



Building Sustainability from the Ground Up: The Need for Community-scale Indicators

Motivation

The authors are primarily motivated by questions surrounding the effectiveness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at influencing community-scale policy and interventions. They seek to address key questions relating to the current state of knowledge concerning SDG localization and effectiveness, as well as the discrepancies between high-level and subnational policy. The authors hypothesize that while the SDGs function well in informing national, Global North policy, they may be deployed less effectively at the community-scale.

Methods

Using the terms "SDG" and "localization" in the SCOPUS database, and after filtering out irrelevant items, we had 70 articles. The authors then extracted from the abstracts all pertinent information relating to the following categories: "Location, SDGs named, Motivation, Theory, Key Argument, Contribution, Methods, Findings, and Call to Action" The information in these categories was then used to inform our analysis

Findings

Using generative AI, the existing literature was analyzed for content and then sorted into three predominant categories, namely:

- Complexity and Considerations in Implementation
- Partnerships, Governance, and Intermediaries
- Data, Policy Coherence, and Contextualization

The literature review confirmed the authors' hypothesis that while important, especially at a national scale, the SDGs are often inaccessible at community or sub-national scales and can therefore impede widespread deployment and incorporation of the Goals.

Without easy and actionable steps, SDGs may continue to be inaccessible to communities around the world

"IT IS FOUND THAT THE COUNTRY-ORIENTED INDICATOR SYSTEM HAS SOME LOCALIZATION PROBLEMS AND CANNOT FULLY REFLECT THE CONNOTATION OF THE SDG SUB-TARGET 9.1 WHEN USED IN THE COUNTY LEVEL."



"The paper suggests that progress in launching and developing local initiatives within the United Kingdom has, to date, been limited. In part, this reflects the lack of a clear national policy framework for the localisation of the SDGs."

Limitations/Gaps

While the authors' review of the abstracts produced by SCOPUS was quite thorough, they recognize that a full paper review is more thorough. The authors also recognize the limitations of working with generative AI as an analysis tool

The authors identified several gaps in the literature, most prevalent is that there is little done on how the current research could be operationalized to facilitate better deployment and incorporation of the goals among local communities

Conclusion

The authors conclude by proposing solutions for easier contextualization of the SDGs. The authors suggest an interdisciplinary framework that invites politicians, community members, and other do-gooders to consider the breadth of the SDGs, while also facilitating workability and deployment of tangible practices and interventions in line with the Goals. Such a framework would guide users through SDG trade-offs and synergies, encouraging increased stakeholder involvement to ensure alignment of community values with SDG outcomes.

References

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