The Road to the 2027 SDG Summit: The Local Way

Making localization a leading pathway for SDG acceleration and the future of sustainable development

Abstract

Against a backdrop of multiple, overlapping crises hampering sustainable development everywhere, the localization of the 2030 Agenda has emerged as a key implementation accelerator, capable of securing local ownership and political buy-in, and driving the systemic change needed to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through territorial transformation.

The central implementation challenge facing the 2030 Agenda is not a lack of global ambition. It is the persistent obstacle of translating global commitments and national priorities into coherent change on the ground, in the local communities where people live and where the SDGs must come to life. Localization addresses this gap by connecting policy, institutions, finance, knowledge, and partnerships around the realities of territories and communities.

Building on and fostering this momentum, the Local2030 Coalition, the United Nations platform for the localization of the SDGs, has mobilized its 15 UN member entities and its five constituencies – national governments, local governments, civil society and academia, the private sector, and youth – in a wide movement to design and implement global agendas in a bottom-up manner, tailoring them to local realities and aspirations.

This movement engaged more than 2,500 local development stakeholders in what came to be known as the "Road to" processes: The Road to Seville towards the Finance for Development Conference (FFD4), the Road to Doha towards the World Social Summit (WSSD2), the Road to Belem towards the COP30, the Road to Baku towards the World Urban Forum, and the current Road to Abu Dhabi towards the Water Conference.

With the 2027 SDG Summit in sight from the beginning, the movement has built momentum for the last stretch of the 2030 Agenda and starting the process to shape the next global agenda, where localization has the opportunity to be the starting point and backbone, rather than an afterthought.

The *Road to the 2027 SDG Summit* is therefore the culmination of this global movement. It will seek to move localization from acknowledgement to responsibilities and resources, from local initiatives to systemic change, and from innovative solutions to sustained impact at scale.

The political imperative is clear: localization must be reflected as a critical pillar for successful SDG implementation in the outcomes of the 2027 SDG Summit, translated into commitments for the period 2027-2030, and used to inform the design of the sustainable development framework beyond 2030.

Context

The world is far from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Successive and overlapping crises, including climate change, conflict, widening inequalities, rising living costs, pressure on housing and basic services, and declining trust in institutions, have made progress more difficult. Yet the implementation gap cannot be explained by crises alone. Too often, global commitments remain insufficiently connected to the territorial priorities, institutions, investments, and partnerships that shape people's everyday lives.

At this decisive moment, the arena for sustainable development is the territory. Cities, regions, rural areas and communities are where the effects of global crises converge; where inequalities are experienced; where housing, water, food, mobility, education, health and social protection are delivered; where climate adaptation and resilience must take place; and where trust in public institutions is either strengthened or weakened. Territories are also where actors can work across sectors, respond to interconnected challenges, and build solutions around a shared understanding of local realities.

Localization is therefore not a secondary implementation phase as it is not simply the transfer of global objectives to the local level. Rather, it is a way of designing and delivering sustainable development that connects national leadership with territorial priorities, empowers communities, engenders local participation, including women's organizations, strengthens multilevel governance, mobilizes diverse actors and directs finance toward integrated solutions with tangible impact at the local level. In a period of constrained resources and growing political fragmentation, localization offers a practical route to greater coherence, legitimacy, efficiency, and impact.

The 2027 SDG Summit will be a defining political moment. Convened with only three years remaining until 2030, it must do more than assess progress. It must identify the implementation approaches capable of accelerating delivery and restoring confidence that multilateral commitments can improve people's lives. It must also begin bringing together the lessons that will shape the future of sustainable development beyond 2030. At a time when the UN80 Initiative is seeking to build a simpler, more coherent and more effective United Nations system that delivers better for people and planet, localization can demonstrate what this ambition means in practice by aligning the capacities of the United Nations system around country-owned and territorially defined priorities, reducing fragmentation and maximizing collective impact.

From the "*Road to: The Local Way" processes to* a shared political agenda

The *Road to the 2027 SDG Summit: The Local Way* does not start from zero. It is the next stage of a movement that the Local2030 Coalition and its partners have been building across major global processes. Through the "Roads to: The Local Way" processes towards Seville, Doha, Belém, Baku and Abu Dhabi, the Coalition has brought national and local governments, United Nations entities, civil society, academia, youth, the private sector, and financing actors into global policy discussions on financing for development, social development, climate action, urban development, and water.

The *Road to the 2027 SDG Summit: The Local Way* will bring these strands together. It will consolidate the political momentum, evidence, partnerships and solutions generated

through the previous "Road to" processes and connect them with the Coalition's High Impact Initiative on SDG Localization, the Localization Blueprint, the SDG Localization Marker, the Seville Platform for Action on Localizing Finance, the Local2030 Hubs, the Knowledge and Scientific Network and country-level action.

Objectives

The purpose of the *Road to the 2027 SDG Summit: The Local Way* is to build the political case and commitments required to establish localization as a leading pathway for SDG acceleration and for the future of sustainable development.

It will pursue four mutually reinforcing objectives:

- Build political ownership of localization across Member States, the United Nations system and the Coalition's stakeholder constituencies.
- Demonstrate, through territorial evidence and solutions, why localization improves the relevance, coherence, and impact of sustainable development action.
- Secure commitments that strengthen the enabling conditions, partnerships, and financing required for localization to operate at scale during 2027-2030.
- Ensure that territorial experience and the lessons of localization inform discussions on the sustainable development framework beyond 2030.

Political Framework and Action Tracks

For the purposes of political engagement towards the SDG Summit, the Localization Blueprint drivers are organized into four accessible tracks. Together they answer a single political question: what must change for localization to realize its full potential as an accelerator of the SDGs?

Track 1 - Political ownership and shared territorial vision

Localization begins with ownership. Sustainable development is more likely to endure when communities can see themselves in it, when national and territorial institutions share responsibility for delivery, and when political leaders work around a common vision of the future of a territory. This requires more than consultation. It requires meaningful participation, effective multilevel governance, and recognition of local and regional governments and other territorial actors as partners in shaping development priorities.

This track will build political buy-in for localization among Member States, United Nations entities, and stakeholder constituencies. It will mobilize champions, connect national priorities with territorial experience, and create space for local governments, communities, civil society including women's groups, youth, academia, and the private sector to contribute to the Summit process. Particular attention will be given to inclusion, rights, and the voices of groups at most risk of being left behind. The political outcome sought is a shared recognition that localization is not only a means of implementation, but a foundation for rebuilding trust, strengthening the social contract and making sustainable development more legitimate, responsive, and effective.

Principal Outputs and Results:

- *Mainstreaming Localization Towards 2030 and Beyond*: a compendium of shared political recommendations and commitments on localization as an accelerator in the final years towards 2030 and beyond.
- *Local2030 Coalition Policy Brief on SDG Localization:* Showcasing a shared One-UN perspective on SDG localization and its role in accelerating SDG implementation, informed by experts and constituents of the Coalition.
- Member State Key Messages One-pager: Provide concise messages on SDG localization as an accelerator for Member States and their engagement in the Summit process. Build a group of champions able to advance localization through Summit preparations, negotiations, and follow-up.

Track 2 - Capacity building and enabling environments
Political recognition will have limited value unless institutions and partners can act on it. Localization requires capable national, regional, and local institutions; access to territorial knowledge and data; space for innovation; and partnerships that can address interconnected challenges rather than fragmented projects.

This track will bring forward locally driven solutions and show how diverse actors can work around shared territorial priorities. It will connect the knowledge and experience of governments, United Nations Country Teams, civil society, including women's groups, academia, the private sector, youth, and communities. The emphasis will be on the relationships and capacities that enable territories to move from diagnosis to integrated action and from isolated initiatives to lasting transformation.

The political outcome sought is a commitment to strengthen the institutional and partnership infrastructure for localization, including more coherent support from the United Nations development system and stronger capacity for multilevel, multisectoral action.

Principal Outputs and Results:
- *2027 High Impact Initiative on SDG Localization Report:* Consolidate territorial evidence and solutions demonstrating how integrated local approaches can advance several SDGs and major transitions simultaneously.
- *Solutions One-pager:* QR code with description to promote the key solutions collected throughout the engagement process within global milestones and on social media.
- *Local2030 Solutions Platform:* Consolidate and amplify territorial solutions on the Local2030 website and enable peer learning and adaptation of effective approaches across territories and countries.

Track 3 - Finance for local impact
Localization will not operate at scale if finance does not reach the priorities and solutions capable of generating local impact. Many territories face limited fiscal space, weak access to development and climate finance, insufficient capacity to prepare investment pipelines, and financing instruments that are poorly adapted to local realities. At the same time, fragmented projects and short funding cycles can undermine the integrated, long-term approaches required for systemic transformation.

Building on the Local2030 Coalition's Road to Seville: The Local Way report and FFD4 Policy Brief, produced by Local2030's Working Group 2, and the Seville Platform for Action proposal on Localizing Finance, co-led with Spain and the OECD, this track will position localizing finance as an essential part of the SDG acceleration agenda. It will connect territorial priorities with national financing frameworks, development cooperation, international financial institutions, development banks, climate finance, and private investment.

Principal Outputs and Results:

- *Localizing Finance for Development Recommendations:* Building on the policy brief "Local Finance is Development Finance," developed by the Local2030 Coalition to inform intergovernmental negotiations towards FFD4, and on the Seville Platform for Action on Localizing Finance, promote local finance as a key contribution to the 2027 Financing for Development and SDG Summit processes, in the form of a political declaration coming from the ECOSOC FFD week dialogue on localizing finance.
- *Financing solutions for systems change:* Based on the Road to Seville: The Local Way towards FFD4 (2025) and through engagement with International Financing Institutions (IFIs), promote financing solutions that can accelerate Agenda 2030 and inspire the next global agendas.

Track 4 — Strategic coordination, partner engagement, and monitoring

The Road to the 2027 SDG Summit: The Local Way will maintain strategic coordination with UN entities, stakeholder constituencies, and partners to connect the "Road to" complementary initiatives, networks and activities focused on strengthening SDG localization. This track will support a shared understanding of where partners and initiatives are contributing, identify gaps and opportunities for collaboration, and bring together evidence, experiences, and perspectives from across the Coalition and beyond. It will also provide a basis for monitoring engagement and contributions across the Road to the 2027 SDG Summit: The Local Way process and for ensuring that territorial perspectives are reflected consistently across political and policy spaces.

The Coalition will develop a communications strategy and common Road To the 2027 SDG Summit: The Local Way branding to support a coherent narrative across partners, constituencies, and political spaces. Communications will reinforce the strategy's political objectives by consistently conveying the role of localization in connecting global commitments with territorial priorities and people's daily lives, generating impact through integrated approaches, and translating recognition of localization into concrete commitments for 2027–2030 and beyond.

Principal outputs and results

- *SDG Summit Local2030 Communications Strategy:* Establish a shared communications approach to bring together the evidence, experiences and political messages emerging from the Road to 2027: The Local Way.
- *Road to the 2027 SDG Summit: The Local Way Local2030 Branding Package:* Provide a common identity and visual framework across partners, constituencies, activities, and political spaces.

- *United Nations Country Teams (UNCT Engagement):* Strengthen the role of RCOs and UNCTs in connecting national leadership, territorial priorities, and UN expertise, and ensure country-level UN engagement contributes to the 2027 SDG Summit.
- *Transformative Partnerships:* Promote partnerships with clear roles for public institutions, civil society, academia, private sector and communities, connecting complementary initiatives and contributions to the 2027 SDG Summit.
- A post-Summit follow-up framework for implementation, accountability, and reporting through 2030.

Operationalizing the Road to the SDG Summit: The Local Way

The Local2030 Coalition will act as a system-wide convening platform, connecting the experience of territories with national leadership, United Nations coordination, and global decision-making.

Engagement will take place at three mutually reinforcing levels:

- **United Nations system:** 15 Coalition members, the Regional Economic Commissions, Resident Coordinator Offices and United Nations Country Teams will be engaged to build a coherent system-wide position and identify commitments for country-level support.
- **Member States:** National governments and permanent missions will be engaged to connect national priorities with territorial experience, mobilize political champions, and advance localization through the intergovernmental process before and after the Summit.
- **Stakeholder constituencies:** Local and regional governments, civil society, academia, youth, the private sector, financing actors, and Local2030 Hubs will contribute evidence, recommendations and commitments through their networks and political spaces.

To produce the principal outputs, the Road to the SDG Summit: The Local Way process will leverage consultations, policy dialogue, global and regional processes, evidence generation and targeted political engagement to:

- Consolidate evidence and locally driven solutions generated through the Roads and Coalition initiatives.
- Translate evidence and lessons across Coalition members and constituencies since 2015 into policy recommendations and political messages.
- Engage Member States and negotiators in advance of and throughout the intergovernmental process.
- Work across regions in coordination with the Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) through their Regional Sustainable Development Fora.
- Strengthen engagement and iteration with financing partners through the implementation of the Seville Platform for Action on Localizing Finance.
- Bring territorial evidence and recommendations into relevant regional and global processes, including the HLPF, Financing for Development, COP processes, and other key milestones towards the Summit.

- Maintain a shared political narrative and coordinated communications approach throughout the Road.

Timeline
The Road will evolve through four phases, aligned with the development of the intergovernmental process and the need to sustain implementation after the Summit.

Phase 1 - Build the common case and coalition
September 2026 to March 2027. The Coalition will convene actors to consolidate evidence and solutions, agree with a shared political narrative, activate its constituencies, engage in the United Nations system, and identify Member State and financing champions. It will publish a UN policy brief towards the SDG Summit and use the recommendations to guide a united engagement in the Summit process across its members.

Expected result: A credible common narrative and position supported and owned by a broad and diverse coalition.

Phase 2 - Shape the political debate
March to July 2027. Evidence and recommendations will be brought into regional processes, the Financing for Development Forum, the High-level Political Forum, and the emerging Summit negotiations.

Expected result: Localization is visible in the substantive political debate and begins to reflect on proposed commitments and language.

Phase 3 - Secure recognition and commitments
July to September 2027. The Coalition and its partners will intensify engagement with Member States, the United Nations system, and financing actors. Summit key spaces will be planned to present evidence, evidence of high-level support, and advance commitments.

During the Summit, convene key Coalition spaces, including the Local2030 Coalition Special Event and a One UN Roundtable on SDG Localization.

Expected result: Political recognition of localization and a concrete basis for implementation during 2027-2030.

Phase 4 - Convert recognition into implementation
From the Summit to 2030. The Coalition will support partners in translating commitments into responsibilities, milestones, and action; track progress; amplify results; and maintain political momentum. Evidence generated through implementation will inform the HLPF, Financing for Development follow-up, and other global processes in this period, as well as the development of the framework beyond 2030.

Expected result: Summit commitments are translated into implementation and accountability pathways through 2030, while territorial experience continues to inform global policy and beyond-2030 discussions.