

JOINT SDG FUND

LOCAL 2030
LOCALIZING THE SDGS

SDG Localization Marker

Acknowledgments

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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations, its Member States, or the organizations that contributed to its development.

Background

With the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we embarked on a major effort to address the challenge of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) not only at the national level but also locally. As 2030 draws nearer, the real challenge lies in turning the SDGs' ambitions into tangible outcomes for communities and individuals by supporting the inclusive and sustainable development of territories.

Localizing the SDGs means placing local territories —and thus people's priorities, needs, and resources —at the heart of sustainable development, therefore articulating and integrating local strategies, national policies and global agendas, respecting local contexts, processes and systems, and empowering local development stakeholders. It ensures that the 2030 Agenda becomes a lived reality for communities and individuals, and cultivates the systemic transformation needed to improve resilience and accelerate human-centred sustainable development. This approach promotes coherence across policies, government levels, development processes, and investments at all levels and in all sectors. It operates concretely by:

- Leaving no one, no community, and no place behind;
- Fostering multi-level governance and policy coherence for sustainable development (PCSD);
- Whole-of-society collaboration based on a shared vision of a city/region's future and strengthening stakeholder and rightsholder engagement;
- Co-creating effective public policies and programmes towards sustainable development based on communities' ownership and leadership;
- Addressing multiple territorial scales of the urban-rural continuum;
- Supporting peer learning, capacity building and knowledge exchange; and
- Facilitating the financing of catalytic, impactful initiatives at the local level.

The **Joint SDG Fund** recognizes SDG localization as a cornerstone of its strategy and as a key driver for all major SDG transitions. The Fund actively supports initiatives that empower local communities and subnational authorities to lead these important transitions.

The **Local2030 Coalition** [1] is the United Nations system-wide platform for the localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Chosen as the UN High Impact Initiative on SDG Localization, the Coalition enables connections for higher impact and systemic transformation to accelerate the achievements of the 2030 Agenda.

With the government of Spain's support and leadership, the Joint SDG Fund and the Local2030 Coalition have partnered to develop this Guidance Note on the 'Localization Marker' to multiply their commitments to localization. This tool serves to identify development initiatives that effectively prioritize localization efforts towards sustainable development, ensuring both policy coherence, multilevel governance, and transparent and accountable tracking of allocated financing for SDG localization and facilitating rigorous monitoring and reporting on the progress achieved in localizing the SDGs.

This guidance is specifically designed to help with the application of the Localization Marker, which supports the design of impactful programmes and initiatives.

[1] The Local2030 Coalition ensures that the UN system is equipped to align global goals and national policies with local contexts, needs, and priorities, while promoting a unified One-UN approach to localization, with a focus on those furthest behind. Comprising 14 UN entities and five key constituencies—national and subnational governments, civil society and academia, the private sector, and youth—the Local2030 Coalition acts as a convergence point between the UN system and a wide range of stakeholders.

Localization Marker Definition

Code	Definition	Note
0	**Not expected to contribute to the localizing the SDGs**	There is no consideration of localizing the SDGs in the programme or initiative, with no incorporation of subnational and local priorities, nor engagement with local and/or regional governments, local service providers[2], or other local actors and stakeholders[3] in the design, implementation and accountability[4]. Additionally, there are no results contributing directly to SDGs nor to the implementation of local or national SD frameworks.
1	**Limited contribution to localizing the SDGs**	There is limited consideration of SDG localization in the design, implementation, and accountability of the programmes or initiative, with limited incorporation of subnational and local priorities. Consultations with local and/or regional governments, local service providers, and other local actors and stakeholders, or their involvement in proposed activities, is limited, while the presence of direct results in contributing to the SDGs and to local or national SD framework is either non-existent or minimal. Consequently, the contribution to SDG localization plays a minor role in the overall outcomes of the initiative.
2	**Significant contributions to localizing the SDGs**	There is a substantial contribution to SDG localization in the design, implementation, and accountability of the programme or initiative. Subnational and local priorities towards the SDGs are duly identified and taken into consideration within the programme, with at least one explicit result contributing to them, and a dedicated level of adequate funding. The programme or initiative includes active participation of local and regional governments, local service providers, or other local actors and stakeholders in programme design, implementation, and accountability activities. The results significantly contribute to SDGs and to the implementation of local and national SD frameworks, distinguishing this level of commitment from other pursued outcomes.
3	**Principal contributions to localizing the SDGs**	SDG localization and the achievement of subnational and local priorities identified in local and national SD frameworks, stands as one or more of the primary intended result(s) of the programme or initiative, with corresponding levels of allocated budget. The initiative is specifically undertaken to support local and regional governments, local service providers, and other local actors and stakeholders in the territorial process for SD, and to enhance ownership, awareness, capacities, and resources related to the localization of the SDGs or to enact policies, regulations, and initiatives facilitating the local implementation and financing for the achievement of the SDGs. The localization of SDGs, embedded within a logic of policy coherence for sustainable development, is an overarching goal of the initiative.

[2] The term “local service providers” refers to public service providers at the local level, for example local entities that run transportation systems, electricity companies, or those that provide education, health, or other social services.
[3]The term “other local actors and stakeholders” includes a wide range of non-governmental actors such as local NGOs, community-based organizations, other civil society organisations, research and academic institutions, private companies and other private sector actors, banks, financial institutions, etc. – all those who might have a stake in, or influence over, the project’s activities.
[4] “Accountability” includes both monitoring and evaluation (through frameworks/tools or systems).

Scoring System for the Localization Marker

The three criteria listed under the Programme Design Dimension are mandatory for all SDG Localization Marker 3 programme/initiatives. This means that non-compliance with these two criteria will disqualify the Joint Programme from being approved as a Localization Marker 3 initiative, regardless of the overall localization marker score. Provide Explanation and means of verification is compulsiry/has to be provided.

Dimensions	Criteria or eligibility	Responses
Programme Design	Does your programme explicitly contribute to delivering measurable results aligned with local SDG priorities expressed in local sustainable development strategies or similar documents, promoting equitable development in specific territories, and embedding results in local systems?	Yes/No Mandatory for Local Marker 3
	Does the programme or initiative include a multi-level governance approach to address the SDG challenges through collaboration between different levels of government, and/or with international organizations and local communities? This approach should recognize that effective action requires coordinated efforts at various scales, from local and regional to national and global.	Yes/No Mandatory for Local Marker 3
	Were subnational-level governments and other key local development stakeholders (including, whenever possible and relevant, local service providers, civil society, academia, private sector, and youth) actively engaged from the programme design phase and had their roles clearly defined with appropriated resources allocated to ensure that the programme directly responds to the priorities formally expressed in local strategies? Are roles and responsibilities of each local stakeholder clearly defined with appropriate resources allocated for both implementation and monitoring of activities?	Yes/No Mandatory for Local Marker 3
Advocacy	Has the programme or initiative planned to develop new knowledge material, research, publication or relevant resources related to SDG localization, specifically mobilizing territorial knowledge from all sources (e.g. academic, formal and informal)?	Yes/No
	Has the programme or initiative planned to develop specific activities to enhance local populations' ownership and inclusion in sustainable development processes at the subnational level, led by local development stakeholders?	Yes/No
	Does the programme or initiative explicitly include capacity building of local governments and stakeholders to design, implement, and monitor innovative solutions with a potential to accelerate sustainable development processes at local level?	Yes/No

Dimensions	Criteria or eligibility	Responses
Actions	Does the programme or initiative bolster the coherence of new or enhanced policies, regulations, plans, or service-delivery approaches—by local and regional governments, communities and/or local service providers—facilitating their meaningful contributions to local SD strategies, national SD frameworks and the SDGs and addressing the principle of leaving no one behind?	Yes/No
	Does the programme or initiative have a multi-stakeholder approach, involving local and regional Governments, civil society, academia, the private sector, youth, and/or others to jointly implement transformative initiatives toward localizing the SDGs? This could include, for example, mobilizing and sharing knowledge, expertise, technologies, and financial resources to support the achievement of the SDGs at the local level.	Yes/No
	Is the programme connected with broader interventions from other local development stakeholders to meaningfully contribute to large-scale initiatives with the potential to transform local development systems and processes, within a shared vision of the city's/region's future?	Yes/No
Financing	Is at least 70% of the programme or initiative budget allocated specifically to activities that directly impact local sustainable development processes and systems (e.g. food systems value chains, local health or education systems, energy and water management, local economic development, local climate action, multilevel governance) embedded in local SDG-related priorities which are expressed in local strategies?	Yes/No
	Does the budget include funding channelled directly to local actors and/or the creation of mechanisms to ensure their participation in implementation?	Yes/No
	Does the programme or initiative support expanding local fiscal space through public and/or private sources to sustain and scale SDG actions at the local/territorial level (e.g. own source revenues, intergovernmental fiscal transfers, public private collaboration, enabling environment for Foreign Direct Investment or Official Development Aid)?	Yes/No
	Does the programme or initiative strengthen local/regional governments' capacities and systems to better identify, allocate, and monitor local financing for the SDGs?	Yes/No
Accountability & Sustainability	Does the programme include a clear monitoring system, connecting to monitoring system(s) of local sustainable development strategies and national sustainable development frameworks to measure impact on local systems and people's lives, and to contribute to the local component of SDG monitoring at city/region and country level?	Yes/No
	Does the programme include clearly identified partnerships with local, national, and international stakeholders to leverage complementary interventions channelling technical and financial resources to scale up the initiative towards transformative, systemic change, either locally and/or in other cities/regions, within a clearly defined exit strategy?	Yes/No
	Criteria for Scoring • **Marker 3**: Between 13 and 15 criteria marked as Yes, including the 3 criteria under the programme design dimension. • **Marker 2**: Between 8 and 12 criteria marked as Yes. • **Marker 1**: Between 3 and 7 criteria marked as Yes. • **Marker 0**: Less than 3 of the criteria marked as Yes.	Total # of Yes

Applying the Localization Marker

- The Localization Marker was first piloted in 2024 and was applied to 136 joint programmes supported by the Joint SDG Fund in the same year. Based on lessons learned from the pilot phase, the Marker 2.0 will be applied to programmes developed and launched after the adoption of the revised Marker guidance by the Local2030 Coalition and the Joint SDG Fund.

- Joint programmes receiving support from resources earmarked for SDG localization, or those developed with SDG localization as a primary focus, must attain a Localization Marker of 3. This requirement ensures that resources earmarked for SDG localization are directed to joint programmes that make principal contributions to localizing the 2030 Agenda.

- As a self-assessment tool, a review of the quality assurance of the localization marker application is essential, particularly for joint programmes and initiatives marked at the level 3. This aims to guarantee the proper applications of the marker, ensuring that actions and funding genuinely flow to programmes and initiatives that mainstream and substantially contribute to SDG localization. The Local2030 Coalition may provide capacity building support to the Resident Coordinator System and UNSDG entities to ensure proper application of the marker and advocate for its broader adoption by other partners.

Monitoring of the Localization Marker

In addition, aligned with the Marker criteria, joint programmes or initiatives assigned a Marker level of 2 or 3 will be required to provide annual reports on the following specific actions and results to affirm their commitment to advancing SDG localization. Please provide evidence or means of verification for each indicator.

Dimen-sions	Indicator	Baseline (year)	Target (year)
Design	Number and type of local and regional governments and relevant local development stakeholders actively engaged in the programme design.	# (type)	# (type)
	Number and type of local and regional governments and relevant local development stakeholders with clear roles and responsibilities within the programme.	# (type)	# (type)
	Number and type of persons or representative organizations involved in activities developed with the primary aim of enhancing local populations' ownership and inclusion in sustainable development processes at the subnational level, led by local development stakeholders.	# (% women, indigenous people, youth, persons with disabilities) (type of org)	# (% women, indigenous people, youth, persons with disabilities) (type of org)
Advocacy	Number and type of specific events, publications, or training materials aimed primarily at building capacity for local sustainable development/SDG localization in local development stakeholders.	# (type)	# (type)

Dimen-sions	Indicator	Baseline (year)	Target (year)
Action	Number and type/description of new policies and regulations elaborated taking into account their contribution to local and national SD frameworks, and/or number and type/description of tools developed to ensure policy coherence for SDG localization (Disaggregated on policies, regulations, or tools focused on policy coherence for sustainable development).	# (type / descrip-tion)	# (type / descrip-tion)
	Number and type/description of mechanisms or activities developed to improve the transparent and accountable financing of SDG localization.	# (type / descrip-tion)	# (type / descrip-tion)
	Number and type of relevant initiatives/processes that the projects contribute to reach large scale, transformative impact.	# (% women, indigenous people, youth, persons with disa-bilities) (type of org)	# (% women, indigenous people, youth, persons with disa-bilities) (type of org)
Finan-cing	Percentage of programmatic expenditures allocated explicitly to activities that directly impact local sustainable development processes and systems (e.g. food systems value chains, local health or education systems, energy and water management, local economic development, local climate action, multilevel governance) embedded in local SDG-related priorities which are expressed in local strategies.	%	%
	Number and type of local financial tools/instruments developed or strengthened to support SDG implementation at local level.	#	#
	Total amount (in USD) of additional public and private sector resources mobilized for local SDG implementation at the local level.	$	$
Accoun-tability & Sus-tainabi-lity	Percentage of results contributing to SDG localization that have met their preplanned target/milestones.	%	%
	Number of local and regional governments and/or local service providers integrating aspects of policy coherence for sustainable development into their monitoring and reporting processes.	# (type of actor)	# (type of actor)

Annex 1: Additional Reference Materials and Websites on SDG Localization

Recommended Reading:

- SDG Localization Training Modules
  - Training Module 1: Localizing the SDGs / Introduction
  - Training Module 2: Territorial Planning and the SDGs (currently being updated)
  - Training Module 3: Reporting to National and Local Reviews
  - Training Module 4: Localizing the SDGs through Decentralized Cooperation
- Towards the Localization of the SDGs – Reports to the HLPF
- Proposal for Voluntary Common Reporting Guidelines for the VNR
- Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews Volume 1 — Towards a New Generation of VLR
- Guidelines for Voluntary Local Reviews Volume 2: Towards a New Generation of VLRs: Exploring the Local-National Link
- Multilevel Governance for SDG localization Research
- New Urban Agenda
- International Guidelines on Urban and Territorial Planning
- Urban Monitoring Framework (UMF) Metadata
- Building Participatory Accountability Systems for City Policies – Handbook
- State of the Voluntary Local Reviews 2022: Overcoming Barriers to Implementation
- Voluntary Local Reviews, VLRs Toolbox: From Data Analysis to Citizen Engagement When Monitoring the SDGs
- Local and Regional Voices on the Global Stage: Our Post-2015 Journey
- Getting started with the SDGs in Cities: a Guide for Local Stakeholders
- Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Dialogues on Implementation
- Delivering the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Opportunities at the National and Local Levels

Recommended Websites:

- Local2030 Coalition: local2030.org
- Multilevel Governance Platform: multilevelgovernance.org
- Global Urban Monitoring Framework – Explainer: youtube.com/watch?v=djqX96iOOq0


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