



**United Nations Trust Fund
for Human Security**



SUMMARY

HIGH-LEVEL EXCHANGE FORUM LOCALIZING THE 2030 AGENDA: BUILDING ON WHAT WORKS

27-29 October 2019
Banjul, The Gambia

The Forum “**Localizing the 2030 Agenda: Building on What Works**” took place on 27-29 October 2019 in Banjul, The Gambia. The Forum was organized in partnership with the Government of The Gambia, the Senegalo-Gambian Permanent Secretariat, the UN Country Team in The Gambia, the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), Humanity United and the International Peace Institute (IPI). It brought together 70 leaders from national and local governments, the UN system, local champions, entrepreneurs, youth and women organizations from Côte d’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Senegal, and Sierra Leone, as well as regional entities and the international community.

Our Approach: Building on What Works

While progress has been made to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, consensus is that a more ambitious response is needed at all levels, particularly at the local level, if we are to realize the transformation envisaged. In line with the human security approach and its principles, localizing the 2030 Agenda is a process to empower local stakeholders and leverage their comparative advantages to ensure that sustainable development is responsive and relevant to local needs and aspirations. To this end, greater attention should be focused on a people-centred approach that mobilizes the capacities and ingenuity of local actors as well as builds inclusive, multi-stakeholder partnerships that can take successful local initiatives to scale to advance national and global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for all.

Both timely and of utmost importance, the Forum was organized to deepen the discussion, identify good practices, and foster new ideas on how to accelerate progress on achieving the SDGs from the ground up. It was structured to provide a model for a different way of working that puts the local at the centre of multi-stakeholder engagement in order to lay a stronger foundation for achieving the SDGs. It focused on identifying existing processes and mechanisms that enables local development initiatives to emerge and flourish. Informed by the shared belief that if recognized and supported such initiatives can accelerate the realization of the 2030 Agenda at the local level, the Forum encouraged a broad range of partners to consider how their collaboration could bring such initiatives to scale to advance the SDGs nationally in an integrated manner that leaves no one behind.

This approach requires a new mindset. It requires a shift from working in silos to working as an interconnected system from the bottom up and the top down, both horizontally and vertically, while engaging in multi-stakeholder partnerships beyond the scope of traditional development

actors. Rather than focusing on specific SDGs, the Forum discussed the systemic approach needed to successfully localize the 2030 Agenda.

The Forum's Methodology: Strengthening the Connection between Local Action and Global Goals

The objectives of the Forum were to:

- Generate awareness of existing capacities, knowledge, and mechanisms that West African communities can leverage to deliver local solutions to sustainable development challenges;
- Design elements for localized development strategies that align capacities and partnerships at multiple levels with the goal of accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda; and
- Enable a conversation on the roles that internal and external actors can play to support local development initiatives and their scale-up in the spirit and the letter of the 2030 Agenda.

As part of the preparatory process, the organizers launched a regional call to invite champions who were working to transform their communities to apply to participate in the Forum. From the 350 applications received, sixteen champions were selected, two per country. In addition, in consultation with Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams in the eight countries, a mayor and a national authority responsible for national development planning were invited to complete country team configurations of five members. Representatives from the international community were also present to ensure linkages across the local, national, regional and global levels in considering how to support acceleration of the 2030 Agenda. This rigorous and thoughtful selection process was a key element of the success of the Forum.

By bringing together stakeholders from diverse sectors, institutions, and levels of governance in each of the eight countries, the Forum created a unique platform for sharing experiences and knowledge that go beyond traditional forms of cooperation towards the multi-level, multi-sectoral dialogue necessary to overcome the complex obstacles to sustainable development at the community and national levels.

Ahead of the Forum, the organizers launched a twitter chat to engage a broader audience on what it means to localize the 2030 Agenda. Surprisingly, the twitter chat received close to 6 million impressions, highlighting the relevance of this topic. Social media is becoming an important platform for engaging a global audience that may not have access to meeting rooms but bring key messages to contribute to the discussions. People from 35 different countries, particularly youth, actively participated by sharing their work, insights and linkages to the 2030 Agenda.

FORUM PARTICIPANTS

Champions: They provided narratives and insights on what works in their country or in the region. They shared personal experiences on successful and comprehensive local development initiatives that could provide the foundation for scale-up.

Municipal authorities: As intermediaries between community leaders and the central government, and as champions of local development, they shared experiences and insights on the ingredients necessary to better support the flourishing of successful local initiatives.

National authorities: As stewards of sustainable development in each country, they provided insights and experiences on efforts being made to foster institutional collaboration and create ownership across institutions, as well as to mobilize and harness the contributions of a diverse set of stakeholders towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

UN Resident Coordinators: They brought experience promoting the comparative advantage of a wide range of stakeholders towards collaborative action and insights on how the UNCTs could help accelerate progress on the SDGs through locally-led strategies.

International participants: They attended the Forum with the intention to learn and consider how international efforts can help catalyse action at the local level and support the scale up of successful initiatives through multi-stakeholder partnerships.

To set the stage, the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General offered remarks via [video](#) underscoring the importance of the Forum and urging participants to seek collaborative solutions and commit to the outcomes of the deliberations. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of The Gambia, Hon. Mamadou Tangara, as well as the Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs of The Gambia, Hon. Mambury Njie, also provided remarks, emphasizing the importance of inclusive partnerships and reiterating their government's commitment to the success of the Forum.

Through facilitated discussions and guided exploration in country configurations, participants from each country shared innovative and successful solutions to multifaceted development challenges at the local level, as well as identified key elements and contributing factors behind the success of their initiatives, providing the underpinning for which to bring them to scale. Based on common values and approaches across their examples, each country group explored how to leverage and strengthen existing mechanisms towards partnership-based initiatives that could better respond to the specificities of their local context. Participants noted the value of learning about locally-driven initiatives in their countries and examining the capacities, resources and knowledge that exist towards larger-scale reach and impact. In addition, sessions for exchange across country experiences created an environment of peer learning as well as identification of areas where support from regional and international actors could strengthen a localized approach to the 2030 Agenda.

Emerging Themes

From the discussions, the following ingredients emerged as essential components for a localized and scalable approach to advance the SDGs: ownership across levels of society, including

traditional leaders and knowledge; partnership, coordination and alignment; building on existing strengths, resources and capacities; and, political will and leadership across stakeholders.

Ownership

To accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, participants noted the importance of ownership across all segments of society and offered the following thoughts on how to promote ownership:

- The 2030 Agenda must be anchored in the value-system of the community by building on existing knowledge, capacities and traditions that empower people to take initiative and by addressing local challenges through dialogue and collective action. Some of the identified values included: a growing sense of volunteerism, a shared identity beyond national borders, honouring and including traditional knowledge and peoples, inclusivity, collaboration, and promoting respect and dignity.
- Simplify the language of the 2030 Agenda into digestible ideas and translate them into local languages to allow the framework to spread beyond major cities, generate a sense of shared values, and become relevant to people's daily lives. This is especially important since the 2030 Agenda envisions itself as a document, "for the people, by the people."
- The 2030 Agenda provides an important opportunity to unify disparate local interests into a platform for collective action. International, national and local leaders therefore should leverage the Agenda's breadth and identify the interconnections and commonalities of needs and priorities across various stakeholders for more cohesive and coherent strategies.
- Countries from the region expressed their desire to move beyond aid and to administer domestic resources in a more sustainable way by addressing key development priorities and ensuring greater autonomy in the development paths of the countries in the region.

From coordination to integration and alignment

Strengthening cross-institutional linkages and identifying areas for meaningful integration and alignment of activities and strategies across sectors and levels in societies was viewed as an essential component to advancing the SDGs at the local and national levels:

- Most institutions need to improve mechanisms to communicate and work across departments, agencies and levels. For national governments, institutionalizing consistent inter-ministerial work is fundamental to advancing the multi-sectoral approach necessary to advance the 2030 Agenda. In addition, structures that systematically share information and combine expertise across levels of government are necessary. These types of platforms can also extend to other partners including the UN system. Stronger integrated action across UN entities would also enhance support to governments in advancing the SDGs.
- Beyond mechanisms within institutions, there is the need to create platforms that systematically engage a broad range of stakeholders across government, regional intergovernmental entities, the UN system, civil society, the private sector and the media to

explore how their respective know-how and resources can come together towards a genuinely multi-stakeholder effort to meet the scope and the scale necessary to advance sustainable development. Efforts could be enhanced by ensuring that such platforms are inclusive of all relevant groups and institutions, including the private sector and the media.

- Building the capacity of actors to work effectively across institutions and sectors was also underlined as a prerequisite of effective multi-stakeholder partnerships. It was noted that building knowledge and understanding the roles and substantive contribution of each entity, harmonizing terminology, understanding the interlinkages across issue areas, and identifying actions that can bring together expertise requires significant time and investment. It is essential therefore to articulate the added value of such partnerships and to identify effective incentives for their realization.

Building on what works from the ground up

Building on what works from the ground up proved to be a unique and innovative model for accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Some of the insights from the discussions included:

- There is a need to reflect on the overall approach to sustainable development, which is often a top-down process with the strategy defined at the international or national levels and implementation expected at the municipal and local levels. By placing people at the centre, as called for in the 2030 Agenda, the process of defining the strategy will naturally engage local authorities and community leaders more systematically. Moreover, strategies will better account for and incorporate the skills, knowledge, and resources at the local level, as well as better identify the gaps that can be addressed through capacity and resilience building efforts.
- There has been a tendency for external actors to come with an agenda and specific priorities that are exogenous to the context and the needs of communities. Although often well intentioned, these efforts can be limited in their ability to bear sustainable results. External actors can better support sustainable development by being responsive to the reality on the ground, catalysing meaningful engagement of local actors, and supporting national governments and local communities to sustain these efforts over the long-term.
- Focusing on a whole-of-society approach at the local level can effectively capture the richness of knowledge, interest, and expertise that exists in all communities. By being a microcosm for engaging a wider array of actors in sustainable development – from women’s and youth organizations, small business and entrepreneurs, faith-based organizations and leaders, art communities, political parties, media, among others – these broad-based local efforts can help identify effective entry points for collaboration that can be taken to scale at the national level.

Political will and leadership

As the central and guiding actor to communicate, plan and execute the SDGs, national government buy-in is essential to accelerate progress and ensure a localized and community-driven 2030 Agenda. Some of the insights from this discussion included:

- The national government has an important role to play in leading and demonstrating its willingness to engage all levels of society to advance sustainable development at the local level by building on effective local solutions. Dialogue platforms on implementing the 2030 Agenda need to extend beyond capitals in order to promote a more open and inclusive format for engaging local leaders and communities.
- In addition, while it is necessary for one entity to take the lead at the national level for overseeing the SDGs, a whole-of-government approach and narrative can help engender responsibility across all parts of the government and create an environment of collaboration for more effective strategies to address the interlinkages across the SDGs.
- Political will for a more localized and comprehensive approach also extends to regional and international actors who are often seen as intermittent players that engage where there is a crisis or only to support specific priorities. Moreover, their engagement on sustainable development needs to more consistently move beyond short-term solutions towards support that catalyses longer-term transformative outcomes. This includes avoiding financing patterns that can reinforce siloes or short-term outcomes.

Outcomes of the Forum

At the end of the Forum, each country group agreed on an overall framework – key components, mechanisms, and partnerships – that would facilitate the scale-up of successful locally-led initiatives. Building on this foundation, participants considered specific actions to foster institutional collaboration, establish or enhance governance arrangements, and create platforms for sustained dialogue across stakeholders at different levels in order to harness their contributions towards accelerating the SDGs at the local and national level. Moreover, they identified critical gaps in communication, partnership, and processes to advance an inclusive and participatory development strategy which builds on innovations and successes at the local level towards national development objectives that leave no one behind. Each group committed to three priority, practice, and time-bound follow-up actions to build on the outcomes of the Forum and to further elaborate the frameworks and strategies discussed (see Annex I).

Subsequently, the Forum helped generate awareness of existing capacities, knowledge, and mechanisms that could be leveraged in each country and within the region to strengthen the delivery of local solutions to sustainable development challenges. In addition, it enabled a broad and inclusive dialogue on how various internal and external actors can come together to support a ground-up approach that includes people as drivers of sustainable development progress and community transformation.

Follow-up Actions to the Forum

To ensure that the wealth of good practices and lessons learned from the Forum will inform global discussions as well as result in concrete actions for people in the eight countries, the following actions will be undertaken (see Annex 1). A comprehensive report will be compiled highlighting the outcomes of the Forum and the specific ingredients, including community assets, capacities, resources, processes and partnerships, that can provide the foundation and structure for scaling up

successful local initiatives to advance national development objectives. The report will be launched at an event in New York in Spring 2020.

In addition, the UNTFHS will work with the Resident Coordinators and UNCTs, as well as government and civil society partners, in each of the eight countries to design operational programmes that build on the outcomes of the Forum and apply the human security approach to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs at the local and national levels. The UNTFHS will offer seed funding and mobilize additional resources to support these eight operational programmes.

The Banjul Declaration

The Forum presented the rare opportunity for the participants to inscribe some of the above key points into a shared document they called the Banjul Declaration in honor of the host country's capital where the Forum was held. The Declaration recorded the wishes and aspirations of the participants and their determination to find the most effective strategies of localizing the 2030 Agenda. In the Declaration, the Government of The Gambia committed to reach out to the participating governments in the sub region and encourage them to endorse and sign off on the draft declaration by the spring of 2020 (see Annex 2).

Annex I

At the end of the Forum, each country group committed to follow-up with specific actions.

Cote D'Ivoire

1. Organisation of a meeting between the Government and the 11 sub-sectors of the civil society towards the localisation of the SDGs.
2. Organize a consultation meeting between the private sector, civil society and civil societies and territorial collectivists (regional council, municipality,) to establish a partnership framework to support the implementation of the SDGs at the local level.
3. Organise a meeting with development partners including sub regional and regional partners to share the conclusions from the past two meetings and secure their support for the implementation of the SDGS at the local level.

The Gambia

ACTIVITY	WHO	WHEN	HOW
Building on the mapping exercise: Awareness raising on decentralization	MOLRG, LGAs, MOFEA, UNCT, CSOs, Private Sector, GAMNATT	June 2020	Radio, Traditional, Communicators, Newspapers, Billboards, Flyers etc.
Participatory platforms strengthened	MOLRG, LGAs, MOFEA, UNCT, CSOs, Private Sector, GAMNATT	Aug/Sept 2020	Meeting of stakeholders integrated with the Gambia's VNR process
Capacity building for Village Development Committees (VDCs), Ward Development Committees (WDCs), Multi-disciplinary Facilitation Teams (MDFTs), Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) to develop Community Action Plans (CAPs), regional Development Plans (RDPs)	MOLRG, LGAs, MOFEA, UNCT, CSOs, Private Sector, GAMNATT	Dec 2020	Training

Ghana

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
SDG information dissemination and meetings with media	Municipal MMDAs and civil society organizations	Within in 3 months starting Nov 2019
Presentation to ICC (SDG) about the outcome of the Exchange Forum	Ministry of Planning and UN Country Team	March 2020 (at next meeting)
Advocate for the need to translate SDGs into local languages	Ministry of Planning and UN Country Team	Begin in Dec 2019 when languages will be identified

Guinea Bissau

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	HOW
Sensitisation of local communities towards a paradigm shift	Mr. Abdul Samba	Q1 2020	Meetings with the local communities and traditional rulers
Empowerment of Women	Nerida	Q4 2019 – Q1 2020	Sensitisation workshop Capacity building Entrepreneurship guidance and experience exchange Support in the creation of women's cooperative societies Training in artisanal works and recycling Promotion of artisanal work as alternative employment
Promotion of Entrepreneurship	Juviano	Q4 2019 – Q1 2020	Support in skills towards the production of bio gas Environment protection against tree cutting for charcoal production

Guinea

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Report on the Forum to the Ministers of Planning and International Cooperation	All Participants	November 2019
Knowledge transfer of the forum to development partners and actors	All Participants	November 2019
Popularization of the SDGs in local communities	ANAFIC ANCG MATD	January 2020 to December 2020
Facilitating the establishment of a platform in charge of advocacy on the SDGs	Ministries of Planning and Cooperation	2020

Liberia

ACTIONS	WHO	WHEN
Sensitization of the Liberia Development Action (LDA) and briefing with the RC and ministry of finance and development planning. Brief with LDA on the SDGs	Government of Liberia and the UN and partners	By the end of November
Use VNR process as a segue way for implementation of the Banjul Declaration on localizing the SDGs – ensure that the methodology is inclusive and connected to the local efforts	Government, UN and partners	By April 2020
Sensitization on the National Development Plan (NDP) on the linkages with the SDGs	Government of Liberia, UN, County Authorities	By November/December 2019

Senegal

ACTION	WHO	WHEN	HOW
Stakeholder involvement in information gathering, sensitization, and mobilisation of resources	Government, Civil Society, Private Sector, Parliament, Youth	Now – January 2020	Put in place a platform bringing together the most dynamic and successful youth and women initiatives towards the attainment of the SDGs
Development of Social Programmes (Example of UNDP initiative)	Stakeholders Platform	Now - 2021	By basing interventions on the specific needs of local communities
Monitoring and evaluation of objectives.	The CASE (Harmonized Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies) through the RAC (Joint Annual Review)	Quarterly and Annual	Production of report and impact assessment

Sierra Leone

ACTION	WHO	WHEN
Convene a meeting with the Minister of Development and Economic Planning and The Parliamentary subcommittee on the SDGs to brief them on the outcome of the Banjul Conference.	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development with support from the UNCT	Within the next 2 weeks
Facilitate training on the SDGs and report back mechanism on the outcome of 2019 VNR report and its recommendations to Local Councils, CSOs, MDAs, Traditional Leaders and the private sectors at district level across the country	Ministry of Development and Economic planning with support from development partners and UNCT	Within next 3-6 months
Review of the decentralization and local government act	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	Ongoing
Localize the communications and dissemination strategy of the MTDP / SDGs using the Wan Fambul National Framework for Inclusive Governance and Rural Development	Ministry of Development and Economic planning and Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development with support from its development partners	Ongoing

Annex 2

The Banjul Declaration
Localizing the 2030 Agenda: Building on What Works
29 OCTOBER 2019

Welcoming the participation of Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Liberia, Senegal, and Sierra Leone at the Localizing the 2030 Agenda: Building on What Works,

Recognizing the Government of The Gambia for hosting the first sub-regional Forum on Localizing the 2030 Agenda.

Recognizing international organizations such as Senegalo-Gambia Secretariat, the UN Country Teams, UN Human Security Trust Fund, the International Peace Institute and other partners for their efforts and support leading up to a successful first 2030 Agenda Exchange Forum in Banjul.

Also recognizing that some of these lessons can be shared and applied in the region and globally to help accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

Acknowledging that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a multilevel and multi-stakeholder process that requires a new institutional approach, with inclusive dialogue and a strong complementarity and cooperation among the different spheres of government – local, subnational, national, regional and global – and with the communities they serve and represent;

Underscoring that localization of the SDGs is essential to enhance the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through a bottom-up process, where ownership at the subnational and community level is needed, as well as transparent and open governments and mutual accountability, and that the SDGs can offer an integrated framework for local and territorial development;

Recognizing the commitment of the international community in the localization of the 2030 Agenda and their support to these bottom-up approaches in coordination with government and regional organizations within the context of the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness;

Noting that 2020 starts the decade of delivery and that we only have 10 years to achieve the goals and targets;

We, the eight countries that met in Banjul, have decided to commit to the following actions:

1. Commit to the localization of the 2030 Agenda by strengthening local institutions, building capacities of communities;
2. Commit to accelerating community development through innovative, inclusive and participatory approaches;
3. Commit to an annual Exchange Forum to take stock of progress and lessons learned;
4. Commit to leading the support mechanism that would localize the 2030 Agenda and align international aid with domestic resources to scale-up in a sustainable and lasting way for greater impact.