



DATA-POP
ALLIANCE

Concept Note:

**Data-Pop Alliance COVID-19 Global South Response
and Recovery Strategic Vision and Action Plan**

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1. Overview and Rationale

The Covid-19 crisis is and will be posing, exposing, and exacerbating structural challenges in the Global South that will have global long-term repercussions—demographic, social, economic, political, and geopolitical. Rising up to the moment requires bold thinking and concerted actions. Data-Pop Alliance wants to contribute as much as we can through the proposed “COVID-19 Global South Response and Recovery Strategic Vision and Action Plan.”

Though more developed regions—Western Europe and the US in particular—are currently the epicenter of the pandemic, the number of infections is on the rise in all parts of the Global South. Based on the experience of rich

countries with far more robust public health systems, such as Spain and Italy, the first order demographic impact in terms of lives lost to Covid-19 could be staggering in the Global South, with generational consequences. With no vaccine or treatment in sight, there is a sliver of time to avoid community spread and enhance preparedness and early response in other cities and countries of the Global South. It is also essential to think beyond the more immediate public health impacts and concerns.

For these continents, countries, cities, and communities, the social, economic and political implications of the Covid-19 crisis are poised to be even more daunting. Obvious reasons include—with variations across countries—lack or frailty of social safety nets, weak public health systems and institutions, high levels of economic informality, low levels of trust towards governments, refugee situations, political instability, etc. Poverty, inequality, gender equality, educational attainments, political stability, State surveillance, democratic processes—all will be on the line. Critically, inequalities between and within countries, which have risen over the past decades to dramatic, indecent levels, will largely determine whether and how families and communities go through the crisis and beyond.

Two facts give a sense of the magnitude and meaning of these inequalities. The U.S. stimulus package voted into law on March 27 (\$USD2.2tn) is about 30% greater than the entire estimated GDP of Sub-Saharan Africa in 2018 (on a per capita basis it is more than 4times greater). Despite this, millions of Americans fear going hungry. According to recent mobility data from major U.S. cities, richer areas [reduced their mobility by half](#), 3 days before poorer areas did—because people there could work from home or afford to forgo income. This shows the kind of uphill battle poor areas of the Global South are facing.

Enforcing strict social distancing will be near-impossible in many parts of the Global South. Those living day-by-day as street vendors, in multigenerational family homes, overcrowded slums in peri-urban areas, or in refugee camps, simply cannot stay confined away from others. [According to WRI](#), informal employment comprises over three-quarters of urban employment in Africa, over half of urban employment in Asia and the Pacific, and just under half of urban employment in Latin America and the Caribbean. Reports indicate that from Angola to Zimbabwe, across the Sahel and in India, many fear that if they don't work they will die of hunger well before they die of the virus—and are willing or simply compelled to take the chance.

The crisis poses many other social and societal challenges — often defined along socioeconomic lines. Confinement will likely result in increased domestic and intimate partner violence and abuse, especially for women and children—as [multiple evidence already shows](#). While many children in the North can attend classes using online tools and video conferencing platforms, these resources are out of reach for most of their peers in the Global South, threatening educational progress and economic prospects for a generation of kids and youth. Inability to exercise, to have human interactions at early or old ages, high levels of stress, are also likely to lead to large scale physical and mental health consequences. People with pre-existing health conditions and disabilities that require daily care may simply be left on their own to die. For those who survive, future support and educational needs will be enormous. A key question will also be when and how to ‘reopen’ economies, with which workers, priorities, modalities, etc.

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The crisis' sociopolitical implications are also extremely worrisome. Social tensions are bound to arise—especially a few months after social movements erupted in many parts of the globe, from Chile to Lebanon. In the past weeks, already, protests from informal workers have taken place in [Colombia](#), [Morocco](#) and [Egypt](#) as government subsidies are either insufficient or nonexistent to replace vital daily wages. [Some governments](#) are trying to set up and send unconditional cash transfers—but targeting scarce resources is a challenge. Using contact tracing technologies and other data analytics approaches can help—but they raise concerns about the possibility of abuses and entrenchments. States tend to expand through crises such as wars and pandemics, and, in our day and age, the risk of lasting reinforcement of State surveillance is real.

These fault lines run from, and to the Global North and geopolitical spheres. Following years of major investments, China is currently ramping up its efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa to [provide medical supplies](#) and testing kits. Meanwhile, official development assistance from OECD countries may go down after the current surge, and demand for products and services from the Global South may shrink. Control over key resources such as land and data and digital sovereignty are on the line.

The potential geopolitical ramifications of the crisis are manifold and very difficult to predict. But looking at the situations and decisions of Western Europe and the U.S., absent from major actions in the Global South, it is not implausible to foresee a nightmare scenario where millions of people in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa would be on the brink of starvation. Added to this are the risks of increased migration to Europe, the threat of flare-ups from ongoing or simmering civil and interstate conflicts, or surges in crime and violence. Entire generations of the most vulnerable people, especially the poor, women, children, teens, refugees, displaced people, could face a life of struggles and despair.

In this context, we believe the Global North has a moral imperative and an existential interest in supporting and joining the Global South in developing and deploying a comprehensive and transformative strategic vision and action plan. In particular, while the U.S. and other developed countries and regions will have a major role to play in the global response, we, as Europeans — or as individuals with strong ties with the European Union — believe Europe and its members States should be at the forefront of the response for historical, geographic, philosophical, and economic reasons. It is difficult to overstate how much of the future of hundreds of millions of humans and probably humanity's fate and the future world order may be played out in the next few months.

At the same time, stakeholders in the Global South are already actively responding to the crisis— this includes governments, civil society organizations, startups, and communities at local, national, and regional levels, through hundreds of initiatives. In some unexpected cases, gangs are even stepping up to enforce containment measures, [as in Brazil](#). More fundamentally, the Global South is filled with resources, networks, and generally, people, who have shown resilience, ingenuity, creativity, entrepreneurship, and solidarity for many decades. The public health system of regions such as Kerala in India have so far been able to face the crisis far more efficiently than others in the U.S. and Europe. All initiatives should build on a deep understanding of local needs and active involvement of local systems and networks.

Last, and critically, we believe that today's data, technology and AI can be of great help if used to promote a human-centered vision. Understanding local needs, risks, resources and gaps in a holistic manner will require collecting and analyzing diverse types of data—from qualitative perception surveys to mobility and epidemiological models based on location data from cell phones. Machine-learning models relying on satellite imagery and other big data sources combined with traditional sources can help estimate economic impacts at micro and macro levels, or help governments allocate resources more efficiently, amongst others. Developing and deploying these approaches and tools in privacy-preserving manners will be critical for the long term. In the short-term, ensuring that populations, respondents and key decision makers have the right information, trust it, and are able and willing to act upon it, will be vital.

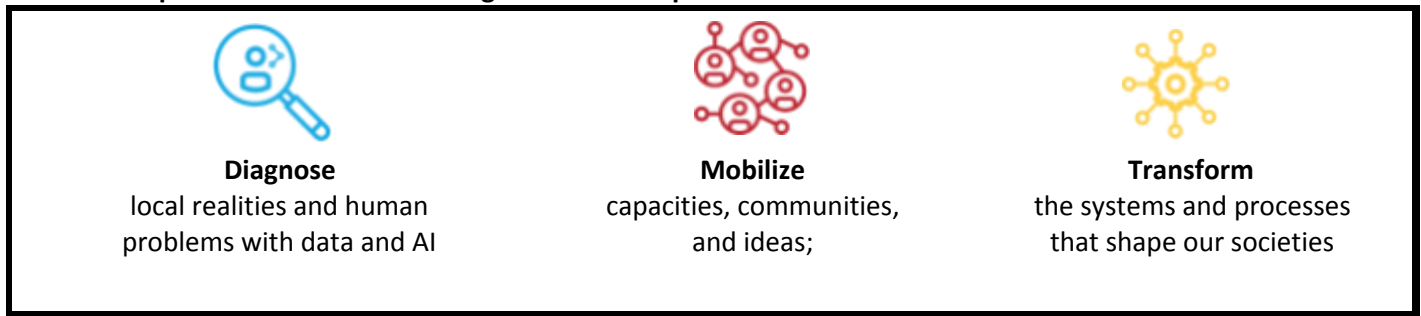
As much as our vision is not focused on the short-term public health response, it is not a techno-solutionist vision either. Our collective experience suggests that technology is only a magnifier of human intent and capacity. For any support to be successful and transformative, local populations and partners must be involved and in the driver's seat during all steps of the process—from the identification of needs to the implementation of results.

2. Strategic Vision and Proposed Action Plan




In this context, through our proposed “COVID-19 Global South Response and Recovery Strategic Vision and Action Plan”, Data-Pop Alliance will contribute, to the best of our capacities, to address some of these massive needs and risks, based on our experience, resources and network

We know that many initiatives are underway and realize we will only be able to respond to a limited number of requests for assistance. But we also believe that our approach is relevant and scalable to several countries and regions, over the next few weeks and months, with appropriate levels of funding.

Our action plan is structured according to the 3 work pillars of DPA:



In the context of the COVID-19 crisis and proposal, our actions will aim to:

-  1. **Diagnose**, by producing **evidence to support timely contextualized decision-making** to avoid or mitigate COVID-19 community spread;
-  2. **Mobilize**, by strengthening **local awareness, information, capacities and connections** to help countries and communities deal with COVID-19;
-  3. **Transform**, by developing **transformative data-enabled policies, strategies and intervention to recover** from Covid-19.

In terms of implementation modalities, our activities will reflect and rely on DPA’s foundational operating principles, in that they will be:

- Demand-driven:** All activities will be co-developed and deployed with local partners, national government institution, UN country office, CSO, typically following an expression of interest after initial discussions;
- Locally anchored:** in each country of intervention we will have dedicated teams and focal points on the ground, either already part of the DPA team and network, or hired on a case by case basis;
- Human-centered**, reflecting core ethical principles (of consent, participation, beneficence...) and aiming to minimize harm and maximize benefits for the most vulnerable, including with the set-up of local CODEs (Council for the Orientation of Development and Ethics);
- State-of-the art**, bringing to bear the best international knowledge, experts, partners, and practices on the projects;
- ‘Big picture, big vision’**, taking into societal and political factors, and long-term considerations, as well as aiming to connect different projects to promote transfer of ideas.

What we propose is a menu of options, or “bricks”, which can be assembled in different ways according to needs and resources.

This menu of options includes the following (high level descriptions, subject to adjustments):

1. Diagnose | COVID-19: producing evidence to support timely contextualized decision-making to avoid or mitigate community spread

Work streams / Sub-objectives	Data / Methods
1. Multidimensional assessment of countries and communities' risk, readiness, resources and needs with a focus on public health, perceptions, poverty and livelihoods, gender, and educational aspects (papers, data visualizations, synthesis dashboards, maps),	CDRs, satellite imagery, primary survey data collection (web, SMS, voice), official statistics and economic indicators, key informant interviews (KIIs), desk analysis...
2. Modeling and optimizing of local response effectiveness (reduction in mobility following containment measures) and impact (papers, algorithms, indicators, maps),	CDRs, primary survey data collection (web, SMS, voice), health site location, official statistics, KIIs, technical guide for telcos...
3. Measuring and monitoring the corollary effects of COVID-19 on societies—poverty, domestic violence, mental health, education and child development, social tensions, etc. (papers, briefing notes, data viz., dashboard).	CDRs, primary survey data collection, official statistics, KIIs, desk analysis, focus groups....
4. Synthesis paper of global policy interventions and historical learnings. (White Paper).	KIIs, desk analysis, literature review on the current and past pandemics

2. Mobilize: Strengthening local awareness, information, capacities and connections to help countries and communities deal with COVID-19

Work streams / Sub-objectives	Activities / Means
1. Promoting local awareness, information and advice on Covid-19	Weekly Country Briefs in local language in DPA C19-Observatory , public awareness campaigns and sensitization, Chatbot on critical questions in local language...
2. Fostering local-to-global connections for advocacy and coordination	Dedicated COVID-19 cells in all countries, local <i>Council for the Orientation of Development and Ethics</i> (CODE) mirrored on those of the OPAL project, network of cells and partners to share information and best practices across countries...
3. Strengthening local decision-makers capacities and incentives	"Data Vs. COVID-19" Toolkits, "COVIDEOs" series with global DPA experts and practitioners in local languages, interactive virtual webinars and capacity and community building workshops....

3. Transform: Develop transformative data-enabled policies and strategies to recover from COVID-19

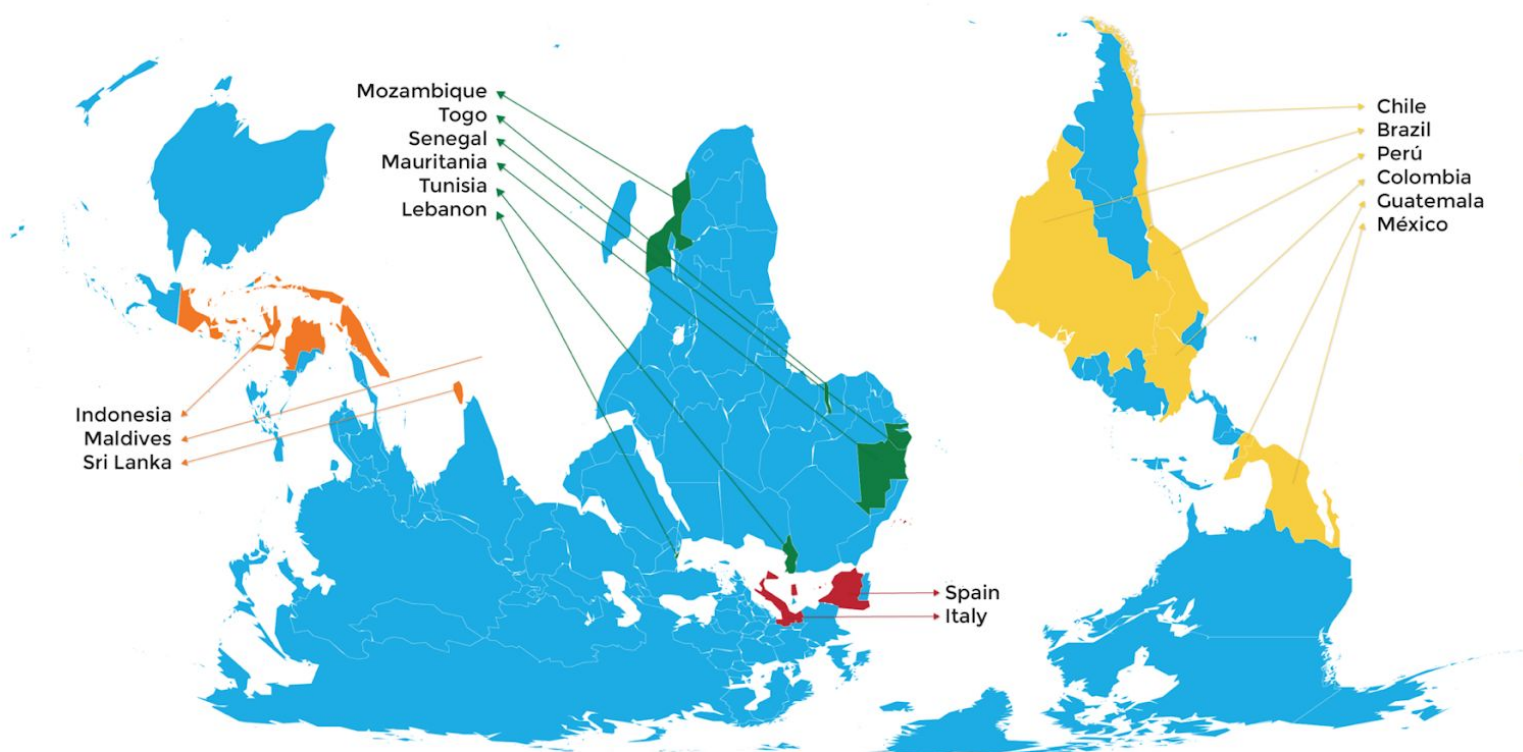
Work streams / Sub-objectives	Activities / Means
1. Supporting immediate social protection policy responses to COVID-19.	Support the design and targeting of social protection policy response through satellite imagery analysis and interactive decision support platform for policymakers, with ProsperIA...

2. Addressing structural development challenges through data and technology

- Research and advice on key post-COVID-19 world issues e.g.:
- (1) When and how to restart and “rewire” economies and societies, with which workers and sectors?
 - (2) The future of tech-enabled social safety nets and social protection
 - (3) Building data-driven public health systems
 - (4) Enabling systematic private-data sharing and use for policy, research, and social transformation, by building ethical and scalable technological systems and governance standards for private-to-public data sharing for better societies.

3. Initial Countries of Focus

Countries of short-term deployment of projects based on current discussions and resources are mapped below. Others will be added according to needs, including: Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Liberia, DRC, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Cambodia, Turkey, etc.



4. Resources and Contacts

Online resources:

- General site: <https://datapopalliance.org/covid19/>
- DPA C19 Observatory page: <https://datapopalliance.org/c19observatory/>
- Current ‘Response Package’ (more detailed version of this Note): https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NIDspqdUXq5lcDy_i2Z9BkZ9ewb3xU4T/view

Contacts:

- For general expressions of interest and questions: covid19@datapopalliance.org
- For specific questions and expressions of interest to support our work: eletouze@datapopalliance.org
- To donate to our effort: <https://datapopalliance.org/support-our-work/>