



LOCAL 2030 COALITION KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC NETWORK

Fostering the connection between knowledge and policy development to advance the localization of the SDGs

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

With the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda behind us, time is of essence if we are to achieve the SDGs. To accelerate progress, policy decisions, plans and projects must be informed by relevant evidence co-produced with the pertinent stakeholders, taking into consideration local and political contexts.

However, many countries still face major challenges in implementing sustainable and inclusive development policies due to gaps in capacity, resources and data, especially at the local level. Scientific knowledge is also often disconnected from the decision-making institutions, resulting on policies and strategies that are not well informed, aligned and concerted with stakeholders.

Academia and research could help address many of these challenges at the local level. They are the source of new, innovative, sustainable approaches and solutions to meet the challenges of the 2030 Agenda while also playing a pivotal role in shaping organizational and institutional governance processes.

Today, there are around 250 million University students in the world, up from 100 million in 2000. The academic and research community, particularly the youth, have a crucial role to play in achieving the SDGs, both in its current capacity and potential future roles supporting policy making. While global and regional networks, disciplinary and thematic, of young research are emerging in all continents, new possibilities and opportunities for connecting students from all continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, Oceania, North and Latin America and the Caribbean) also increase. Knowledge development and research thus acquire more value thanks to diverse and multifaceted points of view that can come together, discuss and innovate.

Building on this innovation and opportunities, the Local 2030 Knowledge and Scientific Network (KSN) has been established as an initiative of the Government of Italy in partnership with UN-Habitat and CeSPI ETS, and anchored to the Local 2030 Coalition, with the aim of connecting experts and

scholars from all around the world on SDG Localization to bridge the gap between knowledge, research and policy making at the local level.

OBJECTIVES

The Local2030 Coalition acknowledges that while the SDGs are globally set, their success is largely realized through place-based development. This approach pivots on the principle that the most effective strategies are those rooted in the reality of local contexts, reflecting the nuanced challenges and opportunities specific to each location.

For the scientific and knowledge community, this signifies a strategic pivot from a purely top-down dissemination of global agendas to a more dynamic and responsive model. Researchers and academics are recognizing the necessity of starting from the ground up – aligning their inquiries and analyses with the specific agendas and priorities set by local actors.

By anchoring research in local needs, the scientific community ensures that their contributions are not only relevant but also actionable. This relevance is critical; it means that when local stakeholders formulate or adjust strategies to meet SDG targets, they're doing so with evidence and insights that reflect their lived experiences and knowledge.

Moreover, nurturing a two-way dialogue between the local and global levels fortifies this process. It is a feedback loop where local experiences inform global strategies, which in turn, refine local action. Such continuous interaction brings to the fore a nuanced understanding of how global challenges manifest locally and how local innovations can address global issues. It's a cross-pollination of ideas and practices that enriches the collective effort towards sustainable development.

While the Knowledge and Scientific Network aims at connecting academics to policymakers at the local level to ensure evidence-based decisions, it also aims at translating these findings into global insights and vice-versa to ensure coherence between global agendas and local polities. Moreover, by promoting a global network of academics and researchers from around the world,



the Network will foster the exchange of knowledge and experiences, hence elevating the debate on the role of research and academia for the SDGs based on practices.

This influence occurs through several key avenues:

• By providing a steady stream of research and data, the research community supports the UN's mandate to be data-driven and evidence-based.

- Through capacity building and empowerment, because the process of collaboration and knowledge exchange inherently builds capacity among all stakeholders.
- By exploring local challenges and testing solutions in varied contexts, the network can contribute a deep understanding of place-based variables that influence the success of SDG Localization efforts.
- By scaling local solutions, because when local innovations prove successful, the global network of researchers can play a crucial role in scaling these solutions, adapting them to different contexts, and integrating them into broader strategies.
- With diverse perspectives for comprehensive strategies because interdisciplinary clusters ensure that a multiplicity of perspectives is brought to bear on the SDG Localization, leading to more holistic and diverse strategies.

MILESTONES

The Knowledge and Scientific Network is both a generator of knowledge on SDG localization and a catalyst for locally relevant, evidence-based action. The Network's multi-level operation is critical to its mission. It captures the diversity of global insights and distils them into concrete, actionable strategies that respect the particular needs of each pilot country. Vice-versa it elevates the local practices and innovations to feed the global debate on how to advance the implementation of the SDGs.

At country level: enhancing the role of supporting evidence-based policymaking for the SDGs.

The Knowledge and Scientific Network will launch and implement an Academic Cluster in countries. The goal is to mobilise a worldwide research community around an interdisciplinary cluster of PhD students, particularly those focused on SDG localization in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, which can significantly inform and enrich global strategies and the broader UN coalition. To this end, two pilot countries were selected and the following activities will start in Tunisia and Jordan:

- 1 Connecting, through in-person and online consultations, training activities and research workshops, universities and students with local policymakers and practitioners from the Jordanian

and Tunisian national governments, as well as the four pilot cities of Aqaba and Irbid in Jordan, and Kerkennah and Sousse in Tunisia to develop targeted action to achieve the SDGs at the local level.

- 2 Activating a multidisciplinary academic and research community involving the coordinators of the PhD programs and a cluster of 12 PhD students, 6 in Tunisia and 6 in Jordan directly related to SDG localization and the related 6 transitions.
- 3 Launching action research local labs in the pilot countries connected to the four pilot cities in Jordan and Tunisia.
- 4 Produce and disseminate policy-oriented documents to inform policymaking and planning in the pilot cities, as well as internal processes.
- 5 Specifically, the pilot countries will count with training and policy-oriented capacity building activities for PhD students, Local Governments and communities, including regular lectures, international workshops, and action-research laboratories.

At the global level: sharing knowledge and innovation linking local practices to the global debate, while connecting scientific networks working on SDG Localization worldwide and with a focus on the global south.

The KSN will anchor the international and multidisciplinary scientific community to SDGs localization and the six Transitions. To this end, it will:

- 1 Mobilize a network of networks: a worldwide scientific community of knowledge focused on SDG Localization— combining experts from academia/research centres and practitioners with a prevalence of partners around the globe – who are interested in interacting and sharing ideas, experiences and lessons in response to priority topic agendas set.
- 2 Exchange and dialogue regularly with the Local2030 Coalition and its wide network (Secretariat, UN Directors Group, Local2030 Hubs, and Steering Committee) to develop normative products and share knowledge. Contribute to the normative products developed by the Local2030 Coalition and its working groups.
- 3 Disseminate the produced knowledge in international events.



TARGET GROUPS AND PARTICIPANTS

A broad worldwide community of qualified multidisciplinary researchers, particularly youth, gathered around the group of multidisciplinary PhD students in the selected pilot countries, is the main target group to be mobilised for mutual benefits and cross-fertilization.

They will be active participants in the planned series of open events, workshops, seminars, and specific courses and modules that will be implemented. They will produce the triangulation of (i) theory, (ii) policies, and (iii) practices on the identified key priorities in the selected pilot countries. This community of active participants will promote specific knowledge sharing for SDG localization at local and global levels.

PARTNERS

As a member of the Steering Committee of the Local2030 Coalition, the Italian Government was interested in proposing a global knowledge and scientific Network with a clear focus on connecting global efforts and country-level implementation. Tunisia and Jordan were hence identified as priority countries and funds directed to UN-Habitat and CeSPI ETS as the two implementing partners to support local capacity building and solid policy making at country-level. Given its global ambitious, the Network has been then anchored to the Local 2030 Coalition and its Secretariat, with the mandate and related funding to support the global scale-up of the activities and processes implemented locally.

PROPOSED TIMELINE (2024-2025)

