The Alan Turing Institute

Impact story
Supercharging sustainable development

A bold new approach to development economics, championed by the Turing and the United Nations Development Programme, could boost government-backed sustainable development all over the world.

- The UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) address global challenges such as poverty, healthcare and education, with progress tracked using data on development indicators (DIs).

- Prioritising which policy issues to pursue for maximum impact is a big challenge for governments, because traditional analytics take a one-dimensional view of development.

- As part of the Turing's Public Policy programme, ESRC-Turing Fellow Omar Guerrero and his co-author Gonzalo Castañeda have developed a method called Policy Priority Inference, which models the impact of policy decisions on DIs.

- The analytical toolkit is a unique mix of economic theory, behavioural economics, network science and agent-based modelling.

- It allows a government to assess which policy areas should be prioritised in future to best achieve its development goals, and accounts for "spillover" effects between DIs.

- In collaboration with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the toolkit is already being adopted by governments in Latin America.

- The researchers have produced several reports with the UNDP, covering case studies from Mexico and Uruguay, and are now starting a project with Colombia.

Impact

- The Policy Priority Inference toolkit has the potential to benefit the billions of people touched by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

- The UN Development Programme is investing in the technology.

- Case studies from Mexico and Uruguay already produced, with a new project starting in Colombia.

"Participating in the project is extremely valuable. An exercise of this kind obliges us to be in the state of the art of monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda."

Mauricio Francisco Coronado García,
Evaluation Director,
Nuevo León's Executive Office of the Governor,
Mexico