**Digital Public Goods**

**Introduction**

Today, there is an unprecedented opportunity for low- and middle-income counties to harness digital resources to help accelerate development. That’s why improving access to, and discoverability of digital public goods (DPGs) is crucial. And while much of the conversation and interest in digital public goods has been related to open-source software, digital public goods are much more than software. According to the UN Secretary-General’s Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, DPGs include not only open-source software, but open-source: content, AI models, standards, and data.[3].

**What is digital public goods?**

The UN Secretary-General’s High-level Roadmap for Digital Cooperation defines digital public goods as “open-source software, open data, open artificial intelligence models, open standards and open content that adhere to privacy and other applicable international and domestic laws, standards and best practices and do no harm” (United Nations, 2020, p. 35). The same report states that “digital public goods are essential in unlocking the full potential of digital technologies and data to attain the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular for low- and middle-income countries” (United Nations, 2020, p. 8).

**Digital Public Goods Alliance**

The Digital Public Goods Alliance is a multi-stakeholder initiative with a mission to accelerate the attainment of the sustainable development goals in low- and middle-income countries by facilitating the discovery, development, use of, and investment in digital public goods.[3]

**Digital Public Goods Standard (DPG Standard)**

The DPG Standard establishes the baseline requirements that must be met in order to earn recognition as a digital public good (DPG). This standard is designed to complement other relevant principles such as the Principles for Digital Development and is applicable to DPGs in all sectors across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The DPG Standard is itself an open project, open to contribution on GitHub, and developed in collaboration with organizations and experts.[3]

**Challenges and Solutions**

**Build and maintain the Internet:** Like all public goods, in order to manage the negative externalities associated with its universality, someone has to provide the resources required to build and maintain the Internet. For this reason, much funding for development of the Internet and tools to govern it where states are unable to do so themselves are invested by mature states’ international affairs or development departments or ministries, or the funding is provided to multilateral agencies or other third parties to do [2].

**Support for implementations of DPGs and services:** In 2021, The Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL) approved a new five-year strategy, Digital Beacons, that includes support for country-wide implementations of digital public goods and services. By connecting, supporting, and scaling DPGs, DIAL helps development actors identify digital and data products best suited to their needs. This work included improving the user experience design of Digital Solutions which features DPGs, and expanding the database to include data from GIZ, WHO and New America, adding 170 products and 3200 projects**.**

**The stakeholder**

New organizations dedicated to Internet governance are not member state-based or driven but generally adopt a collaborative or ‘multistakeholder’ approach to governance, usually with predominance of one of the stakeholder groups (Van der Spuy, 2017). On a technical level, this includes policy platforms like the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Besides agencies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) or World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) working toward the development of formal agreements between member states to enable free trade or the protection of intellectual property respectively, significant lobbying resources are now dedicated by global interests (e.g., the World Economic Forum), the global mobile industry association (GSMA), and even some big platforms and applications (e.g., Facebook and its WhatsApp and Instagram applications, or Google (Alphabet)) on convincing governments to enable their big data businesses to be more globally competitive by benefiting from the data of users in the global South.[2]

# References

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| [2] | L. M. N. a. L. Harrisi, "Digital public goods: Enablers of digital sovereignty," in *Development Co-operation Report 2021*, 2021. |

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