



Theme of the UN Datathon 2023

EMBARGO UNTIL 26 OCTOBER - 08:00 AM

The need to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Every year in September the heads of states and governments gather in New York for the United Nations General Debate to talk about the most pressing issues of our time. This year, the General Debate of the UN's General Assembly was accompanied by the 2023 SDG Summit to assess the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. In a letter to the world's leaders the UN Secretary General stated:

"At the mid-way point of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is time to face the facts. Without a surge in commitment, solidarity, and transformative action, we will miss the headline targets of the 2030 Agenda to end poverty, reduce inequality and protect the environment. [...] The multiple crises of the last three years have dealt a major blow to SDGs implementation efforts. Millions have been pushed into poverty. Inequalities have risen considerably. The rights of women and girls have been under siege. And the urgent and existential business of averting climate catastrophe has been undermined. Even before these crises hit, we were not on track to meet the goals by 2030. Many critical policy changes, innovations, transitions and investments have not advanced at the speed or scale required. [...] Yet, the transformation envisioned by the 2030 Agenda remains both possible and essential. [...] We never had access to so much knowledge, technologies and resources." – António Guterres, source: [Letter of the UN Secretary-General to Member States-SDG Summit](#)

Over the past eight years, the world has seen unprecedented mobilization around the SDGs and we have made significant progress on some fronts, laying the critical foundations for our future success. However, now halfway to the 2030 deadline, we are not halfway there – in fact, we are only 15% of the way. Research on the SDGs has converged on six transformative entry points – or **key transitions** – that can have catalytic and multiplier effects across the SDGs and an outsized determinant impact for achieving the Goals.

These are six key transitions:

- (1) [food systems](#);
- (2) [energy access and affordability](#);
- (3) [digital connectivity](#);
- (4) [education](#);
- (5) [jobs and social protection](#); and
- (6) [climate change](#), [biodiversity loss](#) and pollution¹.

¹ Pollution is a multifaceted issue and there is no single summit document which covers it in a comprehensive way.

Rooted in the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#), these six transitions are not a new agenda. Rather, the transitions represent a useful organizing frame that can spotlight investment pathways to accelerate SDG progress within and across countries, with the prevailing country context determining the priority level and action accorded to each area. (Source: [Six Transitions: Investment Pathways to Deliver the SDGs](#), available in English, French, Spanish, Russian)

The six key transitions are supported by 5 enablers: SDG Stimulus, Trade, **SDG localization**, Public sector capabilities, and **Data dividend**. (Source: [Announcement on Initiative to accelerate the SDGs](#))

The UN Datathon 2023 will focus on one of these enablers, SDG localization, to support the collective action of the UN System and its Member States to accelerate the progress towards achieving the SDGs.

The need for local action and monitoring - SDG Localization

The crises of our time – environmental, social, health, economic and conflict – all have local dimensions and require localization of responses. For the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to enable its transformative potential, it must be fully realized at the local level. Localization of the SDGs is key if we want the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets to get back on track. We must place communities at the centre of sustainable development. Local actions and monitoring are vehicles to accelerate the six key transitions and ensure that no one and no place are left behind.

Three local action areas are key for this: a) Local advocacy, to generate a deeper understanding of the imperative of Localization to accelerate the SDG transitions, b) Local action, to facilitate local implementation through technology, capacity building, and financing, and c) Local monitoring and reporting on SDG implementation, including exchange of knowledge and perspectives. (Source: [Local2030 Coalition: Pushing key transitions and achieving the SDGs by 2030](#))

“In the few years that we have left until 2030, local breakthroughs across all the SDGs will be the cornerstone of the successful achievement of the SDGs. You are our most important advocates and we need your support to turn the tide in the next seven years.” – Amina J. Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General in the [Video of the Local2030 Coalition](#) (available also in [French](#) and [Spanish](#)).

Your challenge as participants of the UN Datathon

Your challenge as a participant of the UN Datathon is to create an innovative data solution which tackles local sustainable development challenges, and which leverages one or several of the six transitions. Everything happens somewhere. Therefore, by using geospatial or geocoded data and combining it with other data sources your solution should support local action and monitoring in an innovative way. And as we are all interconnected in this world, your solution – even though focusing on a local issue – should ideally be adaptable to other regions, and hence be scalable at the global level so that as many people as possible can benefit from your solution.
