

LOCAL 2030
LOCALIZING THE SDGS

KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC NETWORK

UN Local2030 Coalition Knowledge and Scientific Network: Enhancing the Role of Academia in SDG Localization

2026 Report



LOCAL 2030 LOCALIZING THE SDGS

UN-HABITAT

Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale

Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale
CeSPI ETS

UN Local2030 Coalition Knowledge and Scientific Network: Enhancing the Role of Academia in SDG Localization

Academia as a Strategic Driver of SDG Localization

At a time when recent reports on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) progress depict a concerning outlook and multilateralism faces unprecedented challenges; SDG localization has emerged as an increasingly recognized driver of accelerated progress toward the 2030 Agenda, securing local ownership and leadership and reinforcing multilevel governance, policy coherence, and public-private collaboration. However, localization cannot be achieved through political commitments or financing alone—it depends on robust knowledge ecosystems capable of linking evidence, territory, and innovation.

Despite the growing recognition of SDG localization, one critical challenge remains: knowledge, policymaking and implementation continue to operate in largely disconnected ecosystems. Scientific evidence often struggles to influence territorial decision-making, while local experiences rarely feed back into research and global policy processes. Closing this gap is not simply a matter of producing more knowledge, but of creating the institutional conditions for knowledge to become collective action.

Academia is not only a producer of knowledge for SDG localization. It is a strategic enabler of territorial transformation. In the Local2030 vision, territorial transformation is ultimately about strengthening the social contract at the local level by reinforcing trust, participation, institutional legitimacy, and the collective capacity of communities and institutions to shape their shared future.

By building capacities, fostering trust, supporting partnerships, informing investments, and connecting local experiences with global learning, universities and research institutions help create the enabling conditions that allow territories to translate sustainable development ambitions into collective action.

This is where academia becomes decisive. Sustainable development challenges are inherently complex, requiring interdisciplinary approaches, long-term vision, and the ability to translate global frameworks into context-specific strategies. Beyond knowledge generation, academia plays a key role in co-producing solutions with local actors and supporting their implementation. Universities and research institutions connect global agendas with local realities while also providing a neutral space where governments, communities, and international actors can engage in informed dialogue. Academia's contribution is both structural and strategic.



Representatives of the KSN Network at the III International SDG Forum: From Research to Action, held in Curitiba, Brazil, March 2026.



School of Education, Cameroon, "Collaboration with The UNESCO Chair in Special Needs Education" (right).

In a policy environment often driven by short cycles, it brings a long-term perspective, ensuring continuity in understanding and addressing deep-rooted challenges. It enables interdisciplinary thinking that reflects the interconnected nature of the SDGs, moving beyond fragmented, sector-specific solutions. It generates context-sensitive, place-based evidence that recognizes the diversity of local conditions and avoids one-size-fits-all solutions. Crucially, it offers independence and credibility, upholding evidence as public good and reinforcing accountability in decision-making processes.

This contribution closely reflects the Local2030 Coalition's understanding of localization as a systemic process. As highlighted through the Localization Blueprint, transformative territorial development depends on five mutually reinforcing drivers: citizen ownership and participation, capacities and innovation, transformative partnerships, strategic investments, and continuous learning across territories. Academia contributes directly to each of these dimensions, making it a foundational component of sustainable territorial ecosystems.





Local2030 Coalition and the Local2030 Knowledge and Scientific Network (KSN)

The **Local2030 Coalition** is the United Nations system wide platform for the localization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It ensures that the UN system is equipped to align global goals and national policies with local contexts, needs and priorities, while securing a one UN approach to localization. Through its five constituencies -national and local governments, civil society and academia, the private sector, and youth-, the Coalition also serves as a convergence point between the UN system and local development stakeholders, enabling connections for higher impact and systemic transformation, with a focus on those furthest behind.

In response to a need for an intersectoral meeting point around local sustainable development, applied research, and the localization of the 2030 Agenda, the Knowledge and Scientific Network (KSN) was created as a contribution of the Italian government to advance the work of the Local2030 Coalition and implemented in partnership with UN-Habitat and the Centro Studi di Politica Internazionale (CeSPI ETS).

LOCAL 2030
LOCALIZING THE SDGS

KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC NETWORK

Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale

UN-HABITAT

Centro Studi
di Politica
Internazionale
CeSPI ETS

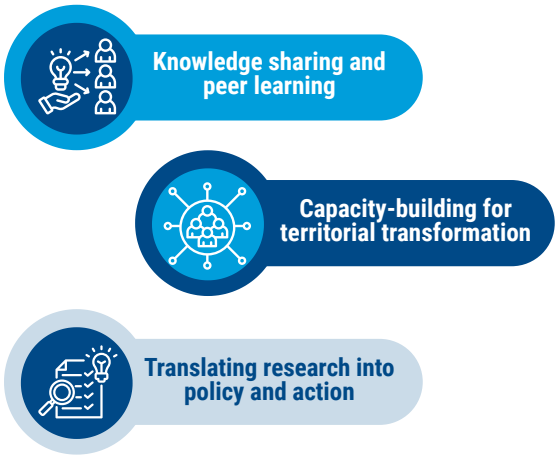


The **Knowledge and Scientific Network** (KSN) was established as a global platform to strengthen the science–policy interface and accelerate SDG localization. By connecting researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and local stakeholders, it mobilizes interdisciplinary expertise and context-specific evidence to inform territorial decision-making. Through training programmes, scalable science–policy mechanisms, and Country Solutions in Tunisia, Jordan, and Vietnam, the KSN strengthens capacities for evidence-based localization and demonstrates how scientific knowledge can be translated into actionable solutions responsive to local needs.

Rather than functioning as a conventional academic network, the KSN serves as the Local2030 Coalition's knowledge infrastructure, embedding academia across the Coalition's policy cycle and connecting research, governance and territorial action.

Its added value lies in embedding scientific knowledge within the governance processes that shape territorial development, ensuring that evidence informs action while local experience continuously enriches global learning.

The KSN operationalizes its work across three core functions: knowledge sharing and peer learning, capacity-building for territorial transformation, and translating research into policy and action. Through the KSN, Academia is integrated across the Coalition's entire policy cycle—from advocacy to action and monitoring. This integration is evident across the Coalition processes and initiatives, including advocacy efforts such as the "*Road to(s): The Local Way*" processes, engagement around key global milestones, and capacity-building efforts aimed at strengthening the ability of key actors to localize the SDGs. It is also reflected in the co-creation of localization programs through the "Bilbao Bootcamp" where academic expertise supports locally grounded action, and in the collaboration with the Local2030 Hubs —centers of excellence across territories recognized for their innovative solutions for the localization of the SDGs.



Through these functions, the KSN helps move beyond traditional models of knowledge transfer toward ecosystems of co-creation, where researchers, policymakers, communities, and development actors jointly define challenges, design solutions, and support implementation processes. By doing so, the KSN also feeds locally grounded evidence into global SDG-related processes, strengthening coherence between global agendas and territorial realities. The KSN's distinctive contribution is therefore not the individual activities of its members, but the infrastructure it provides to connect territorial demand, academic capacity, policy uptake, and global learning.

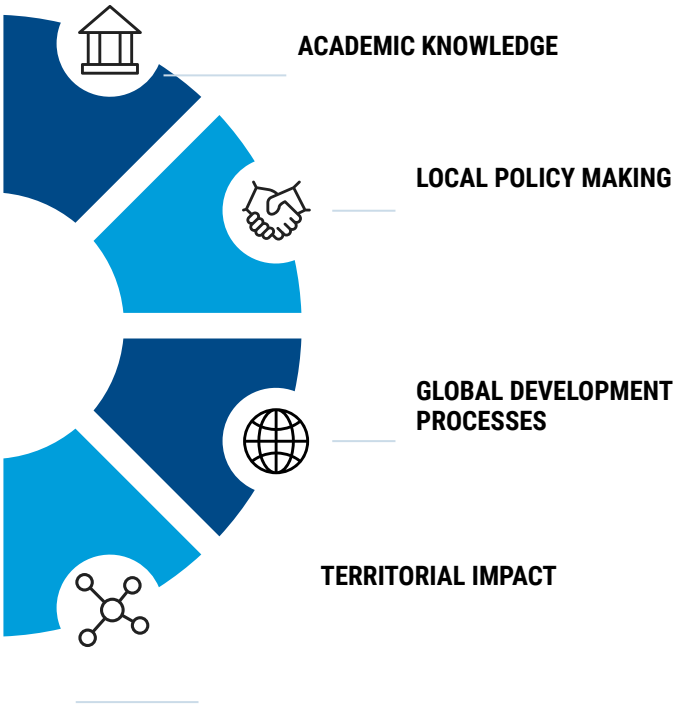
As part of the commitment to advancing SDG localization through research, policy dialogue, and territorial transformation, the KSN have co-organized a series of International SDG Forums: The first edition, held in Utah, USA (2022), highlighted the central role of academia and scientific research in advancing the 2030 Agenda, while the second edition, held in Bilbao (2024), focused on co-creating transformative solutions for environmental, social, economic, and digital transitions. The third edition, held in Curitiba, Brazil, built on this progress by strengthening the contribution of higher education to territorial SDG action through a dedicated dialogue among Local2030 Hubs.

KSN Innovation Labs

Building on this rationale, the Local2030 Coalition has entered a new phase with the launch of the KSN Innovation Labs, a global network of academic institutions and knowledge ecosystems that transform research into actionable solutions for territorial development.

The Innovation Labs are not centres of excellence in the traditional sense. They function as territorial learning infrastructures, where scientific knowledge, public institutions and local communities jointly generate, test and scale solutions to complex development challenges.

These Labs bring together leading entities recognized for their ability to respond to local needs through innovation, partnerships, and evidence-based approaches. Through the KSN, their work is amplified and shared globally, from developing practical tools and fostering collaboration to generating solutions grounded in real territorial challenges. They are selected based on their demonstrated capacity to connect academic knowledge with territorial priorities, sustain partnerships with local institutions and communities, generate actionable solutions, and share transferable learning across the Local2030 ecosystem. As the model evolves, a common framework will guide their commitments, outputs, monitoring, and collaboration with Local2030 Hubs and other Coalition partners.



As part of the broader Local2030 ecosystem, the **KSN Innovation Labs** reflect the diverse ways in which academic actors are advancing the localization of the SDGs. They act as a bridge between academic knowledge, local policymaking, and global development processes. In doing so, they actively strengthen the Coalition's capacity-building efforts, support action on the ground across territories, and contribute to more effective linkages with the Local2030 Hubs.



They also play a key role in informing and reinforcing the Local2030 Coalition global advocacy processes, bringing evidence, local insights, and academic rigor into international policy dialogues. Across all these dimensions, they promote approaches rooted in local impact, scalability, interdisciplinary collaboration, strong policy linkages, community ownership, and data-driven decision-making.

While the contexts presented in this report vary significantly, the experiences share common characteristics. They demonstrate how academia contributes to building territorial capacities, strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration, generating context-sensitive evidence, supporting policy innovation, and scaling local solutions through global learning networks.

University of South Africa

The University of South Africa demonstrates how an engaged university can embed sustainable development into its institutional mission, transforming community engagement into a long-term driver of territorial transformation.

The **University of South Africa (Unisa)** is the largest university on the African continent and one of the world's largest mega-universities. As an engaged university, it values collective thinking and action for greater social benefit. Unisa's orientation is grounded in community, which forms the bedrock of African society, and is inspired by *Ubuntu*, the enduring African philosophy that affirms humanity as fundamentally relational.

Recognizing that humanity is shaped through connection, Unisa approaches sustainable development as a contextual, community endeavor that unfolds with specific people in specific places. It actively forges collaboration and partnerships among academics, students, government, business, civil society, and communities of shared place, practice, and purpose to enable meaningful, context-responsive yet scalable change.

Critical Actions taken to advance Agenda 2030:

1. Pillar 3 of **Unisa's strategy**, *Engaged Scholarship and Global Impact* provides the strategic foundation for its commitment to sustainable development impact at local and global levels through collaborative knowledge and development work.
2. Unisa's **dedicated Division of Community Engagement and Outreach** (DCEO) drives the strategic thrust for Agenda 2030 action and impact. It has developed stakeholder databases and digital platforms to support scaling without losing contextual sensitivity.
3. As an engaged university, its knowledge creation and mobilization efforts are rooted in thinking, reflection, and action *in community*. For this reason, Unisa works to **break down disciplinary and sectoral silos** so that knowledge can converge to effectively solve sustainable development problems and enhance development solutions capacity.
4. It purposefully **extends sustainability dialogue beyond the boundaries of higher education**, placing high value on ***situated knowledge*** that exists outside the university across diverse sectors and communities. Through engagement in specific contexts, it draws on the **richness of culture** and **localized community wisdom**, including **indigenous knowledge systems** and **historically subjugated epistemologies**.

Unisa's Chance 2 Advance program:



Unisa's Chance 2 Advance program is a scalable and replicable model for university-community knowledge mobilization. The picture shows a community in Siyabuswa who participated in Children's Rights training. Through this program insights from affected communities are fed into teaching, learning and research and policy review.

University of South Africa

5. To ensure that they move **from commitment and aspiration to action**, Unisa has created a **governance framework for engaged sustainability**. It crafted **institutional policy and a range of operating procedures** to deepen sustainability consciousness, discourse, and action.

6. Even amid resource constraints, **Unisa commits human, financial, ICT and other university resources** and offers operational support mechanisms to enable their projects.

7. Their **annual capacity building programme** drives high quality sustainability praxis and is tailored to the needs of their participants who include project teams, government, business, civil society and a range of community networks.

8. For Unisa, the **relevance of Agenda 2030 was not left to chance** but embedded in our engaged scholarship project structure. Projects respond to specific SDGs and related targets. Collectively, their projects are **active on all 17 SDGs**. **The number of projects localizing Agenda 2030 has increased year-on-year from 78 in 2020 to 197 in 2026, representing a 152% increase.**

9. Unisa designed and implemented an integrated planning, reporting system that takes their Agenda 2030 projects from registration through to close-down. Through their **tailored institutional platform and business intelligence**, they can track budgets, social networks, engaged teaching, learning, research, and social innovation, and assess **qualitative and quantitative impact** across all 17 SDGs.

10. Each year, there is an increasing number of projects that connect the university with policy custodians and policy implementation bodies at national, continental, and global levels.

11. Their **stakeholders are kept informed** of their work through **annual aggregated reporting** that covers their sustainability efforts.

12. Instead of a "hit and run" approach, they **walk the long journey** with their communities and networks to address asymmetries in development. Through effective collaborations, they generate solutions that are technically sound, socially legitimate, and contextually appropriate. Their communities retain agency, build ability, and sustain impact.

Unisa's Skills Training for Translators and Editors project:



Unisa's Skills Training for Translators and Editors project led by the Department of Linguistics and Modern Languages - College of Human Sciences trained the South African parliament's language practitioners who are responsible for a range of essential language services, including interpreting, translation, reporting and language editing. Their work ensures that parliamentary proceedings are accessible, accurately recorded, and professionally communicated across South Africa's diverse linguistic landscape. Unisa provided professional development of these practitioners, focusing on ethics in translation, standards, and professionalism in translation. Between 2016 and 2025, the project reached eight provinces, namely KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North-West, Gauteng, Eastern Cape, Free State, and the Western Cape.

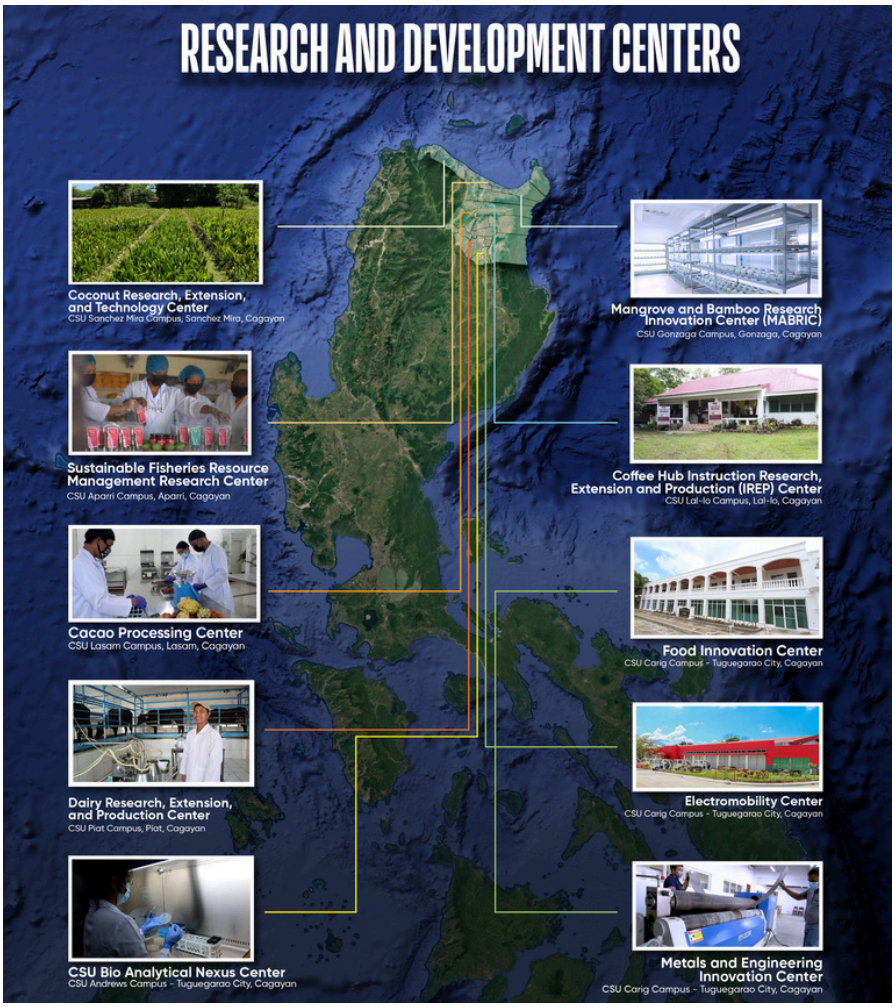
Cagayan State University

CSU demonstrates how a provincial university can act as an anchor institution for place-based sustainable development.

Cagayan State University (CSU), in the Philippines, is a provincial institution with a global vision, embedding the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across its academic, research, and extension programs. With nine campuses across Cagayan province, CSU ensures that quality, free higher education is accessible to all and positions itself as a driver of sustainable development across its communities.

Its research centers conduct specialized and community-based studies that not only advance knowledge but also translate into technologies and livelihood opportunities for local populations. Through environmental scanning and community consultations, the University identifies available resources and transforms them into value-added products, thereby addressing pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges.

This commitment is strengthened by CSU's partnerships with Local Government Units (LGUs), community leaders, youth organizations, and national agencies such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), among others. By integrating instruction, research, extension, and production, the University creates synergies that benefit communities, enterprises, and government agencies alike. Its academic programs conduct interdisciplinary research that contributes to policy development, promotes smart agriculture, supports enterprise growth, and conserves biodiversity—demonstrating how higher education institutions can localize the SDGs in practical and impactful ways.



Each campus contributes uniquely to this mission. In **Aparri**, where fishing sustains local livelihoods, interdisciplinary research harnesses information technology to prevent the harvesting of undersized marine species, ensuring sustainable fisheries management.

Cagayan State University

Sanchez Mira, a coconut-farming community, hosts a coconut gene bank that develops resilient varieties and promotes a circular economy through coconut-based innovations. Gonzaga's Mangrove and Bamboo Research and Innovation Center (MABRIC) integrate agroforestry with mangrove conservation, mitigating deforestation and rural poverty while enhancing food security. At the **Piat Campus**, the Philippine Carabao Center supplies 80 percent of the milk for the School-Based Milk Feeding Program, directly addressing child malnutrition while strengthening the dairy industry's value chain.

Other campuses contribute to enterprise development and climate action. **Lallo Campus** has the largest land area, covering 724 hectares, of which 1.57% is developed as the Valena Coffee Forest. It empowers farmers in producing coffee beans for campus-based enterprises and supports research for technology transfer to the community.

Meanwhile, **Lasam Campus** cultivates cacao plantations that support a community-based chocolate industry. **Carig Campus**, home to engineering programs, operates the Electromobility Research and Development Center (EMRDC), which pioneers electric tricycles, buses, and trams—scalable models that advance sustainable transportation systems not only in Cagayan but also throughout the Philippines. Its Architecture Department complements this work by designing resilient housing for Ivatan indigenous communities in Batanes, integrating cultural preservation with disaster resilience.

Andrews Campus, located in Tuguegarao City, serves as the commercial hub for farm yields of the adopted communities and products developed across the system. At the same time, its programs in Business, Entrepreneurship, and Accountancy collaborate with other disciplines to scale community-based microenterprises by providing entrepreneurial capacity training, development of business plans and marketing research, product costing and pricing, and cooperative development.

As a way forward, the campuses are being developed into agritourism sites to expand the livelihood opportunities for communities, providing research opportunities and living laboratories for the students, preserving the cultural heritage of Cagayan, and promoting the SDGs at the local level.

Together, these initiatives illustrate CSU's holistic approach to sustainable development. By embedding the SDGs into its academic and research agenda, CSU not only strengthens its instructional capabilities but also empowers communities to thrive. Its integrated model demonstrates how a provincial university can influence policy, foster inclusive growth, and build resilient ecosystems—making CSU a strong example of how higher education institutions can localize global goals and translate them into tangible community impact.





Utah Valley University

UVU shows how international academic partnerships can strengthen local capacities while generating global learning.

Utah Valley University (UVU), through its UNESCO Chair on AI and Environmental Stewardship for Sustainable Futures and its academic colleges, advances sustainable development through international partnerships that integrate education, research, community engagement, and innovation. As part of its engagement within the Local2030 Coalition and the KSN, UVU contributes to advancing locally relevant solutions through interdisciplinary initiatives that connect academic expertise with community needs across diverse geographical contexts. Its work spans multiple countries and disciplines, addressing challenges related to cultural heritage preservation, artificial intelligence, public health, inclusive education, environmental sustainability, entrepreneurship, and climate resilience.

UVU's initiatives demonstrate how academic institutions can foster international collaboration while contributing to sustainable development through education, research, and community engagement. In **Greece**, the "Capturing the Agios Achilios of Pentalofos" initiative combines architectural surveying with advanced digital technologies, including LiDAR scanning, photogrammetry, and extended reality, contributing to cultural heritage preservation and expanding access to historical and cultural assets. In the **Philippines**, partnerships with educational institutions, government agencies, and professional organizations strengthen AI education, research, and workforce development, while promoting ethical and practical applications of artificial intelligence.

Other initiatives focus on health, inclusion, and community well-being. In **Cambodia**, interdisciplinary collaboration with Angkor Hospital for Children provides students with hands-on global health experiences while supporting local healthcare delivery and community education. In the **Dominican Republic**, projects in emergency medical services and entrepreneurship promote professional training, financial literacy, and community-based development.

In **Indonesia**, partnerships with universities and disability organizations strengthen support for families of children with disabilities through practical training and rehabilitation initiatives. In **Kenya**, the development of digital mental health tools seeks to expand access to confidential and inclusive support services for university students.







Credits: *Utah Valley University*

Environmental sustainability is also a central area of work. In **Peru**, collaborative research addresses freshwater sustainability through multidisciplinary studies on water quality and ecosystem protection. In **Cameroon**, projects examine environmental vulnerability, climate adaptation, and inclusive education, while in **Benin**, research on sacred forests highlights the role of local traditions in biodiversity conservation and environmental stewardship. In **Thailand**, educational partnerships promote ethical, inclusive, and sustainability-focused teaching approaches through global exchange and intercultural learning.

Together, these initiatives illustrate UVU's commitment to fostering international collaboration, advancing applied research, and supporting sustainable development through education, innovation, and community engagement. Further information on these initiatives, including detailed descriptions of projects and country-level activities, is available in the full **Local2030 Coalition Report - Utah Valley University**.

University of Granada

UNIVERSIDAD DE GRANADA

The University of Granada illustrates how universities can evolve from knowledge providers into institutional partners for territorial governance.

The **University of Granada** offers an illustrative example of how academic institutions can contribute to the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by connecting scientific knowledge, public institutions, and territorial priorities through structured, long-term collaboration. Its contribution is articulated through the Impronta model, an institutional framework designed to strengthen the interface between academia and public administration, and to support the translation of knowledge into action for territorial development, public innovation, and evidence-informed policymaking.

The model is currently deployed at two complementary levels:

- **Impronta Granada** at the provincial level, and
- **Impronta Andalucía** at the regional level,

reflecting both strong territorial anchoring and the capacity for scalability and transferability.

The Impronta model is grounded in a challenge-based approach. It begins with the identification of specific public needs and territorial priorities, and seeks to connect them with the scientific and technical capacities of the university. In doing so, it supports the co-production of solutions that are context-sensitive, operational, and aligned with institutional decision-making processes. The model combines several enabling components: digital infrastructure, data-informed matching between public challenges and academic expertise, co-creation methodologies, and multilevel governance arrangements.



Credits: Impronta Granada

Impronta Granada, launched at the end of 2022 as a strategic alliance between the University of Granada and the Provincial Council of Granada, focuses on aligning university knowledge with the territorial challenges identified through the province's urban agendas aligned with the 2030 Agenda. It has evolved into a mechanism for structuring and systematizing university-territory relations, turning previously fragmented interactions into a more coherent ecosystem of collaboration and impact. Its main areas of work include territorial governance, public innovation, citizen science, rural development, and place-based sustainability.

Among its key activities are the Consejos Comarcales UGR (UGR County Councils), which function as stable spaces for dialogue between researchers and local actors across the province's counties; Public Innovation Labs for the co-design of evidence-based public policies; citizen science initiatives that involve communities in research processes with direct territorial relevance; and the **Impronta Awards**, which connect academic outputs such as theses, dissertations, and scientific publications with specific territorial needs. The model also integrates hackathons and living lab methodologies, including Granada Tierra Viva, developed within the framework of the European project **SOILCRATES**, where producers, public administrations, and scientists jointly address issues such as soil degradation, water scarcity, and climate resilience.



Credits: Impronta Granada



Credits: Impronta Andalucía



Credits: Impronta Andalucía

Building on this foundation, the University of Granada launched **Impronta Andalucía** in 2025, together with the Andalusian Institute of Public Administration (IAAP), as a regional ecosystem for public innovation and science-for-policy.

This second level extends the approach of Impronta Granada to the scale of Andalusia through a multilevel network involving the regional administration, provincial councils, municipalities, Ceuta and Melilla and, progressively, the wider Andalusian public university system. Its core areas of work include the mapping of public challenges, calls for academic participation, capacity-building for science-policy exchange, co-creation laboratories, and evaluation processes.

In March 2026, a first high-level meeting brought together approximately 150 participants from the scientific community, senior policymakers from the Regional Government of Andalusia, and representatives of the third sector. The meeting provided a valuable platform to identify shared priorities, align institutional and knowledge agendas, and advance a common understanding of how science-policy collaboration can support territorial development.

As a result of this process, further joint actions are planned for June 2026, with a particular focus on culture, heritage, and cities. These actions are especially significant as they align the work of Impronta Andalucía with one of Granada's key strategic processes: the city's candidacy for European Capital of Culture 2031. In this respect, the initiative illustrates how academic institutions can help connect public policy, cultural development, and territorial transformation within broader sustainable development frameworks.

Through this dual structure, the University supports SDG localization by combining local embeddedness, institutional collaboration, interdisciplinary knowledge, and the capacity to scale up and transfer lessons across contexts, thereby making a meaningful contribution to the objectives of the Local2030 Knowledge and Scientific Network.

Country Solutions

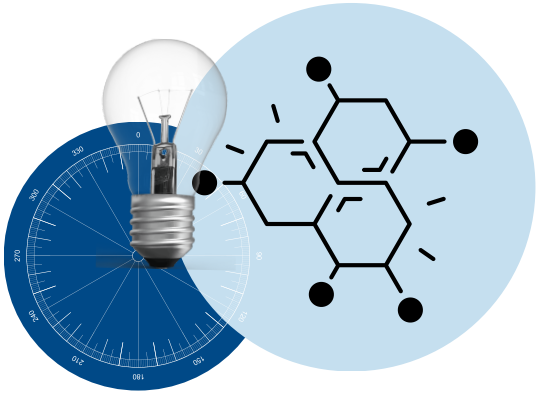
Complementing the KSN Innovation Labs, the **Country Solutions** in **Tunisia** and **Jordan** represent a core component of KSN's approach to translate research into policy and action. Building on the work carried out by CeSPI and UN-Habitat, the pilot phase supported an interdisciplinary cohort of 12 doctoral and postdoctoral researchers – 6 from Jordan and 6 from Tunisia – that worked directly with local governments and stakeholders to address context-specific development challenges.

Through a combination of research workshops, training activities, and academic engagement with local actors, the Country Solutions bridge the gap between academia and policy making, supporting the co-creation of outputs that are policy-oriented, while enhancing local capacities for decision-making processes, and contributing to embed scientific knowledge within planning processes.

The Country Solutions bring together three complementary components that connect academic learning, territorial engagement, and knowledge production:

1. The **Academic Training Programme** equipped young researchers with tools for SDG Localization through eight thematic modules and over 60 learning and exchange activities involving more than 50 experts and practitioners.
2. **Twenty-four local labs** in Jordan and Tunisia connected this academic learning with territorial realities. Through collaboration among researchers, municipalities and local stakeholders, the Labs supported the identification of local priorities, the analysis of context-specific challenges, and the alignment of research with local planning and policymaking needs.
3. A **knowledge-production component** translated the research and territorial engagement into accessible, policy-oriented outputs. Researchers produced opinion articles, scientific papers and policy briefs, generating a total of 34 knowledge products.

Building on the experience in Jordan and Tunisia, the Country Solution methodology is now being adapted and expanded to Viet Nam with support from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.



Testimony of Jordan



Jordan's experience within the KSN has demonstrated the transformative potential of SDG localization when global ambitions are translated into locally relevant actions. As the United Nations system-wide initiative for SDG localization, the Local2030 Coalition provided an important framework through which Jordan's Local Labs in **Irbid** and **Aqaba** connected academic research, local stakeholders, and decision-makers to address pressing sustainability challenges.

In Irbid, the **Local Lab** focused on issues directly linked to the city's development priorities. Within the food security theme, student Isra Al Kharabsheh examined the impacts of water scarcity on Jordan's major crops, particularly wheat and barley, highlighting the urgent need for resilient agricultural practices. Under Housing, Amal Almalkawi explored the thermal insulation performance of residential buildings, which constitute the largest portion of Irbid's urban fabric, using advanced simulation tools to identify opportunities for improved energy efficiency and living conditions. In the Urban Solutions theme, Rawan Khattab developed a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure and monitor SDG localization in Irbid, providing local authorities with practical tools to assess progress and guide future interventions.

In Aqaba, the Local Lab addressed challenges and opportunities unique to the city's coastal and urban context. Hala Ghazi's work on Life Below Water explored sustainable marine ecosystems and documented best practices implemented by ASEZA.
Abdelruhman Abu-Hamdeh focused on Smart Cities, developing live monitoring platforms for air quality to support healthier and more sustainable urban environments. Meanwhile, Safwan Abdel Aal investigated automated waste management systems capable of optimizing collection, monitoring, and operational efficiency across the waste management process.

The Local Labs informed decision-makers through a series of interactive workshops and stakeholder engagement activities conducted in both cities. The solutions generated outputs for different audiences, including opinion pieces, academic articles, and policy reports. Their uptake and longer-term influence on policy will require continued monitoring and actionable recommendations for policymakers.

Beyond the individual projects, the KSN journey provided academic partners with a rich learning experience through its diverse modules, workshops, and capacity-building activities. The Local Lab model proved to be an effective mechanism for engaging stakeholders in purposeful academic research with practical and measurable outcomes. Most importantly, the emphasis on localization ensured that SDG implementation was grounded in local realities rather than generic frameworks.



Credits: Dr. Deyala Tarawneh



Credits: Thouraya Hammami-Bekri



"As a National Liaison Officer, this experience has been exceptionally rewarding. I had the privilege of working alongside talented Academic Partners, engaging with decision-makers capable of transforming ideas into action, and learning directly from the KSN programme. Above all, the experience reinforced a fundamental lesson: meaningful SDG localization begins by thinking locally, and through that process, we can truly act globally."

Dr. Deyala Tarawneh
Assistant Professor in Urban and Regional Planning, Architecture Department, School of Engineering, University of Jordan



Credits: Dr. Deyala Tarawneh

Country Solutions

Testimony of Tunisia

The KSN's experience in **Tunisia** as a Country Solution is a remarkable initiative that has concretely contributed to bridging the gap between scientific research and municipal institutional actors in local development. More broadly, it has highlighted the concept of SDG localization within academia and raised awareness of the role it can play in accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

Tunisia has placed the achievement of the SDGs among the priority objectives of its national scientific research strategy. However, SDG localization remained a concept that was not widely addressed by researchers, while co-creation with local actors and communities was limited. The KSN experience, supported by the expertise of UN-Habitat and CeSPI, and particularly through the Local Labs in the cities of **Sousse** and **Kerkennah**, has notably enabled the production and promotion of action-oriented research aligned with urban planning priorities and adapted to local contexts, as expressed by the partner municipalities.



Credits: Thouraya Hammami-Bekri

The cohort of six KSN academic partners and researchers benefited from an intensive training programme covering concepts, methodologies, tools, and case studies on SDG localization, delivered by international practitioners and researchers. This connected them to a global community of practice, enriching their learning and strengthening their capacities. Furthermore, as part of their action research, they either developed new research or deepened their ongoing PhD research.

In the Kerkennah Archipelago, Wiem Alimi explored HBIM-based digital twins for heritage governance and sustainable territorial planning, while Nada Abdelkader examined the recovery of Posidonia oceanica ecosystems, from restoration to conservation.

In Sousse, Dr Khouloud Annabi explored the development of the circular economy through the sustainable valorization of arboricultural by-products, and Mohamed Amin Nagaaoui studied the implementation of SDG 7 at the local and national levels, highlighting monitoring as a key instrument.

In both cities, Dr Sana Smaddah explored heritage-driven urban revitalization as a lever for sustainable territorial development, while Mohamed Ouerghi studied smart and sustainable decision-making through the reinvention of development policies for digital urban waste management.

More specifically, the KSN Local Labs, organized through 14 meetings across the two cities, served as local platforms bringing together municipal stakeholders, civil society representatives, KSN academic partners, and university researchers working on topics relevant to the municipalities. Through these platforms, researchers were able to present and discuss their findings directly with municipal authorities for the first time, contributing evidence-based data and insights to inform city strategies and local urban development plans. The Tunisia Solution demostrates the KSN's capacity to create first-time institutional interfaces between PhD research and municipal planning processes, contributing evidence-based data and insights to inform city strategies and local urban development plans.



Credits: Thouraya Hammami-Bekri

"As the National Officer for Tunisia, I consider that the KSN represents a successful first experience in knowledge co-creation for SDG localization in the two cities. This experience should be continued through the implementation of projects in Sousse and Kerkennah, as well as replicated in other cities, in order to achieve a systemic impact and promote a paradigm shift towards scientific evidence-based local, regional, and national public policies focused on SDG localization."

Ms. Thouraya Hammami Bekrih
KSN National Liaison Officer for Tunisia

Paraná Local2030 Hub: NAPI Agenda 2030

The **Paraná Local2030 Hub** supports the municipalization of the 2030 Agenda by promoting knowledge exchange, strengthening collaboration among public institutions, academia, civil society, and the private sector, and providing an inclusive platform for local governments, leaders, and communities to co-create innovative policy solutions and partnerships that advance locally led SDG implementation across Paraná's 399 municipalities. Within this framework, the **New Arrangement for Research and Innovation (NAPI) Agenda 2030** was established to bridge research and public policy, connecting academic expertise with local development priorities to strengthen evidence-informed decision-making and public sector innovation in support of SDG implementation.



Credits: Paraná Local2030 Hub

Main areas of work

The NAPI Agenda 2030 is grounded in the Quadruple Helix governance model, which integrates Government, Academia, the Private Sector, and the Territory (Civil Society). Its mission is to transform scientific evidence into sustainable public policies through three interdependent strategic axes:

- **Axis 1 - Sustainable and Innovative Cities (SDG 11):**

Focuses on sustainable urban development, capacity building, metrics, participatory planning, social housing, sustainable urban solid waste management, green infrastructure, natural and cultural heritage, and life cycle assessment of the built environment.

- **Axis 2 - Conservation and Sustainable Use of Oceans (SDG 14):**

Focuses on protecting Paraná's 98 km of coastline, addressing challenges such as marine litter, sewage treatment in isolated communities, citizen science, ocean literacy, and the management of marine biodiversity.

- **Axis 3- Awareness, Motivation, and Diffusion of Knowledge**

A cross-cutting axis aimed at strengthening social engagement and disseminating SDG-related knowledge through the integration of teaching, research, and extension activities.

Key Activities

The activities are centered on action research (planning, action, observation, and reflection) and a data-driven approach. By utilizing advanced tools such as Artificial Intelligence and Power BI, the NAPI systematizes complex environmental and social data into intuitive dashboards that support municipal and state managers in making informed decisions.

Key activities include identifying territorial challenges in partnership with local municipalities, mapping innovative technologies to solve regional problems, and providing continuous training for public agents and community leaders. In the urban sphere, the Lab works on certifying "Sustainable Cities and Neighborhoods" and implementing technical assistance for social housing. Simultaneously, in the coastal region, it monitors marine pollution from a "source-to-sea" perspective and implements social technologies for sanitation in vulnerable areas.

Through the **TECPAR** (Institute of Technology of Paraná) as the executing agency and the support of **Fundação Araucária**, the Hub ensures that science is translated into tangible territorial outcomes, generating wealth, promoting well-being, and contributing to measurable improvement in quality of life for the citizens of Paraná.

TECPAR
INSTITUTO DE TECNOLOGIA DO PARANÁ

ARAUCARIA
CIÊNCIA, TECNOLOGIA E INOVAÇÃO PARA O PARANÁ

NAPI
AGENDA
2030



Credits: Paraná Local2030 Hub

Conclusions

The experiences and testimonies presented throughout this report demonstrate that academia is not simply an actor supporting SDG localization; it is a strategic enabler of territorial transformation. Across diverse contexts, universities and research institutions help create the conditions that allow territories to mobilize knowledge, build capacities, strengthen partnerships, inform investments, and reinforce the social contract through greater trust, participation, institutional legitimacy, and collective ownership of development processes.

Across the different experiences presented, several common principles emerge that underpin effective localization: interdisciplinary collaboration, strong partnerships between academia and public institutions, engagement with communities, and the capacity to translate scientific evidence into practical action. Whether through public innovation ecosystems, community engagement programmes, territorial research, citizen science, technological innovation, or locally grounded policy support, these experiences illustrate how knowledge can become a catalyst for sustainable development when it is connected to local needs and aspirations.

The Local2030 Knowledge and Scientific Network has played a critical role in enabling these connections. By bringing together academic institutions, young researchers, policymakers, and local actors, the KSN has contributed to bridging the gap between science and policy, strengthening capacities for territorial transformation, and ensuring that locally grounded evidence informs broader sustainable development processes. In doing so, it reinforces an essential principle of the 2030 Agenda: that global ambitions can only be achieved when they are rooted in local realities.

The cases presented here illustrate diverse models of SDG localization while revealing a shared set of enabling conditions: strong territorial partnerships, interdisciplinary collaboration, community ownership, and sustained institutional commitment sharing a common objective to creating meaningful and lasting impact. The experiences show that localization is not just the implementation of global goals at the local level; it is a transformative process that empowers communities, strengthens education institutions, and generates solutions shaped by the knowledge, priorities, and aspirations of people and places.

The future of SDG localization will not depend on producing more knowledge. It will depend on building the institutional capacity to transform knowledge into collective territorial action. The experience of the Local2030 Knowledge and Scientific Network demonstrates that when academia becomes embedded within governance ecosystems, evidence informs policy, local innovation generates global learning, and sustainable development becomes a shared territorial endeavour rather than a collection of isolated initiatives.

Knowledge creates impact only when it becomes part of territorial governance.









The Local2030 Knowledge and Scientific Network is empowering researchers, universities, and local actors to co-create solutions that make the SDGs tangible, actionable, and locally relevant.

LOCAL 2030
LOCALIZING THE SDGS

KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC NETWORK

Key Resources

LOCAL 2030

LOCALIZING THE SDGS

KNOWLEDGE AND SCIENTIFIC NETWORK

2026