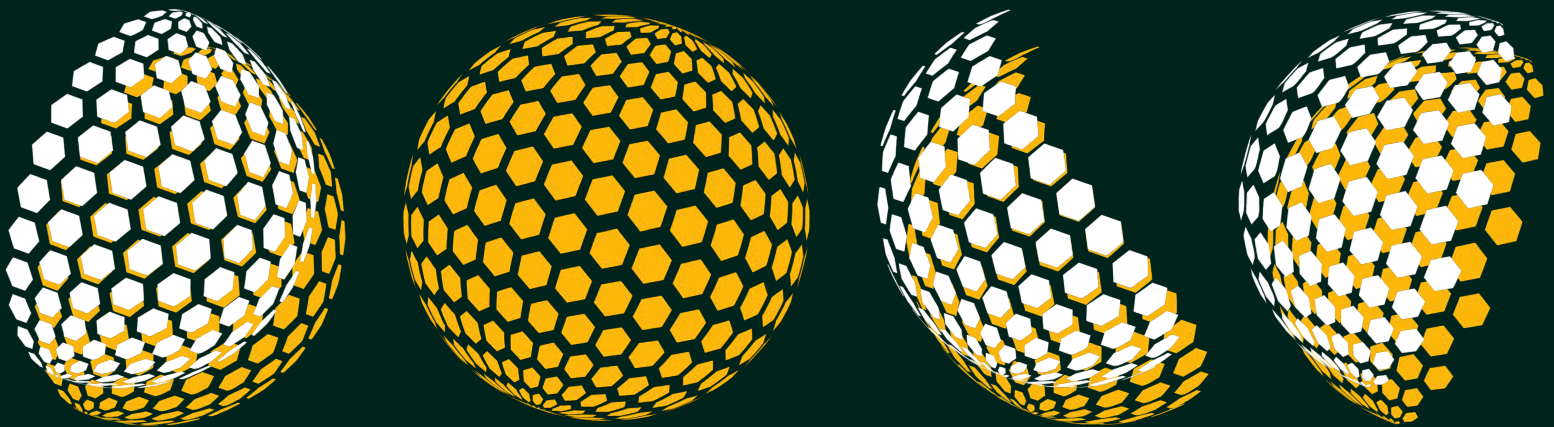


Reimagining Development Data: Global Data Asset Inventory

Brief



July 2026

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Acknowledgments

This policy brief was prepared by Bryan Burgess, Divya Mathew, and Rodney Knight (AidData). The findings and conclusions are those of the authors alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of the funders and advisors we thank below.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the many individuals across the development data landscape that we have called, spoken with, and asked for advice over the past six months. Their insights provided an invaluable framework for understanding the challenges facing the development landscape.

We greatly appreciate the time of our AidData colleagues who supported the data collection for this inventory. This report draws on many hours of work identifying and reviewing data assets, and the careful effort required to make real-world initiatives fit into clear, meaningful categories. The team is: Ana Horigoshi, Kelsey Marshall, Katherine Nolan, Jonathan A. Solis, Narayani Sritharan, Jessica Wells, and Wanqi Zhu.

This study was made possible through generous financial support from the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Citation

Burgess, B., Mathew, D., & Knight, R. (2026). *Reimagining Development Data (RD2) Global Data Asset Inventory*. Brief. AidData at William & Mary.

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Acronyms

CDCS	USAID Country Development Cooperation Strategies	ODA	Official Development Assistance
CPIMS+	Child Protection Information Management System	NDP	National Development Plan
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	NFHS	National Family Health Survey in India
DEC	USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse	NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys Program	NSO	National Statistical Office
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
FEWS NET	Famine Early Warning Systems Network	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
GBVIMS+	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System	UN	United Nations
HDX	Humanitarian Data Exchange	UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
ICC - OC	Ocean Conservancy: International Coastal Clean-up	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
JMP	Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene	UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
LMIC	Lower and Middle-income countries	UNESCO-UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation	UNOSAT	United Nations Satellite Center
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
MLW	Marine Litter Watch	VNR	Voluntary National Review
		WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

Global support for Official Development Assistance (ODA) is more uncertain than it has been in decades. According to a 2026 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), ODA is projected to decline 6.9 percent from 2025 levels, marking the third consecutive year of declining commitments.¹ In an era of constrained budgets, donors face increasing pressure to effectively target and monitor development programs, ensuring that they continue to deliver results. At the same time, funding for data to inform the targeting of limited resources and monitor progress towards targets is also facing precarious drops. In 2023, ODA for data and statistics comprised only 0.25 percent of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donor portfolios.² DAC donors mobilized the largest sums of financial support to data systems in 2023, but they are also among those projected to make the largest aid cuts in 2026.³ Multilateral institutions with longstanding roles in statistical stewardship and capacity building are expected to scale back support, even as they adjust to large funding losses themselves.

Several data programs that are critically relied upon have already been disrupted. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) was offline for five months in early 2025, following the closure of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).⁴ This system, used widely by governments and humanitarian agencies around the world to monitor food insecurity, became inaccessible without warning. Similarly, the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC), a cache of project insights dating back to 1975, was also taken offline. The DEC repository served not only U.S. government officials, but also a broad community of development professionals including researchers, practitioners, and implementers.

Other data resources face similar risks. The United States government was the largest funder of the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) program, disbursing \$45 million in 2023, but ended its support in August 2025.⁵ Although the DHS has secured an emergency grant to continue operations, the long-term sustainability of one of the most widely used sources of population and health data remains uncertain. These disruptions extend beyond high-profile programs or those funded by the U.S. government. As part of the Reimagining Development Data (RD²) project, AidData is examining how these changes affect the producers, users, and beneficiaries of development data.

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2026, June). *ODA Projections for 2026 and the Near Term*. Paris: OECD.
https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2026/06/oda-projections-for-2026-and-the-near-term_10979bc6/d7c74fa2-en.pdf

² PARIS21 (2025), The PARIS21 Partner Report on Support to Statistics 2025: Maintaining Momentum to Protect Hard-Won Gains. https://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/media/document/2025-11/press-2025_0.pdf

³ OECD. (2026). *ODA Projections for 2026 and the Near Term*.

⁴ Igoe, M. (2024, May). *FEWS NET—once USAID's flagship famine warning system—is back online*. Devex.
<https://www.devex.com/news/fews-net-once-usaid-s-flagship-famine-warning-system-is-back-online-110357>

⁵ PARIS21 (2025), The PARIS21 Partner Report on Support to Statistics 2025.

Scope of Brief

Recent declines in development assistance from bilateral and multilateral donors have affected development programs in lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Data systems that support planning, monitoring, and evaluation have experienced reductions in funding that limit their ability to collect, analyze, and disseminate information. Although some private foundations have increased support to mitigate gaps, the long-term sustainability of critical data systems remain in question.

The Reimagining Development Data (RD²) project seeks to assess the extent of these funding reductions through a systematic review of funding for key data assets. For this review, “data assets” encompasses data collection systems, data tools (e.g., analysis tools, dashboards), and data repositories. A first step in this process is identifying which data assets to include. Our list prioritized data assets with large user bases within and across LMICs, those with strong track records of donor support, and those used to monitor international development goals such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The lists of data assets generated covers seven sectors: agriculture and food security, disaster and humanitarian response, education, environment, gender, governance, and health. Our aim is to compile comprehensive lists of data assets relevant to each sector. As we gather additional information and consult with data users, we may revise these lists to better reflect user needs and preferences. While some adjustments may occur, the current lists have undergone sufficient review to begin gathering data on their finances, as well as other characteristics that determine sustainability.

2. Characteristics of Data Asset Lists

Our data inventory identified 496 unique data assets.⁶ These included not only datasets, but also the infrastructure that enables policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to access, interpret, and use development data. The list covers data repositories, data portals,⁷ data visualization tools, data analysis tools or guidelines, information management systems, key reports, and constructed indices.⁸ Datasets comprised the largest share of assets, followed by indices, data repositories, and data portals (see Table 1 below). Information management systems, such as the Primero-based CPIMS+ and GBVIMS+, which support case management for child protection and gender-based violence incidents in humanitarian settings, do not

⁶ For full details of how data assets were identified and the inclusion criteria, see the Methodology section in the accompanying file *RD² Data Asset Inventory_Technical Documentation*.

⁷ For the purposes of our study, we defined data portals as topic-specific resources that compiled one or more select data sources and allowed users access to insights through visualization or query tools. Data repositories functioned more akin to catalogues: often sector-agnostic, with longer lists of datasets and limited interpretive or interactive functions.

⁸ While we include both primary and secondary data in the category for “dataset,” we defined data indices as a subset of secondary data sources that were calculated to produce a composite indicator or series of indicators.

always publish open-access data, but remain essential data-management tools for organizations working directly with vulnerable populations.

To organize the inventory, we grouped individual data assets into 259 distinct asset families. These families link multiple data assets produced under the same overarching initiative. For example, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF's Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene (JMP) produces separate data reports on water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions in health care facilities, schools, and households. Although released as distinct databases, the same JMP team produces these three data assets and they are therefore linked under one asset family. Only a small number of data-producing organizations were linked to multiple data families; these were typically larger bilateral donors and multilateral organizations with the capacity to manage multiple data initiatives in parallel. For a full list of data asset families, see the accompanying file *RD² Data Asset Inventory_Technical Documentation*.

We recorded 230 asset publishers, which generally (but not always) aligned with the asset families. For each asset, we identified the institution responsible for producing and releasing data assets, rather than the funding entities. Publishers were consolidated to the level of the parent organization and reported at the project or unit level.⁹ For the full list of publishers, see *RD² Data Asset Inventory_Technical Documentation*.

For each data asset, the inventory includes fields detailing: the publisher, a link to a source, publication frequency, geographic coverage, sectoral coverage, whether the asset includes gender-disaggregated indicators or a gender focus, an assessment of the year of last update, and the type of data asset.

Table 1. Number of Data Families and Assets by Type

Asset Type	Family Count	Asset Count
Dataset	117	202
Index	49	62
Data repository/publication list	40	49
Data portal	37	47
Data visualizer	34	43
Data guide/tool	29	43
Reports/evaluation findings	25	35

⁹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS) and the International Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO were two exceptions, as they were deemed sufficiently large-scale and distinct enough to be considered separate entities.

Information management system	12	13
Code	1	1

2.1 Sectors

Practitioners across development sectors vary in their operational needs and modes of work, and the data assets they rely on reflect this diversity. To capture this variation, the research team conducted sector-specific reviews of key datasets, indices, tools, portals, and guidelines. This review was supplemented by a review of SDG indicators, which span 17 different goals and a range of development domains. For this project, we focused on seven distinct sectors: agriculture and food security, disaster and humanitarian response, education, environment, gender, governance, and health. We also recorded several cross-sectoral or sector-agnostic assets—such as population data or GDP statistics—that underpin analysis across multiple sectors. Many data assets were also relevant to more than one sector and were coded accordingly (see Table 2).

Table 2. Number of Data Asset Families by Sector

Sector Name	Family Count	Asset Count
Agriculture and food security	47	65
Disaster	53	58
Education	22	27
Environment	84	120
Gender	38	45
Governance	50	105
Health	40	75
Development (cross-sector)	68	114

Notes: This table depicts the count of data assets and families by sector. Individual assets or families may be relevant to multiple areas, in which case they were coded to all relevant sectors. Therefore, the sums in this table exceed the number of distinct families and assets.

The largest number of assets appeared in the environment sector. This reflects the broad distribution of sources for climate and environmental monitoring. Across SDGs 13 (Climate Change), 14 (Life below Water), and 15 (Life on Land), we identified 120 distinct sources. SDG indicator metadata often specifies reporting frameworks that combine multiple sources from several publishers. For example, metadata for SDG Indicator 14.1, “By 2025, prevent and

significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution,” assigns compilation responsibility to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) drawing on contributions from seven data providers in addition to national governments: Geo Blue Planet; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA); Esri; Florida State University; European Environment Agency (EEA); Marine Litter Watch (MLW); Ocean Conservancy International Coastal Clean-up (OC-ICC).

Cross-sectoral data sources, or assets identified in SDG indicator reviews that did not fit neatly into one of the seven sectors, formed the next largest group. These include baseline demographic and economic data that feed into the calculation of other indicators and support the development of data portals. Although not tied to a single sector, these assets play a central role in transforming raw data into policy-relevant information that leaders and practitioners can use.

Education, by contrast, is a relatively concentrated sector. Education data is reliant on a small number of international data assets and a larger number of national-level planning and monitoring systems. Because this study excludes single-country monitoring exercises, the number of education assets identified is smaller than in other sectors.

The health sector will be an important focus area moving forward. We recorded the third-highest number of individual assets in the health sector (75), but the third-lowest number of asset families (40) (see Table 2 above). This indicates a fairly high concentration of health data within a limited number of asset families. Many of these families were primarily supported by ODA from the U.S. prior to 2025, making health a key sector to monitor for risks to data assets, as U.S. funding for global health has declined.

2.2 Regional Overview

Given the scale of this project and the need to produce timely, actionable insights, most of the data assets reviewed were global in scope (see Table 3 below). These assets covered a wide range of countries across all regions. In the case of tools for disaster and humanitarian response, such as the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) or the United Nations Satellite Center (UNOSAT), the asset may not be deployed globally, but it uses a standardized methodology that can be applied across countries and contexts.

North America had the least dedicated coverage in the inventory, which aligns with expectations: the scope of this project is to track development data assets that are impacted by ODA cuts, which typically tend to be in the Global South. Many of the development data assets identified are produced by the governments of the United States, Canada, and Mexico, but these assets are not oriented toward domestic use. All three of these countries also maintain highly developed National Statistical Systems that generate country-specific data and fall outside the scope of this study.

Table 3. Number of Data Assets and Families by Region

Region	Family Count	Asset Count
Global	213	403
Semi-global	12	21
East Asia and Pacific	7	7
Europe and Eurasia	11	11
Latin America and the Caribbean	18	28
Middle East and North Africa	4	4
North America	2	2
South Asia	7	8
Sub-Saharan Africa	19	20
Other (limited geographies)	12	13

Note: Semi-global indicates that data assets covered a substantial number of countries in multiple regions, and/or were restricted to certain World Bank income categories. The “Other” category contains data assets limited to fewer than 10 countries, or with otherwise unknown geography.

3. Initial Findings from Review of Data Assets

3.1 Buy-in from the Private Sector

We identified 87 data assets with documented use cases in the private sector. In many instances, references indicated direct use by for-profit entities and large companies, alongside development-sector organizations. Most of these assets were cross-sectoral, focusing on macroeconomic and governance conditions relevant to trade and investment. This finding suggests that private-sector actors use and may rely on several foundational datasets, and they may represent a potential source of future support.

3.2 Role of AI in Development Data Production

Amid declining funding for development data and statistics, several data producers are weighing whether artificial intelligence (AI) can help accelerate or streamline data creation. While AI offers efficiencies, its use warrants caution. Many data assets contain nuanced methodological choices, contextual subtleties, and country-specific variations that are difficult to evaluate or harmonize automatically. For example, in one multi-country survey, the research team identified inconsistencies in the age ranges defined as “reproductive age” of the

respondents. Although such differences may appear minor qualitatively, automated smoothing or AI-generated recommendations for programming could amplify these discrepancies and materially affect downstream impacts. This underscores the need for careful oversight when integrating AI into core data production and analysis processes.

3.3 Gender

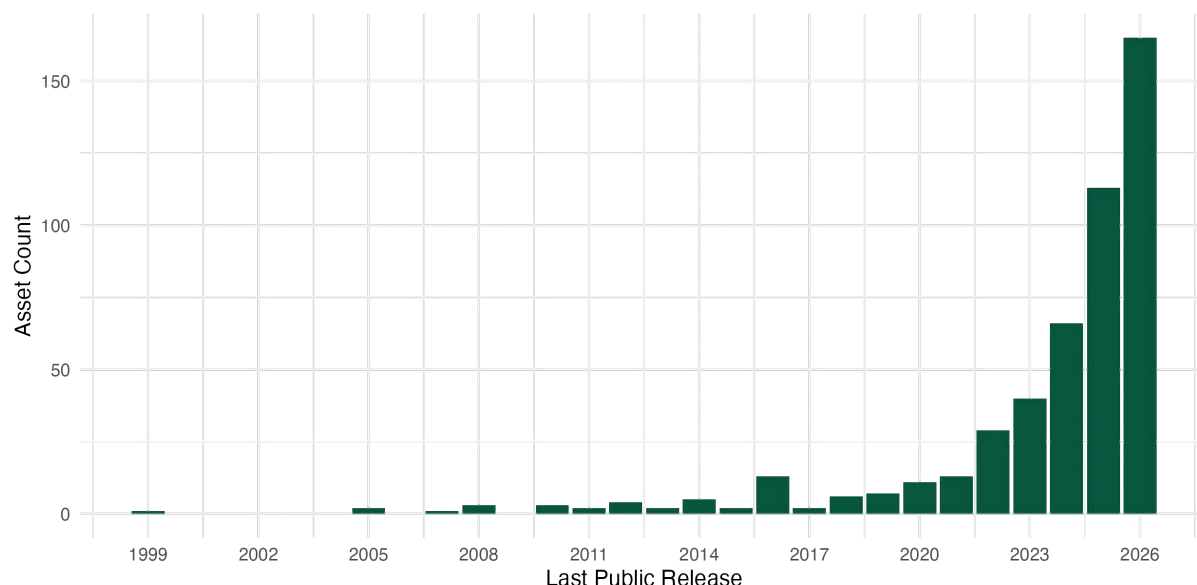
Across our review, we assessed whether data assets included features that enabled gender-relevant analysis. Drawing on the OECD-DAC categorization methodology, we applied a tag to indicate whether data assets had “significant” gender relevance (e.g., a broader survey that includes gender-disaggregated data on education outcomes) or a “principal focus” on gender (e.g., a survey on girls’ education outcomes). This tag was applied separate from and in addition to the “gender” sector classification, to reflect the cross-sectoral nature of gender-relevant data.

Roughly six in ten identified assets did not include gender-disaggregated components. Three in ten data assets had a significant gender relevance, but were not exclusively focused on gender issues, and fewer than one in ten were gender-focused datasets. These patterns illustrate the challenges of “embedding this [gender] data into broader data frameworks,”¹⁰ and the limited integration of gender-disaggregated information across data systems.

¹⁰ Data2X. (2026, April). What We Built Together: A Brief History of Data2X. Washington, DC. <https://opendatawatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/Data2x/Data2X-Reflections-What-We-Built-Together-A-Brief-History.pdf>

3.4 How well does the timing and frequency of data assets match the need?

Figure 1. Timeline of Most Recent Public Releases, 1999-2026



Note: This graph depicts the count of identified data assets by year of the most recent update. This was determined by reviewing the publication data of the most recent data release, or in the case of data portals or repositories, reviewing the most recent publications or data coverage. This excludes five data assets with unknown release dates.

At the time of writing, most data assets in the inventory remain contemporary. A majority were updated in 2025 or 2026 (278 of 495), indicating that many producers and programs have continued data release cycles despite recent funding disruptions (see Figure 1). As a result, policymakers and program analysts still have access to recent data for many development domains.¹¹

However, these patterns warrant cautious interpretation. More than 100 assets were last updated in 2025, and these releases may reflect the use of funds allocated prior to that year, rather than sustained resourcing. The same may be true of data assets updated in 2026. Funding disruptions will likely affect different asset types unevenly. Already, consulted experts have shared that organizations plan to prioritize core data production while scaling back other components of their portfolios. In the short-term, this may allow certain datasets to continue timely updates, but the infrastructure surrounding them—such as data portals, external reporting, and linkages to other data systems—may deteriorate due to reduced maintenance. Non-core data production efforts may also be discontinued.

¹¹ The time series shown in Figure 1 is not intended to represent the full scope of data tools, but rather only those identified within this study. There is a recency bias, as many older data assets that have not been published in the past several years are no longer accessible, including numerous USAID assets.

In the next phase of the RD² project, the team will conduct a systematic review to assess the sustainability of recent update cycles and identify which assets are most at risk of interruption.

A further area of concern is the number of assets that have not been updated recently. Over 200 assets last published an update in 2024 or earlier, and one in ten have not been updated since before 2020. Given the substantial changes in technology, development priorities, and global conditions since the COVID-19 pandemic, many of these assets no longer serve the needs of planners in 2026. This highlights a broader systemic challenge for leaders seeking to bridge the gap between data production and use (see Table 4).

Table 4. Breakdown of Asset Update Frequency

Frequency	Asset Count
Daily/real-time	52
Weekly	7
Monthly	20
Quarterly/biannual	8
Annually	206
Multi-year (set schedule)	60
Multi-year (variable schedule)	28
Ad hoc/static	106
Unknown	9

Note: This table shows the approximate update frequency of different data assets, based on review of recent releases and documentation. Daily/real-time assets include assets that are continuously updated via a dispersed set of data providers, such as data portals that allow a network of users to upload their data to the commons at any point. "Multi-year (set schedule)" indicates that the asset is updated at a frequency of 2-6 years on a regular schedule, while "multi-year (variable schedule)" indicates that the asset is regularly updated at intervals greater than a year, but this has not been consistent. Ad hoc indicates that the asset is updated on a non-regular cycle, often linked to specific projects, or was published once and has remained static since.

Production schedules are often dictated by the supply side, i.e., the data production method, rather than the demand side, i.e., the need for timely data. Survey instruments, for example, can only be deployed at certain intervals, in part due to the operational costs. In other instances, satellite-based data collection produces near-real-time data, but this is costly and is subject to technical limitations, including orbital cycles and satellite lifespans.

Long data production and review cycles have been a standing challenge for policymakers seeking to integrate evidence into program design. Recent disruptions to data production, release, and maintenance have exacerbated these constraints. The majority of assets in the inventory are updated annually or on multi-year cycles. In practice, this can leave national planners with data that is at least 18 months old, a significant delay for policymakers relying on timely data to enact responsive programs.

Even more challenging for leaders are the data assets that are released on a variable timeline or on a case-by-case basis. Unpredictable release cycles pose serious roadblocks to national leaders' ability to incorporate data into their policy processes, and variable release cycles were the status quo prior to funding disruptions for 28 data assets reviewed. Disruptions can also have downstream effects, as many data producers require reliable information to initiate their own work. For example, Afrobarometer has been unable to conduct political or economic public opinion polling in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as the last census was conducted in 1984 and the absence of recent census data prevents the construction of a reliable and nationally representative sampling frame.

3.5 Are there characteristics of the data assets that were unexpected?

Generalists vs. Specialists

Producers and users of development data vary widely, and the data assets they generate reflect different operational models. Several data asset families in the inventory include data across a range of sectors, countries, and asset types. These producers function as the “Swiss Army knives” of the development data ecosystem, drawing on diverse sources and supporting a wide range of activities. This pattern was most common in the governance and cross-sectoral data families.

In contrast to the “Swiss Army knives,” some producers are specialists—focused on a single core data asset or a narrow set of related tools. Environmental monitoring tends to rely on unique data tools or datasets, sometimes combining multiple sources within a single methodological framework. For example, UNOSAT maintains several projects centered on satellite-based damage assessments. These assessments feed into platforms such as UN ASIGN and the Global Disaster Awareness and Coordination System (GDACS), as well as contribute to the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX), ReliefWeb, and PreventionWeb. Focused and reliable data plays an important role as a reference point in rapidly evolving contexts.

At this stage of the project, it remains unclear whether generalists or specialists offer a clearer path to long-term sustainability and resilience. In all likelihood, both approaches serve complementary functions, and future RD² research will examine the conditions under which each model attains resilience and whether there are opportunities for generalist and specialist producers to provide mutually-reinforcing support.

Multilaterals and Universities as Key Publishers of Data Assets

Two notable clusters emerged in our review of publishers of key data assets: large multilateral organizations and universities. Multilateral entities—including the World Bank and various UN agencies—produce a wide range of data assets, from sector-specific guidelines and portals to large survey programs like the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS).

Universities also represent a large share of publishers: nearly one in ten publishers identified in this review were academic institutions. University-based data publishing may offer some resilience, due to institutional continuity and longstanding commitments to the preservation of knowledge for the public good. Examples include the Global Roads Open Access Data Set (Columbia University's CIESIN), the Lives Saved Tool (Johns Hopkins University), the DHIS2 project (HISP Centre at the University of Oslo), and the Global Disaster Risk Index (published jointly by the Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict at the Ruhr University Bochum and an association of NGOs, Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft). However, university-produced data assets are not without risk. Some are maintained by individual researchers or small research lab teams,¹² which may struggle if key personnel transition. Ensuring that data production methods and documentation are publicly available can help support continuity.

Shared Dependence on Core Data Assets

Across the variety of data portals and indices captured in this inventory, it became clear that many assets rely on a small set of shared primary data sources. For example, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index and UNDP's Gender Inequality Index both draw on educational attainment data from UNESCO-UIS surveys and life expectancy data. Similarly, the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Parline data has its own dedicated portal but also serves as a source for the political empowerment component of the Global Gender Gap Index and for UN DESAs Minimum Set of Gender Indicators portal and data package.

In future stages of this study, the RD² team will examine these core nodes of primary data assets more closely. As central points within larger networks of data assets, they benefit from the support of a broad community of practice and institutional uptake, but also represent points of vulnerability if disruptions occur.

¹² Our team also reviewed several replication datasets or project-specific data published in conjunction with academic studies, but determined that these were too limited in scale and coverage to include in this inventory. Several repositories storing these resources have been included, such as Harvard's Dataverse.

4. Plan for Data Asset Inventory Moving Forward

The Data Asset Inventory serves as the foundation for future research through the Reimagining Development Data (RD²) project. Following the release of version 1.0 of the inventory, we will seek input from data producers and users during a comment period. Based on the input received, the inventory will be revised as needed. While major changes are not anticipated, additions or deletions will be made where warranted. Additional adjustments may be made at subsequent research phases, such as deleting data assets that historically have received little donor funding.

Going forward, the research team will conduct an analysis of funding trends for the data assets, assessing their resilience to fluctuations in donor funding and support. In parallel, the team will conduct key informant interviews and a global survey to gather more information about data assets' funding sources, sustainability, and pathways to resilience.

Synthesizing results from these analyses, AidData will publish a series of sector briefs that provide a deeper dive into data assets for the RD² sectors. These findings will be consolidated into a global synthesis report. A cross-sectoral gender data brief will also be published, examining the integration and uptake of gender-relevant information across development data assets.