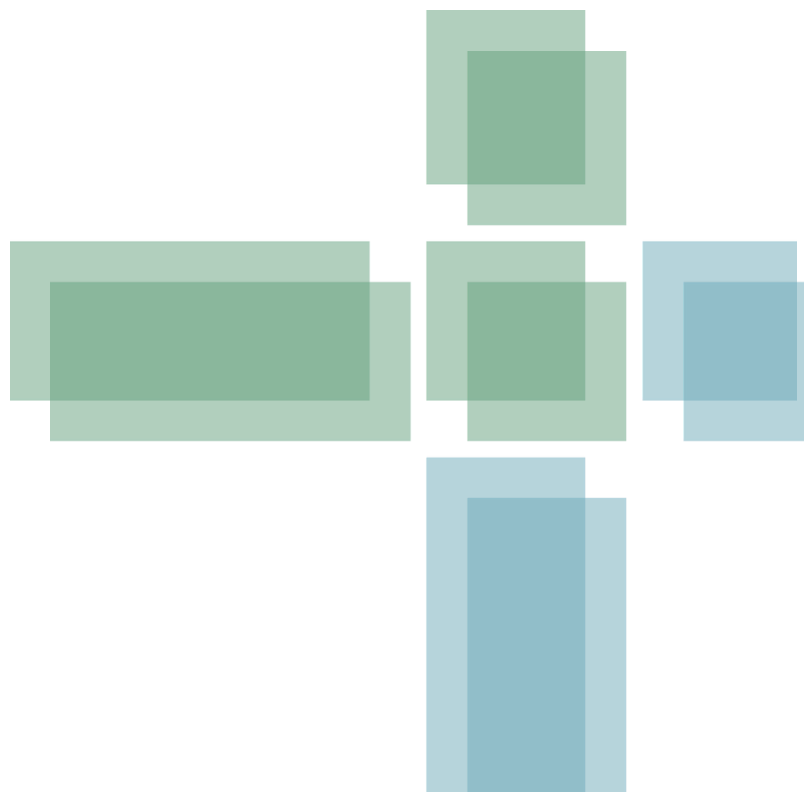


UNLOCKING DATA, POWERING CITIZENS

Why India Must Build a Fair and
Inclusive Data Economy



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INTRODUCTION

Data, once an invisible by-product of digital activity, has become the lifeblood of the next economy. From climate systems and urban mobility to behavioural insights and local commerce, data holds transformative potential. Yet much of this potential remains unrealised, trapped in silos or captured by a few powerful custodians.

If AI is to serve everyone, citizens and businesses alike, we must unlock data as a shared asset, design systems where value flows both ways, and ensure that those who generate data also benefit from it.

THE UNTAPPED POWER OF MACRO AND MICRO DATA

Macro datasets, like weather patterns, geospatial layers, infrastructure flows, provide large-scale context. Micro datasets, such as local consumption trends and prescription patterns capture the pulse of everyday life. Combined, they become catalytic.

Imagine district-level health trends integrated with anonymised local prescription signals to anticipate disease outbreaks. Or weather intelligence combined with agricultural transaction data to guide farmers in real time. These are practical opportunities waiting to be unlocked.

THE STRUCTURAL IMBALANCE IN TODAY'S DATA ECONOMY

Today, data largely moves in one direction: from people to platforms. Insights are extracted but rarely returned. Value accumulates at the centre, not at the edge.

Consider a pharmaceutical company digitising its field sales activity in a district like Bareilly. Sales representatives record doctor interactions, prescription shifts, seasonal disease patterns. The data is granular, community-rooted, and rich with insight. Yet it remains locked within the enterprise, used primarily to optimise sales and supply chains. The broader health ecosystem (local clinics, policymakers, public health planners) does not benefit from the patterns that emerge.

This is a question of design, not legality. The technology exists. What's missing is institutional adoption, driven largely by fear of sharing and lack of trust.

When insights reach a dead end, society loses compounding value.

FROM EXTRACTION TO UNLOCK: A NEW DATA COMPACT

If we are serious about building AI for citizens, we must rethink the architecture of data exchange. Individuals are active producers of data, not passive consumers of digital services. Businesses are potential contributors to shared intelligence, not merely extractors of insight.

A new compact must ensure four things, which we call **GIVE**:

Guaranteed trust in systems and outputs: data integrity, source reliability, and confidence in AI-generated insights.

Incentives to participate. Not always monetary, but aligned with shared growth and ecosystem resilience.

Value creation. Insights must translate into better services, improved productivity, and stronger local economies.

Exchange mechanisms. Data without collaboration is static; data with collaboration is transformative.

AI AS THE MULTIPLIER FOR CITIZENS AND ENTERPRISES

Artificial intelligence is only as powerful as the data it can responsibly access. As India advances its AI ambitions, data must evolve into a foundational layer of economic infrastructure, much like identity, payments, or connectivity.

The next generation of AI agents will support small retailers managing inventory, farmers navigating climate variability, frontline health workers tracking disease signals, and micro-entrepreneurs competing in digital markets.

Competitive advantage in this AI era will belong to those who can responsibly mobilise diverse, contextual, high-quality data.

THE DATA WINDOW IS OPEN

India's scale, digital public infrastructure, and entrepreneurial depth create a rare opportunity. If we design a data economy where insights circulate rather than stagnate, where businesses grow while communities benefit, we can move from extraction to empowerment.

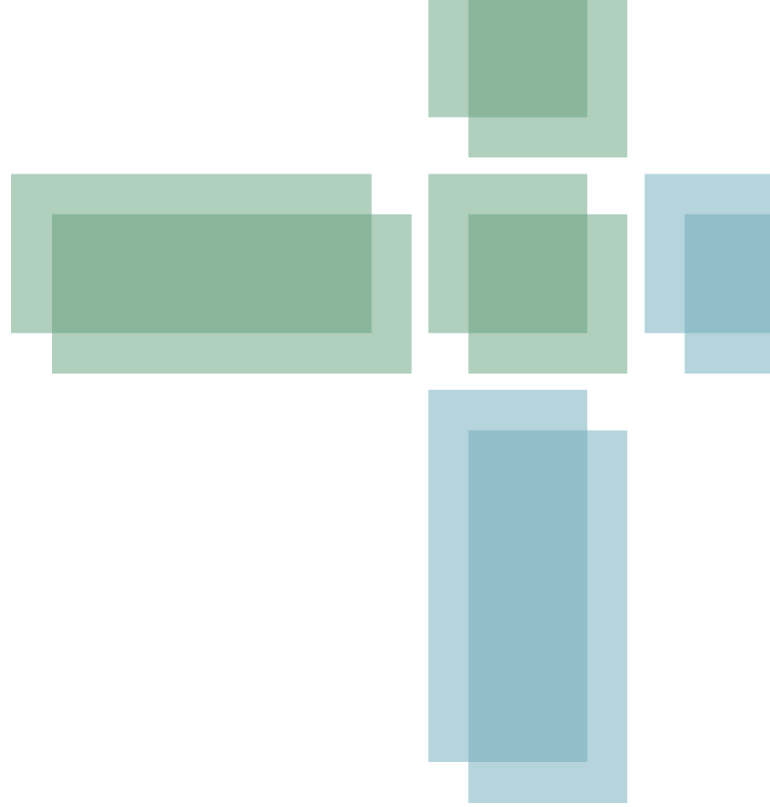
Data already creates economic value. The question is whether we will design systems where that value is shared widely enough to power both prosperity and public good.

AI needs data as fuel. India has the scale, the infrastructure, and the imperative to build a data economy that works for everyone. The window is open. The opportunity is ours to shape.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article was written with inputs from:

1. Shankar Maruwada, Co-founder & CEO, [EkStep Foundation](#)
2. Jagadish Babu, COO, [EkStep Foundation](#)
3. Gaurav Gupta, CGO, [EkStep Foundation](#)
4. Alok Gupta, Chief - Solutions and Product Officer, [EkStep Foundation](#)
5. Deepika Mogilishetty, Chief - Policy and Partnerships, [EkStep Foundation](#)
6. Tanvi Lall, Director, Strategy, [People+ai](#)
7. David, Menezes, Director, Programs, [People+ai](#)
8. Pooja Manjooran, Program, Data & AI, [People+ai](#)
9. Aparajita Choudhury K, Solutions, Data & AI, [People+ai](#)
10. Anuj Gupta, Product, Data & AI, [People+ai](#)
11. Sugandha Srikanteswaran, Technology Consultant, Data & AI, [People+ai](#)
12. Sonia Menezes, Research Writer, [People+ai](#)
13. Sonika Choudhury, [People+ai](#)
14. Tushar Bansal, CPTO, [ONEST](#)
15. Astha Kapoor, Co-Founder and Director, [Aapti Institute](#)
16. Pooja Sharma Goyal, CEO, [The Udaiti Foundation](#)
17. [The Convergence Foundation](#)
18. [OpenAgriNet](#)
19. [Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship \(GAME\)](#)



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