EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNLOCKING THE POWER OF
LOCALISATION
& MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS
TO RESCUE THE SDGs

July 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) approaches, global progress remains critically off track. According to the UN's **2024 SDG Progress Report**,[1] only 17 per cent of targets are on track, with significant regressions in poverty eradication, hunger, education, and climate action. A convergence of crises – including persistent inequality, conflict, food insecurity, climate instability, and a global financing shortfall – threatens to derail the 2030 Agenda.

Amidst these challenges, localisation and multi-stakeholder partnerships emerge as essential strategies to accelerate SDG implementation. Localisation is essential for achieving the SDGs because it brings implementation closer to the people and places most affected. With an estimated 65 per cent of SDG targets dependent on local action,[2] local governments and civil society actors are uniquely positioned to tailor solutions, foster community ownership, and ensure accountability. Localisation enables better production and use of disaggregated data, facilitates inclusive participation, and drives innovation in service delivery – often pioneering scalable models that national or global actors can adopt. As global progress stalls, empowering local actors has become not only a practical necessity but a strategic imperative to rescue the 2030 Agenda.

This report entitled '**Unlocking the Power of Localisation and Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships to Rescue the SDGs**', drawing on 15+ real-world case studies from the Forus network across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific, and Europe, underscores the transformative potential of localisation and equitable partnerships in delivering the SDGs. It presents key insights into what works, what hinders progress, and what opportunities lie ahead for accelerating the implementation of the SDGs through localisation and partnerships. Examples from over 15 countries – including Argentina, Guatemala, Indonesia, Zambia, and the Philippines – demonstrate that localisation, *when adequately resourced and powered by inclusive, multi-stakeholder partnerships*, is our best lever to rescue the 2030 Agenda.

Unlike traditional assessments, this report combines grassroots data, official statistics, and diverse regional case studies to build a comprehensive picture of SDG localisation efforts. It provides a timely, strategic roadmap for governments, civil society, public development banks (PDBs), and donors to reorient implementation efforts around local power, inclusive governance, and coherent policy frameworks. The report also highlights narratives from the Forus multilingual and participative campaign **'We are leaving no one behind, are you?'** on civil society impact and positive influence on the SDGs and on Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) with stories that have been submitted from across the globe.

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1   UN General Assembly Economic and Social Council 'Progress Towards the Development Goals: Report of the Secretary-General' UN Doc A/79/79-E/2024/54 (2024) 2 https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2024/secretary-general-sdg-report-2024--EN.pdf (accessed 4 June 2025) .

2   UNDP, UN-Habitat & UNDESA 'Inter-Agency Policy Brief: Accelerating SDG Localization to deliver on the promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (2024) 3 https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Policy%-20Brief%20FINAL%20May%2029%205%2024.pdf .

Key findings

- **Localisation is gaining momentum:** As of July 2024, **over 300 cities, municipalities, and regions have published Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs),** reflecting a surge in local leadership and accountability.[3]

- **National-local integration is increasing:** Nearly **70 per cent of VNR countries in 2024** reported formal coordination mechanisms between national and subnational levels for SDG implementation – marking a steady institutional shift toward multilevel governance.

- **Success depends on systemic enablers:** Key enabling conditions include coherent policy and budgetary frameworks, predictable financing, robust local data systems (including community-generated data), inclusive civic participation, and digital innovation.

- **Persistent barriers remain:** Many local actors continue to face fragmented governance systems, underfunded mandates, weak statistical infrastructure, and shrinking civic space – especially in contexts of political volatility and centralisation.

- **Civil society is central:** Community-based organisations are playing a vital role in catalysing inclusive planning, local monitoring, and bottom-up accountability.

Recommendations

To scale and sustain SDG localisation, the report calls on governments, donors, and development actors to:

- **Institutionalise localisation in national planning, budgeting, and monitoring systems**, with clearly defined roles for subnational actors.

- **Scale up and integrate VLRs and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs)** into formal national and global SDG reporting cycles to strengthen coherence and accountability.

- **Provide direct, predictable, and flexible financing to local governments and civil society**, ensuring that financing mechanisms are tailored to local needs and realities.

- **Strengthen local capacities** through long-term training, infrastructure, and peer learning.

- **Enhance local data ecosystems**, including the integration of disaggregated and community-generated data to track progress and identify gaps.

- **Promote equitable multi-stakeholder partnerships and protect the enabling environment of civil society** – especially of marginalised and underrepresented groups – into local governance structures.

- **Leverage inclusive digital tools and capacity strengthening** to improve access, engagement, and transparency in local SDG planning and service delivery.

- **Align donor funding with locally-led development strategies**, ensuring support for long-term, trust-based partnerships.

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3   Author *Progressing National SDGs Implementation Report 2024* 9 ed (Publisher 2024).

A CALL TO ACTION

With just five years remaining in the 2030 Agenda, the present situation pertaining to SDG delivery cannot continue. Localisation is not an add-on – it is a transformative shift to ensure that SDG delivery is rooted in local realities, responsive to local needs, and led by local actors.

This report urges stakeholders, working in collaboration, and particularly duty bearers, policymakers, funders and international institutions, to act decisively and collaboratively. Only by centring local leadership and multi-stakeholder partnerships can we accelerate meaningful progress toward the 2030 Agenda and truly ensure that no one is left behind.

Forus is a member-driven network of 72 national NGO platforms and 7 regional coalitions from all continents, representing more than 24,000 NGOs active locally and internationally on development, human rights and environmental issues. This publication was produced with the support of the Agence française de développement (AFD) the Fondation de France, Oxfam Hong Kong, Gouvernement Princier de Monaco, and the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Forus.

Read the full report here.