived through data analysis.

4. BUILDING A NETWORK: Parties across sectors should establish a network of such data stewards. This community of practice can help to coordinate and streamline efforts and provide greater transparency on the current state of play with regard to data stewardship and collaboration. Its mission, objectives, participants, and criteria for participation should all be made open to the public, and its activities should be undertaken in an inclusive manner.

5. ENGAGING CITIZENS: Citizens should be encouraged to co-create data collaboratives for well-defined and documented public interest purposes of their choice. To enable this, governments and corporations should promote user-friendly crowdsourcing and data donation mechanisms. These mechanisms should clearly articulate to citizens how their data will be responsibly used, re-used, and protected. In general, efforts should be made to make more transparent to citizens what the benefits of data collaboration could be for them personally and for society at large.

6. UNLOCKING FUNDS: Funding from a variety of sources, including crowdfunding, should be unlocked and sustained without the use of heavy-handed procurement. Funders should support data systems and infrastructure with an eye toward future crises as well as current challenges. A system of pre-qualified recipients should be developed that can facilitate rapid access to resources during the first stages of a crisis. Other incentives for data collaboration should also be established, including the public recognition of private companies and civil organisations that engage in data collaboratives. Existing funding schemes should take societal priorities into account when making decisions on how to allocate funds or create incentives.

7. PROMOTING TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION: With the support of governments and foundations, data scientists and researchers should co-design and co-develop technologies needed to implement data collaboration at scale and in a responsible and sustainable way. This collaborative research should be as transparent and interdisciplinary as possible, and could focus initially on core needs such as privacy-preserving technologies, security technologies, and access-control technologies.

TO VIEW SIGNATORIES OR JOIN US VISIT HERE.

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