Policy Brief Series

LOCALIZING THE SDGs BY ADVANCING THE SIX TRANSITIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

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BACKGROUND

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Summit in September 2023 identified a set of 12 High Impact Initiatives (HIIs) aimed at accelerating collective actions and transformative progress towards the SDGs. Led by the United Nations Local2030 Coalition, the HII on Localization focuses on strengthening the localization of the SDGs.

The Local2030 Coalition is the United Nations system-wide platform advancing the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs at the local level, driven by 14 United Nations entities and five stakeholder constituencies: national governments, local governments, civil society and academia, youth, and the private sector. As the primary forum for bringing these actors together on SDG localization, the Coalition helps ensure that global commitments translate into tangible improvements in people's lives and local communities. Through the Localization Blueprint, the SDG Localization Marker 2.0, and continuous policy development, the Coalition provides strategic guidance to the United Nations system and to these constituencies on the localization of the SDGs.

During the aforementioned SDG Summit, the six transitions were introduced as strategic investment pathways to deliver the SDGs:

1. food systems;
2. energy access and affordability;
3. digital connectivity;
4. education;
5. jobs and social protection; and
6. climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

The six transitions build on the interconnectedness of the SDGs, and they themselves are interconnected.

This policy brief presents the Local2030 Coalition's guidance on how national and local governments, constituent groups, and communities, with the support of the United Nations, can contextualize these transitions to address local priorities and improve people's lives (i.e. localize the six transitions).

It examines the challenges, successful practices, and enabling conditions needed to sustain, amplify, replicate, and adapt approaches that advance their localization for greater impact in accelerating the SDGs. The recommendations outlined in this brief are derived from global analysis and expert group consultations.[1] It complements the broader capacity development offer of the Local2030 Coalition, including the Localization Blueprint, the SDG Localization Marker 2.0 developed jointly with the United Nations Joint SDG Fund, and related tools, trainings and methodologies, providing practical guidance for translating global transition agendas into territorial action and impact.

The United Nations system has a critical role to play in supporting SDG localization by connecting global policy agendas with national implementation and territorial action. Building on the complementary mandates and comparative advantages of Resident Coordinators (RCs) and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs), Regional Commissions, global entities and development partners, the United Nations system can help Member States adapt the six transitions to national and local priorities, strengthen policy coherence across sectors and levels of governance, and support implementation through normative frameworks, technical cooperation, regional peer learning, practical tools, standards and capacity development. This integrated approach reflects the ongoing United Nations development system reforms, which seek to deliver more coherent, coordinated, and impactful support to countries in accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Within the Local2030 Coalition's approach to SDG localization, the six transitions can be understood as thematic and investment pathways for accelerating SDG achievement, while the Localization Blueprint provides the systemic framework through which these transitions can be advanced at the territorial level. The Localization Blueprint's drivers of transformation – enabling environments; capacities and innovation; mission-oriented partnerships; strategic investments and inter-territorial cooperation – provide the institutional, governance, and financing architecture required to localize each transition effectively.

In this sense, the recommendations contained in this policy brief can serve as practical approaches for national and local governments, constituent groups, and communities, with the support of the United Nations, to operationalize the Localization Blueprint across the six priority transition areas. Advancing food systems, energy access, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, and climate action at the local level requires strengthening the same underlying drivers of territorial transformation identified by the Localization Blueprint, while adapting them to the specific characteristics and opportunities of each transition.

With less than five years remaining to deliver the 2030 Agenda and the majority of SDG targets off track, incremental progress is no longer sufficient. Demonstrating that the SDGs can deliver meaningful improvements for people and communities is critical for sustaining the credibility of global sustainable development commitments. The Local2030 Coalition is convinced that localization represents the most effective way to accelerate implementation, and to translate global ambition into tangible results and restore momentum towards the SDGs. Furthermore, the ten-year assessment and renewed commitment to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) provides the supporting framework to address remaining challenges and strengthen collective action through participatory, multilevel approaches that connect local priorities with global development objectives.

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[1] This has included an analysis of initiatives undertaken in different countries related to the localization of the six transitions. This primarily entailed a 2025 research conducted by the Local2030 Coalition's Working Group 1 on Localizing the Six Transitions – co-led by UN-Habitat, UN DESA, FAO, and ILO, with the participation of UNDP – of a selection of over 60 projects and initiatives led by the United Nations, which were summarized in a synthesis report. Building on this knowledge, an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) was organized in January 2026, in Nairobi, Kenya, bringing together technical experts and practitioners to share their experiences from various contexts. The EGM focused on bridging analysis and action-oriented guidance, identifying strategic insights and successful operational practices with attention to feasibility, scalability and relevance across diverse territorial contexts. Further research on relevant initiatives by non-United Nations entities was subsequently undertaken. In addition, the policy brief was peer reviewed by the expert group as well as other relevant stakeholders to consolidate additional feedback.

WHY THE SIX TRANSITIONS MATTER FOR SDG LOCALIZATION

Integrated and indivisible by design, the SDGs form a complex network of interlinkages across goals, targets, and indicators. These interconnections span environmental, social, and economic dimensions and unfold across different geographic and temporal scales. Because actions in one domain can influence progress across many others, effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD) that recognizes and manages these relationships, harnessing systemic benefits, deepening synergies, and mitigating trade-offs. The 2019 and 2023 editions of the Global Sustainable Development Report underscore that the most efficient, or even the only, way to make progress on the SDGs is through systemic approaches that address multiple goals simultaneously, rather than narrow, sectoral approaches that focus on one or a small subset of goals.

The transitions approach builds directly on this logic. The transitions present transformative entry points and investment pathways that leverage the SDGs' inherent interconnectedness, generating catalytic and multiplier effects across the 2030 Agenda. Their impacts converge most visibly at the local level, where the multiple relationships between sustainability dimensions become concrete, where their synergies and trade-offs are most evident, and where integrated responses are essential. At this level, these interdependencies become particularly tangible. Challenges such as access to adequate housing, secure land tenure, and basic services, demonstrate how progress towards relevant SDGs depends on actions across several transitions, which connect and reinforce one another. For example, adequate housing is connected to jobs and livelihoods, energy access and efficiency, education outcomes, social protection, climate resilience, and environmental sustainability, thus helping in the integrated delivery of the transitions at the local level. By identifying and acting on such interlinkages in a systemic way, the transitions help to operationalize PCSD and support integrated implementation.

The transitions are deeply interconnected. For example, food systems include creating decent jobs and strengthening social protection through inclusive value chains, improving education and nutrition outcomes, and leveraging digital connectivity and energy access to enhance production, processing, and market linkages. Thus, it is important to identify what is the main entry point to system transformation depending on the local context.

Local and regional governments, communities, and service providers sit at the centre of these interlinked systems, making them the most effective actors for driving integrated, people-centred change. With 65 per cent[2] of SDG targets linked directly to local and regional government mandates , localizing the six transitions helps ensure that national strategies are grounded in communities' priorities, implemented with coherence, and tailored to the specific economic, social, cultural and environmental conditions of each locality. Localizing the transitions also ensures effective delivery and systemic impact of development strategies, both national and local. Local and regional governments and actors are best positioned to identify context-appropriate solutions through a systems approach that coordinates across sectors, government levels, territories, and mobilizes diverse local actors and stakeholders to co-deliver results. When supported by enabling national environments, grounded in policy coherence and multilevel governance, financing frameworks, data systems, and adequate technical assistance, local action to advance the transitions has a multiplier effect: it aligns and accelerates progress across multiple SDGs, ensuring that investments have catalytic effects and lead to lasting improvements in people's lives.

[2] United Nations (2023) The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special Edition – Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet.

The United Nations system can support this process by leveraging its complementary capacities across global, regional, and country levels. While RCs and UNCTs facilitate integrated support at the country level, Regional Commissions contribute with regional policy dialogue, normative frameworks, technical cooperation, and peer learning across countries facing similar development challenges. Together, these complementary functions help translate global commitments into context-specific territorial action and strengthen coherence across levels of governance.

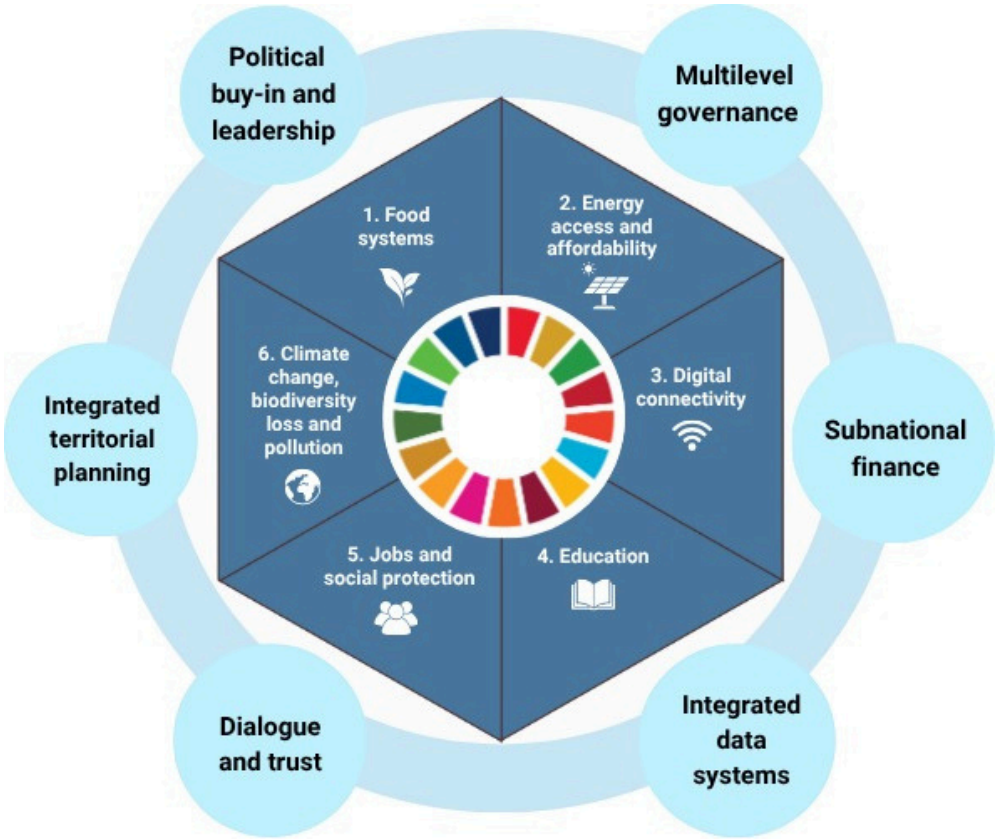
For these reasons, localizing the six transitions is not merely complementary to national-level efforts to advance the SDGs; it is one of the most effective pathways for advancing the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR LOCALIZING THE SIX TRANSITIONS

"Enabling conditions" refers to the policy frameworks, institutional arrangements and capacities, governance mechanisms, data infrastructures, and finance architectures that must be adopted to allow sdg localization to move from political commitment to coordinated, multilevel action and system-wide transformation through the six transitions.

Within the local2030 coalition's approach to sdg localization, these enabling conditions contribute to operationalizing the drivers of transformation identified in the localization blueprint. While the six transitions provide thematic pathways for accelerating sdg achievement, the blueprint offers the systemic territorial framework through which these pathways can be localized, financed, implemented, and scaled. Political leadership, dialogue and trust, multilevel governance, territorial planning, finance and data systems help create the enabling environments, capacities, partnerships and investment conditions required to advance the six transitions at the territorial level.

These conditions enable locally led solutions to emerge and scale and allow national strategies to be adapted to territorial priorities. These conditions do not emerge automatically: building them is fundamentally a political process, requiring sustained negotiation, coalition-building, and trust across levels of government and stakeholder groups. Progress is rarely linear; it requires: (a) iterative adjustments towards policy coherence for sustainable development, and (b) implementation strategies designed for durability across political cycles, not just for short-term results.



Six mutually reinforcing enabling conditions:

- **(1) Political buy-in and leadership:** Champions at all levels of government who prioritize, legitimize and sustain the localization of the six transitions across political cycles.
- **(2) Dialogue and trust:** Inclusive, continuous engagement across levels of government, stakeholders and communities, ensuring that transition pathways are locally legitimate, socially grounded, and resilient to political change.
- **(3) Effective, coherent and inclusive multilevel governance:** Clear institutional mandates, coordinated vertical and horizontal relationships, and accountability mechanisms that enable all levels of government to work together towards shared transition goals.
- **(4) Integrated territorial planning:** Context specific, nationally coherent planning systems that translate global transition ambitions into strategies grounded in the economic, social, cultural and environmental realities of each territory.
- **(5) Subnational finance:** Adequate, predicatable and flexible finance aligned with subnational responsibilities, ensuring that finance follows functions across all levels of govenment
- **(6) Integrated data systems:** Timely, disaggregated and spatially explicit data ecosystems that inform evidence-based decision-makin, track transition progress, and support accountability across territories.

For the localization of the six transitions to drive system-wide transformation, enabling conditions should encompass the three mutually reinforcing processes:

- **Strengthening and bottom-up scaling** of locally led solutions that demonstrate and capitalize on what works.
- **Empowerment** of local governments and actors through national policies, finance, and institutional support that enable subnational action.
- **Intermediary coordination,** involving regional and subnational bodies, associations or civil society organizations that support intermunicipal cooperation and pooling of resources to provide public services and meet regional goals.

These mutually reinforcing processes closely reflect the drivers of transformation identified in the Localization Blueprint, linking locally led action, enabling governance environments, strengthened capacities, strategic investments, and inter-territorial collaboration into a coherent framework for territorial transformation.

Together, these processes create a coherent multilevel governance system capable of delivering transition outcomes at scale while ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development. Without this foundation, even well-intentioned initiatives risk becoming performative rather than enabling systemic change and territorial transformation, consuming resources while leaving the structural conditions for lasting, scalable impact unaddressed.

1. Political buy-in and leadership

Advancing the six transitions at the local level is fundamentally a political process before it is a technical one. Decentralization reforms, multilevel governance systems, and transition-aligned financing arrangements do not emerge from policy documents alone – they require sustained political will and leadership across all levels of government. At the national level, this means central governments actively choosing to empower subnational actors with clear mandates, adequate resources, and genuine decision-making authority. At the local level, it means mayors and regional leaders who champion the transitions, mobilize constituencies, and maintain accountability to communities across political cycles.

Political buy-in is not a one-time commitment – it must be continuously renewed through inclusive coalitions that bring together central and local governments, sector ministries, civil society and academia, the private sector, and development partners around shared goals. Without this broad political foundation, even well-designed enabling conditions risk remaining on paper. With it, the six transitions can bring a global agenda to national strategies and then to local delivery pathways that are planned, financed and implemented where they matter most.

2. Inclusion and trust as system-wide foundations

Localizing the six transitions requires inclusive governance and trust-building across all levels of government, stakeholders and communities – ensuring that transition pathways are legitimate, socially grounded, and responsive to the needs of people and places, and hence durable over time. These are foundational conditions rather than downstream outcomes; inclusive processes strengthen legitimacy, accountability, and long-term implementationof transition- relatedinitiatives. Transition pathways perceived as externally imposed or socially exclusionary are unlikely to achieve durable territorial ownership or long-term legitimacy.

Strengthening trust requires governance arrangements that enable continuous dialogue across levels of government, centred in empowered local and regional governments, and ensuring that local knowledge shapes national decisions and national commitments are embraced locally. In addition, institutionalized participation mechanisms explicitly and consistently linked to real decision-making and resource allocation related to the six transitions, including feedback loops connecting citizen input to policy adjustments, are key for strengthening both institutional legitimacy and public confidence. To be effective, these mechanisms need to ensure the deliberate inclusion of marginalized and underrepresented groups as partners in designing, implementing and delivering sustainable development-focused solutions. Finally, transparent transition-focused delivery processes and consistent service delivery at the local level, reflected through accountability mechanisms, are key to maintaining institutional legitimacy and a strong social contract.

3. Decentralization and coherent multilevel governance with clear institutional mandates

Effective localization of the six transitions requires robust decentralization frameworks that can translate national political commitment into clear, durable institutional arrangements across levels of government. Decentralization – when accompanied by adequate authority and accountability – enables subnational actors to plan, implement, and adapt transition-aligned solutions in line with territorial realities. Defining responsibilities and coordination mechanisms across national, regional, and local levels of government is essential. This begins with working through and strengthening existing institutionalized mechanisms to which countries, regions, and cities are already committed – positioning the six transitions not as a new framework, but as practical drivers that enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of what governments are already doing, while preserving existing mandates and ownership. PCSD tools and approaches can provide the enabling policy-led foundation that aligns national, subnational, and local priorities, ensuring that governance systems are multilevel and support integrated and mutually reinforcing SDG outcomes.

Mandate clarity – anchored in legislation, policy frameworks, or established coordination mechanisms – must specify decision-making authority, implementation responsibilities, and coordination interfaces across governance levels. Frameworks embedded in clearly mandated institutions, rather than in one-off programmes, are the ones that endure across political cycles and translate political intent into sustained accountability.

Transition-oriented SDG localization advances most effectively when mandates are clear and well-aligned. Local actors often have the solutions; what unlocks their potential is the alignment of decision-making power, delivery responsibilities, resources, and accountability. Clear mandates, strong coordination channels, and the means for implementation are mutually reinforcing, and mandate clarity delivers the greatest results when matched with strong local capacity and resources.

4. Territorial planning systems connecting national ambition with diverse local realities

The six transitions unfold through territorial dynamics, not uniform national interventions. Translating global transition ambitions into outcomes that reach people in their lived environments therefore requires planning systems that are both nationally coherent and territorially differentiated. This recognizes that while national priorities and long-term transition pathways are important, the conditions, capacities, and entry points vary significantly across regions, cities, and communities, necessitating territorial strategies that clearly articulate these needs and opportunities.

At the national level, development plans must explicitly recognize territorial diversity when defining transition pathways. When co-designed jointly with regional and local governments, transition-aligned national objectives can be more effectively translated into territorially relevant priorities, targets, and investment pathways. This also applies to transition-aligned national sector strategies and associated expenditure frameworks. When developed with the participation of regional and local governments, such national planning instruments can provide a shared strategic framework and related core indicators that allow all levels of government to understand how evolving local conditions affect transition progress nationally.

At the regional and local levels, a key requirement is strategic prioritization. A modular approach enables each regional or local level of government to define context-specific pathways and priorities based on local conditions, often starting with transitions where traction exists, while remaining aligned with shared national transition-oriented planning frameworks. This flexibility is essential to ensure that the six transitions are not implemented as uniform packages, but as adaptive processes rooted in territorial realities Territorial planning should be anchored in a shared long-term vision and translated into integrated territorial roadmaps that align policies, investments, and partnerships around clearly defined transition outcomes.

At the same time, territorial differentiation must be balanced with attention to equity across places: planning systems should account for differences in need, cost, and capacity between territories, so that lagging or underserved regions are not left further behind as local SDG implementation is advanced through the transitions. In this regard, for example, lack of adequate housing and the prevalence of informal settlements represent a critical dimension of territorial inequality in many contexts, particularly in rapidly urbanizing ones. Deficits in adequate and affordable housing, alongside the expansion of informal settlements, shape health, educational outcomes, employment and livelihoods, access to basic services, energy efficiency, and environmental quality, directly affecting progress across multiple SDGs. Integrating housing strategies and informal settlement upgrading into territorial planning is therefore essential to ensure that transition pathways are inclusive, responsive to lived realities, and capable of reaching the most vulnerable populations.

5. Subnational finance aligned with responsibilities and transition priorities

Integrated planning–budgeting–investment mechanisms that connect national transition-aligned strategic priorities and spatial plans with regional and local investment pipelines are critical for translating national SDG and transition priorities into place-based implementation and tangible outcomes.

These mechanisms should support the translation of territorial priorities into investable project pipelines capable of mobilizing, aligning, and channeling public and private finance towards locally defined SDG outcomes. Institutionalized and embedded within national and subnational public financial planning and management systems, these mechanisms should also be supported with peer learning and cross-territorial exchange, enabling adaptation rather than replication. A key diagnostic test for assessing whether subnational finance is fit-for-purpose is whether finance actually follows functions (i.e. legal assignment of responsibilities to local governments means little if revenue authority and fiscal transfers remain centralized, unpredictable, or insufficient to meet delivery needs). These mechanisms can be further strengthened through structured peer learning and co-creation platforms. For example, the Local2030 Coalition alongside the Joint SDG Fund, Government of Spain, and Basque Regional Government supported the Bilbao Bootcamp – a space to convene national and local governments, United Nations entities, development finance institutions, and other stakeholders to jointly design context- specific investment pipelines and blended financing solutions aligned

with transition priorities, enabling adaptation to territorial realities rather than one-size-fits-all replication.[3]

As part of these integrated mechanisms and related learning and financing efforts, a key enabling condition for the localization of the six transitions is the availability of adequate, predictable, and flexible transition-aligned finance – combined with relevant technical capacity – across all levels of government. This should encompass adequate fiscal support from the national government through intergovernmental fiscal frameworks that reflect the distribution of responsibilities and ensure predictable fiscal transfers to incentivize transition-related outcomes. It should also include the authority, paired with relevant technical and human capacities, that enable local governments to mobilize and manage own-source revenues for transition priorities. Across both levels, a coherent fiscal strategy - one that aligns revenue structures, expenditure priorities, and intergovernmental transfers with transition – is essential to ensure that available public resources work in the same direction rather than at cross-purposes. The strategic use of public finance can further unlock financial, human, and technical resources through de-risking private investments, attracting funding from development partners, and supporting community-based initiatives, including through blended finance, innovative finance.[4]

6. Integrated data systems for evidence-driven transition-focused planning and reporting

Data is the backbone of transition-oriented SDG localization efforts that are evidence-based and supportive of learning. National, regional, and local governments and other relevant actors need timely and reliable, disaggregated to the extent feasible, including, where possible and methodologically sound, at subnational level to map local conditions, identify transition-specific gaps and opportunities, understand how transition challenges vary across places, and design interventions where they will have the greatest impact in response to the specific needs of communities, while tracking progress over time across territories and population groups.

A key foundational requirement is to strengthen integrated national–regional–local data systems anchored in the global SDG indicator framework, with interoperable platforms and feedback loops that support learning and adjustment. This entails making fuller use of the agreed SDG indicators and their respective data sources, linked to decision-making and reporting processes to help assess transition-aligned policy and project contributions to the SDGs, track progress, and make the necessary adjustments at all levels of government, while taking into consideration local specificities. Ultimately, data systems add value only when they inform decisions; therefore, sustained investment[5] in the statistical and technical capacities of the national statistical systems and local actors to produce, disaggregate, interpret, and act on data for the SDG indicators is as critical as the data infrastructure itself. Emerging digital tools can complement these efforts but should not substitute for the foundational work of strengthening official statistics on the commonly agreed indicators.

[3] Early results indicate the potential of such approaches to mobilize and align financing at scale, with the second Bilbao Bootcamp expected to catalyze over USD 340 million in local investment by translating territorial priorities into bankable projects.
[4] As emphasized in the Local2030 Coalition policy brief on the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4).
[5] The Local Sustainability Reporting Framework (BNK) from Germany is an example of such a common framework. <Available at: https://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/en/projects/local-sustainability-reporting-framework/>

GUIDANCE FOR LOCALIZING THE SIX TRANSITIONS TO DELIVER SYSTEMIC SDG IMPACT

This section provides actionable recommendations for the localization of the six transitions to translate the above-outlined enabling conditions into specific processes, mechanisms, and tools that can help deliver systemic impact. The recommendations clustered under the five subsections below address the enabling conditions outlined above, while more specific, cross-cutting and overarching frameworks and tools are highlighted to support the realization of these recommendations. Sustained political commitment, dialogue, and trust are treated as cross-cutting foundations that run through all the recommendations, rather than as standalone actions. There is no universal model; the recommendations should be understood as principles to be adapted to each country's context. They therefore focus on clarifying which functions, incentives, and relationships need to be aligned across governance levels to achieve better outcomes in each specific setting. Local actors are encouraged to consider the local specificities, contexts, and institutional capacities when identifying which recommendations are most applicable to prioritize.

Consistent with the Localization Blueprint, these recommendations should be understood as practical approaches for advancing territorial transformation through the six transitions, while adapting implementation pathways to national and local contexts.

In recent years, a growing range of methodologies and tools have emerged to support the assessment of the state, performance, and potential gaps of these different systems. For example, these include tools aimed at improving the understanding of where governance systems are strong and where they require.[6] Other tools – including SDG budgeting and finance diagnostics, Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs)[7] – can further support countries in identifying entry points for strengthening the enabling conditions for SDG localization, including through the six transitions.

Examples of successful United Nations support are included in Annex 1 to illustrate the recommendations, providing inspiration rather than a model to follow, as each local context is unique and demands tailored solutions.[8]

1. Strengthen and institutionalize multilevel governance and associated legal mandates for the localization of the six transitions

- Map the distribution of competencies across levels of government to support the clarification of mandates and the design of effective multilevel governance arrangements for the six transitions.

- Update policy and regulatory frameworks to clearly assign responsibilities for the localization of the six transitions by linking mandates to revenue-raising powers, resource transfers, and

[6] See, for example, A Users' Guide to Measuring Local Governance by the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, The Strategic Role of Subsidiarity: A Readiness Assessment for Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals: Handbook for Government Officials at National and Local Levels by UN DESA, and Committee on World Food Security. 2025. Strengthening urban and peri-urban food systems to achieve food security and nutrition in the context of urbanization and rural transformation. Policy Recommendations. https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e5c66dcb-aae2-4d48-804f-fbd9b3a4781f/content

[7] See, for example, FAO and UNDP. 2023.SDG localization in Europe and Central Asia – Guidelines to support subnational development planning and budgeting.Budapest.https://doi.org/10.4060/cc8164en

[8] Further examples of successful United Nations support can be found on the Local2030 Coalition website.

technical support, while embedding related responsibilities and coordination functions within statutory planning and reporting cycles to ensure continuity beyond political cycles.

- Support national governments to act as enablers of decentralization and institutional clarification, establishing mechanisms that enable multilevel governance, while supporting subnational and local governments to develop corresponding structures, and to finance and sustain these structures (as elaborated in subsequent points).

- More specifically, support national governments to strengthen and formalize intergovernmental coordination architectures for the localization of the six transitions through legally mandated platforms, clear vertical and horizontal coordination protocols, and permanent institutional focal points across sectors/transitions and levels of government. This could include establishing or reinforcing dedicated transition-related coordination units, clarifying the roles of ministries and local authorities in implementation and oversight, and ensuring continuity of coordination functions through legally anchored mechanisms that are resilient to administrative and political change.

- Establish dedicated institutional mechanisms for bottom-up influencing, where local innovations and evidence from transition-focused delivery at the local level systematically inform national policy adjustments. This can be achieved, for example, through institutional coordination mechanisms that support integrated Voluntary National Review (VNR)–VSR– VLR processes aligned with the transitions, which serve as interfaces for multilevel dialogue, review, and joint decision-making.

- Build broad coalitions for governance reform, recognizing that decentralization and multilevel governance are political negotiations as much as technical exercises. Sustainable reform typically requires alignment across central government, local and regional governments, sector ministries, civil society, and development partners around shared goals and realistic compromises, since any of these actors can stall progress if their concerns are not addressed.

2. Embed the six transitions in national and territorial planning, budgeting, and monitoring cycles

- Identify how the transition approach can be used to respond to the main national priorities with clear entry point(s) in the respective planning cycle, based on territorial conditions, political feasibility, and institutional capacity. Entry-point selection should also map and assess likely synergies, trade-offs and interdependencies between transitions, so that governance arrangements can address them proactively, while aligning with a long-term territorial vision.[9] Prioritize transitions with strong local ownership or clear investment potential, and progressively expand scope as capacities, partnerships and financing mature.

- Integrate the systems approach to SDG acceleration and the six transitions – or a subset thereof, depending on selected prioritized transitions, as outlined above – across national and subnational development plans as well as associated sectoral and spatial strategies, medium-term expenditure frameworks, and annual budget plans across different levels of government.

[9] To effectively manage synergies and trade-offs across the six transitions, it is important to map the distribution of competencies and mandates across levels of government, as mentioned in the above subsection. This helps identify which actors hold responsibility for policy design, implementation and financing in the sectors relevant to each transition, and ensures that the appropriate levels of government are engaged from the outset. Such mapping can strengthen coordination, clarify accountability, and support more effective alignment of transition-related interventions across governance levels.

- Develop integrated territorial roadmaps that align transition priorities, investment strategies, stakeholder partnerships, and implementation arrangements around a shared long-term vision for territorial transformation. In doing so, identify locally relevant entry points that can generate co-benefits across multiple transitions. For example, where relevant, use integrated housing and informal-settlement upgrading strategies as such catalytic entry points, which can advance economic development, social inclusion, access to services, energy efficiency, and climate resilience, among others, thus accelerating progress across multiple SDGs. Such integrated territorial roadmaps and housing strategies can also leverage and promote the social and ecological function of land, advancing the co-benefits of the transitions.[10]

- Establish local or regional SDG-focused delivery mechanisms to translate global and national commitments into prioritized, investable, and scalable projects at the subnational level, with a focus on the six transitions. Ensure that such mechanisms have strong local and/or regional government ownership and are aligned with national coordination frameworks to link strategic planning with local project preparation and investment, ensuring that the six transitions are operationalized through tangible actions on the ground. UNCTs and RCs at country level, Regional Commissions at the regional level, and global entities contributing normative expertise, knowledge products, and specialized technical support, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, can play an important role in advocating for and facilitating such mechanisms,[11] including through the application of the SDG Localization Marker 2.0 in project design and assessment.

- Use existing SDG progress review and reporting processes (e.g. VNRs, VSRs, VLRs) as transition-oriented planning tools, feeding evidence from local reviews into national policy and territorial planning (and associated budgeting) adjustments, ensuring national decisions reflect territorial realities through a multilevel learning process.

3. Establish and align fiscal frameworks and financing instruments with transition-related delivery [12]

- Strengthen fiscal decentralization by reforming intergovernmental fiscal systems, including medium-term fiscal planning frameworks, so that subnational mandates for transition-related delivery are matched with adequate fiscal capacity. Reforms should ensure enhanced and predictable national–local fiscal transfers, greater transparency and responsiveness to local needs, expanded own-source revenue authority for local governments, and coherent subnational borrowing frameworks. These reforms are most effective when grounded in a financing strategy that maps existing flows, identifies structural gaps, and sequences interventions across public and private sources in alignment with territorial development priorities. Instruments such as country financing roadmaps, medium-term expenditure frameworks, and Integrated Local Financing Frameworks (ILFFs) help to connect those strategies and the overall fiscal frameworks with broader financing sources and instruments, alongside strengthened local public financial management and budgeting systems.

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[10] Including productive local economies and livelihoods, food systems, biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and the sustainable management of natural resources, among others.

[11] For example, they can ensure that SDG localization approaches, including transition-oriented ones, are systematically integrated into United Nations programming instruments, including Common Country Analyses (CCAs) and United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks (UNSDCFs). Building on this, UNCTs and RCs can also support the development and coordinated implementation of subnational pipelines of transition-related projects.

[12] The recommendations in this subsection are closely related to Driver IV of the Localization Blueprint, and build on those of the Local2030 Coalition policy brief for FfD4 on local development finance, the FfD4 outcome document, and the Sevilla Platform for Action

- Embed SDG-transition-related priorities into fiscal decentralization frameworks, by integrating transition-linked criteria into performance-based intergovernmental transfers, local revenue systems, and subnational borrowing regulations aligned with long-term, territorially specific transition objectives.

- Establish territorial transition-aligned investment-readiness and project-pipeline mechanisms that convert transition-related priorities into bankable, finance-aligned portfolios, using standardized methodologies, financial appraisal tools, and performance criteria, while strengthening capacities to develop investable projects that address local environmental and socioeconomic challenges. Ensure these local investment pipelines are systematically aligned with national financing strategies, climate funds, and development bank instruments, enabling aggregation and scale across territories. Underpinning this requires local governments to have in place a coherent fiscal strategy, one that coherently aligns own-source revenue mobilization and expenditure allocation with transition priorities, as the foundation that makes external financing viable and investment pipelines credible.[13] This approach enables the translation of territorial priorities into investable pipelines that can mobilize, align and channel finance towards locally defined SDG outcomes.

- Introduce targeted financing instruments – such as tax incentives, duty waivers, and capital grants – that enable local communities to adopt infrastructure and other solutions that support progress across the transitions. Such instruments can help lower the cost, and hence accelerate local uptake, of transition-relevant solutions, particularly in underserved territories, reducing inequalities.

- Build the capacity of local governments to more effectively plan, budget, and manage local infrastructure assets to ensure their productivity and reliability in delivering public services that respond to citizens' needs and advance the SDGs via the six transitions. This can optimize the use of often scarce public funding, build the trust of investors and national institutions, and help mobilize additional financing. Tools such as the United Nations Infrastructure Asset Management Toolkit can support this process.

- Deploy public investment strategically through blended finance,[14] guarantees, and concessional instruments to de-risk transition-related investments at the territorial level. Direct development banks and other public financial institutions to pool risks by aggregating local transition-aligned projects into diversified, scalable portfolios attractive to private capital. These aggregated, transition-aligned portfolios should be structured to enable access to capital market instruments — such as green, social, or municipal bonds, blended financing vehicles, and other institutional investment products — thereby connecting territorial-level project pipelines to broader sources of capital market financing. Such risk-pooling arrangements can enable smaller or higher-risk territories to participate in transition-related financing opportunities that would otherwise be inaccessible. This requires standardization, credit enhancement, and supportive regulation to meet investors' scale, risk, and disclosure requirements.

[13] In these pipelines, focusing on multiple transitions, while taking into consideration their synergies and alignment with local conditions, can support such efforts.
[14] Blended finance approaches should leverage partnerships across governments, financial institutions, and the private sector to scale systemic transformation, mobilizing both public and private finance for local SDG delivery.

4. Strengthen knowledge and data ecosystems for informed decision-making and accountability of transition-related initiatives at the local level

- Strengthen local data ownership and integrated local data ecosystems by enabling local governments and community-based organizations to contribute to the production and use of timely data, disaggregated to the extent feasible. This includes combining official statistical, geospatial, and community-generated data, where appropriate and methodologically sound, supported by standardized methodologies, quality assurance frameworks, and adequate digital infrastructure for analysis and storage, ensuring these systems can capture and reflect transition-related dynamics at the territorial level.

- Ensure interoperability across national and subnational data systems by drawing on the global SDG indicator framework to enable consistent progress tracking, knowledge sharing, and stronger collaboration between national statistical offices and local governments, while allowing local actors to build on shared datasets to assess territorial specificities and monitor transition-related priorities.

- Enhance the technical capacities of national statistical systems and of regional and local statistical and planning units to generate, disaggregate, interpret, and use data for the SDG indicators relevant to transition-related decision-making. Complimentary training in digital and, where relevant, artificial intelligence (AI)-related skills can support these efforts, but should not divert attention from the core work of strengthening official statistics, drawing on the international statistical standards, methodologies, and programmes developed by the United Nations Statistical Commission and the Regional Commissions to strengthen official statistics, improve data quality and interoperability, and support the modernization of national statistical systems.

- Ensure local and regional governments have consistent access to and the capacity to effectively use global data platforms, such as the UN-Habitat Global Urban Indicators Database, FAOSTAT, ILOSTAT and FAO SDG Indicators Data Portal, relevant to the six transitions and make use of innovative data creation methodologies.

- Develop and institutionalize mechanisms to integrate local data into transition-related decision-making. This includes establishing shared knowledge platforms and associated processes to ensure that data on the SDG indicators, together with available territorial diagnostics (including those generated as part of VLRs/VSRs) systematically inform planning and budgeting across various levels of government.

- Strengthen monitoring and reporting frameworks across different territorial levels (including in VLRs, VSRs, and VNRs), ensuring that analyses on the agreed SDG indicators are systematically integrated and used to track transition-related progress and inform adjustments.

- Enhance knowledge-sharing and learning processes by strengthening structured peer exchange mechanisms across territories and dedicated global and regional repositories of transition-related initiatives and best practices. These could support the documentation, analysis (including potentially through AI tools), and dissemination of experiences, as well as the identification of gaps and opportunities for learning, replication and scaling of effective approaches.

- Promote inter-territorial learning and cooperation mechanisms that facilitate the exchange of data, innovations, methodologies, and implementation experiences across territories, enabling adaptation, replication, and scaling of successful transition-related approaches.

5. Institutionalize meaningful participation and build local trust in transition-related decision-making

- Make use of and institutionalize participatory mechanisms within formal planning, budgeting, and monitoring processes for transition-related initiatives. Ensure that these mechanisms meet minimum inclusion criteria and have clear feedback loops for decision-making and structured channels – including participatory budgeting, local SDG councils, and citizen assemblies linked to decision-making, co-creation, and resource allocation. This may also include establishing comprehensive transparency mechanisms that allow citizens to access information, track decisions, and provide inputs throughout the design and implementation of transition-related initiatives.

- Ensure the inclusion of stakeholders from civil society academia, women, children and youth, older persons, and the private sector, including employer and worker organizations, among others. Before launching initiatives, meaningfully engage marginalized and underrepresented groups (e.g., persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples) and ensure their inclusion in formal SDG coordination mechanisms. Establish mechanisms to address potential power asymmetries in decision-making authority, structural barriers, and resource distribution, including through collective representation and social dialogue, thereby supporting more equitable outcomes for underrepresented and marginalized groups.

- Embed locally rooted, territorially specific, and culturally contextualized narratives in communication and advocacy efforts to build legitimacy and trust, ensuring that transition-related initiatives resonate with local priorities, histories, and the lived experiences of communities, and reflect shared visions for long-term territorial transformation pathways.

6. Overarching frameworks and cross-cutting tools to support implementation

- Apply established SDG localization frameworks to guide coherent, system-wide implementation. The Local2030 Coalition Localization Blueprint provides a human-centred approach to creating enabling environments that mobilize, align, and channel finance towards locally defined priorities through multilevel governance, strong local ownership, and mission-oriented collaboration. Complement this with operational tools such as the SDG Localization Marker 2.0 to track and assess how policies, programmes, and investments contribute to SDG localization and to the six transitions, including synergies and trade-offs across sectors and territories.

- Prioritize the development and implementation of National SDG Localization Frameworks (NLFs)[15] aligned with the six transitions. NLFs serve as the operational architecture for institutionalizing localization across governance levels and sectors. Grounded in Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development (PCSD) and informed by tools and initiatives such as the Localization Blueprint and SDG Cities global initiative, they integrate policies, institutional arrangements, and financing mechanisms into a coherent multilevel governance system – shifting from fragmented, project-based approaches to systemic and scalable territorial transformation.

[15] The development of a methodology and associated tools for the creation and implementation of NLFs, as well as country piloting in Senegal and Tunisia, along with other relevant initiatives, are currently being undertaken within the framework of the Partnership Platform on Localizing the SDGs, the operational initiative promoted by the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security (MASE) and UN-Habitat.

- Strengthen multilevel and multistakeholder approaches that connect national priorities, local action, and territorial realities. Effective localization of the six transitions requires governance arrangements that bring together national and subnational governments, communities, civil society, academia, the private sector, development partners, and the United Nations system around shared objectives and coordinated action. Mechanisms, frameworks and tools such as VLRs, VSRs, NLFs, the Localization Blueprint, and the Localization Marker 2.0, can support countries in creating enabling environments for dialogue, coordination, planning, financing, and accountability. By strengthening collaboration across levels of government and stakeholder groups, countries can reduce fragmentation, align investments and policies, and accelerate the translation of SDG commitments and transition priorities into tangible territorial outcomes.

The window to deliver the 2030 Agenda is narrowing, but the pathways are clear. Localizing the six transitions offers one of the most direct routes to accelerate progress where it matters most: grounded in communities. Realizing this potential will require sustained political commitment, predictable financing, and the patience and collaboration to build institutions that endure beyond political cycles. National governments, local and regional authorities, the United Nations system, and partners across all constituencies each have a specific role to play. Through its online capacity building programme, the Local2030 Coalition stands ready to support UNCTs and its constituencies to turn this guidance into concrete action.

ANNEX 1: CASE EXAMPLES

Please find below examples of successful United Nations support, which serve to illustrate the recommendations. The examples serve to provide inspiration rather than a model to follow, as each local context is unique and demand tailored solutions.

Case example – Namibia: Transitions 1 (Food Systems) and 5(Jobs and Social Protection)

In Namibia, the joint ILO–UNDP–UNICEF–FAO programme "Agri-Systems Transformation through Biomass Processing for Decent Job Creation and the Extension of Social Protection in Namibia" contributes to the coordination, implementation, and financing of national integrated policies for food systems, job creation, and universal social protection by establishing a national coordination mechanism consisting of three cabinet-level co-chairs, representing two ministries and the Planning Commission.

The programme supports institutional capacity development, cross-sectoral alignment, and high-level political ownership by enhancing the use of analytical tools, evidence generation, and policy guidance to inform integrated decision-making across food systems, employment, and social protection agendas. Embedding coordination functions within national institutional structures and linking technical evidence with policy processes, the initiative provides an example of how multilevel and cross-sector governance arrangements can help operationalize and strengthen integrated transitions in practice, directly contributing to the advancement of multiple SDGs at the national and subnational level.

Case example – Ghana: Transitions 4 (Education) and 6(Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution)

In Ghana, the UN-Habitat Smart SDG Cities Programme, funded by the Government of Norway, supports 10 Metropolitan and Municipal District Assemblies (MMDAs) to advance integrated territorial transformation through spatialized VLRs and data-driven planning processes.

Implemented in close partnership with the Ministry of Local Government, Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs (MLGCRA), with the involvement of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), the programme strengthens integrated planning processes that connect national SDG priorities with local development realities, territorial disparities, and investment opportunities.

Through systematic digital data collection, spatial analysis, participatory processes, and geospatial mapping, the spatialized VLRs provide a territorially anchored understanding of SDG challenges and opportunities, helping cities to planandidentify priority intervention areas and to develop integrated and financeable project pipelines. To support implementation and institutional coordination, SDG Cities Implementation Committees

have been established in each of the 10 participating MMDAs, bringing together local stakeholders across sectors and levels of governance.

Climate action is a key cross-cutting priority within several of the spatialized VLRs under development, with spatial analyses helping local governments identify priority areas for climate adaptation and resilience-building. The programme also promotes SDG education and civic engagement through a youth-focused hackathon initiative, where schools across the participating cities develop innovative solutions linked to their respective priority SDGs.

The programme seeks to ensure alignment and complementarities with other United Nations initiatives inGhana, including collaboration and linkages with UNDESA-supported work on Infrastructure Asset Management (IAM), strengthening integrated approaches to long-term infrastructure planning, investment prioritization, and sustainable territorial development.

Case example – Jordan: Transitions 1 (Food Systems), 5 (Jobs and Social Protection) and 6 (Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution)

In Jordan, the joint FAO–UNIDO programme "Transforming Jordan's Agri-Food Systems Through Local Financing Solutions," funded by the Joint SDG Fund, promotesblended finance models to strengthen the fruit and vegetable sector. The programme brings together a wide range of stakeholders, including producers, cooperatives, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), startups, private sector actors, the municipalities of Deir Alla and Mafraq, the Ministry ofAgriculture, the Agricultural Credit Corporation, the Cooperative Corporation, financialinstitutions including international financial institutions (IFIs).

The programme aims to strengthen rural alliances among producers, cooperatives, MSMEs, and startups, while encouraging the adoption of climate-smart practices and technologies to improve livelihoods and resilience. It also supports the construction of two climate-resilient post-harvest centres to reduce post-harvest losses by 30–40 per cent. This initiative will support food system resilience, promote inclusive market and labour access, and enhance overall environmental sustainability, supporting the achievement of a range of SDGs in Jordan, such as SDG 6, 8, 10, 12, and 15, through an integrated advancement of the transitions at the local level.

Case example – Indonesia: Transition 3 (Digital Connectivity)

In Indonesia, the joint UNICEF–UNFPA-WFP project" GUARD - Assisting the Government with the Utilization and Availability of Reliable Data for Local Level SDGs Acceleration inIndonesia" funded by the Joint SDG Fund, enabled local governments to utilize the national SDG Dashboard as a one-stop database and digital monitoring system to analyze the progress on SDGs and learn from the existing best practices to strengthen the local development plans. The project also contributed to the development of national guidelines and protocolsfor localutilizationof the SDG Dashboard and promoted interoperability among government data systems, which will increase local governments' SDG data

availability,accessibility,and disaggregation. It will produce reliable, disaggregated SDG data, supportedby the development of governance and framework to the implementationofthe Small Area Estimation approach, including the useof geospatial and big data, to inform policymaking and planning at national and subnational levels.

Case example – Philippines: Transitions 4 (Education), 5 (Jobs and Social Protection) and 6 (Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Pollution)

In Surigao City, the Philippines, the joint UN-Habitat–UN Women project"Localize to Realize: Accelerating SDG Implementation for Local and Vulnerable Groups and Communities of Women, Indigenous Peoples and Informal Settler Families", funded by the Joint SDG Fund supported 40 Bajau families and 40 informal settler families to participate in local SDG processes, strengtheningtheir access to decision-making, social protection, education, and climate resilience, directly supporting the achievement of a wide range of SDGs by advancing multiple transitions at the local level.The Sama Bajau and informal settler families are among Surigao City's most vulnerable communities due to climate change related-risks, displacement pressures, their distinct living conditions, including sea- based livelihoods and residence in hazard prone areas. Beyond community engagement, the initiative helped enable institutional changes: the formalization of a permanent Sama Bajau seat in the Barangay Development Council; the inclusion of Sama Bajau and informal settler family needs in local planning instruments, including the Surigao City Comprehensive Land Use Plan; and policy direction for Surigao del Norte State University to review its admission policies to better consider the unique context of Sama Bajau and other indigenous learners.

Case example – Honduras: Transition 4 (Education)

In Honduras, a joint UNICEF–UNDP project addressed a critical education challenge, with over 800,000 children and adolescents — nearly one in four school-age children – out of school in 2023. Recognizing that this required shifting incentives rather than simply increasing resources, the United Nations and the Government of Honduras championed a results-based, locally driven approach to improve education outcomes. Using an initial catalytic investment of US$250,000 from the Joint SDG Fund, the initiative brought together the Ministry of Education, the Association of Municipalities of Honduras, UNICEF, and UNDP to establish a performance-based mechanism: municipalities demonstrating measurable improvements in education outcomes were recognized as "Champions for Education," receiving public recognition, technical support, and strengthened national legitimacy.

Within one year, 146 municipalities — nearly half of the country — participated in the initiative, significantly exceeding the original target of 30. The 100 municipalities recognized as Champions achieved enrolment growth rates 3.6 times higher than non-participating municipalities, supporting the return of approximately 96,000 children to school at a cost of just US$2.50 per child enrolled. The initiative also generated significant

local financing impacts. Participating municipalities increased allocations of their own- source revenues to education from 43 per cent to 68 per cent, mobilizing approximately US$1.1 million in additional resources — representing an average 300 per cent increase. Building on these results, the Ministry of Education has formalized the approach through a Ministerial Commitment, integrating the model into national policy and providing a pathway for scaling incentive-based, locally led financing and service delivery for education, enabling effective delivery of multiple SDG targets – such as reducing gender disparities – through education-related outcomes at the local level.

Case example – United Nations system support to multilevel and regional cooperation: All six transitions

In addition to country-level implementation, the six transitions can also be advanced through multilevel international cooperation. Members of the Local2030 Coalition support integrated approaches to sustainable development by strengthening global and regional policy dialogues, peer learning, and cooperation across levels of governance. They also help ensure that the priorities, perspectives, representation and contributions of local and regional governments are channelled into the United Nations system through existing intergovernmental, inter-agency and regional bodies and processes. Drawing on their normative mandates, technical cooperation programmes, and convening power, they help connect local experiences, national priorities, and regional policy agendas, promoting policy coherence and the exchange of integrated approaches that support progress across all six transitions.

One example is the United Nations Forum of Mayors, convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in close collaboration with the other United Nations regional commissions and the wider United Nations system. The Forum brings together mayors, national governments, United Nations entities, and other stakeholders from all regions to exchange solutions related to sustainable urban development, climate action, social inclusion, digital transformation, and public service delivery. By linking local practice with regional and global policy processes, the Forum strengthens multilevel governance, facilitates the dissemination of innovative practices, and supports local and national capacities to accelerate SDG implementation. This example illustrates how regional cooperation can complement country-level action by strengthening institutional capacities, fostering integrated policymaking, and enabling the scaling of successful approaches across countries and localities, thereby supporting the advancement of all six transitions.