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Scaling SDG Impact Through Networks: The CIFAL Model for Localized Capacity and System-Wide Delivery - HLPF Side Event

People

Deadline: 15 Jul 2026

Type:	Side Event
Location:	New York, United States of America
Date:	16 Jul 2026
Duration:	2 Hours
Thematic Area:	Local Governance and Decentralisation, , Cross Cutting: Learning, Capacity Development and Leadership
Website:	https://unitar.org/sustainable-development-goals/people/our-portfolio/cifal-glo...
Price:	\$0.00
Event Focal Point Email:	adriana.lopez@unitar.org

BACKGROUND

As the international community enters the final stretch towards 2030, the urgency of accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals has never been greater. Despite notable progress in some areas, significant gaps remain across countries and regions, compounded by intersecting global

challenges including climate change, urbanization, inequalities, economic uncertainty, technological disruption, and increasing pressure on public institutions.

The theme of the 2026 High-Level Political Forum, “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for a sustainable future for all,” underscores the need to move beyond commitments and towards implementation approaches that are integrated, inclusive, scalable, and capable of delivering impact across sectors and levels of governance.

In this context, capacity development emerges not merely as a supporting function, but as a strategic enabler of transformation. Achieving sustainable development requires strengthening the capacities of institutions, local governments, communities, and stakeholders to translate global commitments into locally owned solutions that respond to diverse territorial realities.

The CIFAL Global Network, coordinated by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), offers a unique example of how networked capacity development can accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Through a global network of locally embedded training centres, CIFAL combines global expertise with local knowledge, fostering partnerships, facilitating multi-stakeholder engagement, and strengthening institutional capacities across sectors and geographies.

Operating at the intersection of global agendas and local action, CIFAL Centres serve as platforms for knowledge exchange, innovation, leadership development, and SDG localization. By leveraging partnerships among governments, academia, the private sector, civil society, and the United Nations system, the Network contributes to strengthening policy coherence, promoting inclusive development, and enhancing implementation capacity where it matters most: at the local level.

Against the backdrop of the 2026 HLPF and the in-depth review of Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), this side event will explore how local network-based approaches can contribute to transformative, equitable, innovative, and coordinated SDG implementation, while showcasing practical experiences and lessons learned from different regions of the world.

EVENT OBJECTIVES

- Present the CIFAL Global Network as a scalable and replicable model for accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda through localized capacity development and multi- stakeholder engagement.
- Demonstrate how network-based approaches can strengthen coordination, foster innovation, and enhance policy and implementation capacities across different governance levels.
- Showcase concrete examples of transformative local action led by CIFAL Centres and their partners in advancing sustainable urban development, inclusive growth, climate resilience, and social inclusion.
- Highlight the critical role of cities, local governments, educational institutions, and territorial actors in advancing the SDGs, particularly SDG 11 and related interconnected Goals.
- Promote partnerships and collaborative solutions that strengthen implementation capacity and contribute to SDG 17, reinforcing the importance of whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches.
- Contribute to global discussions on innovative delivery models that can help accelerate progress towards the SDGs during the remaining years of the Decade of Action.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Key Themes for Discussion:

- **Localizing the SDGs:** Strengthening capacities to translate global commitments into local action.
- **Transformative Action:** Accelerating sustainable development through integrated and systemic approaches.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Advancing development pathways that leave no one behind.
- **Innovation for Sustainable Development:** Leveraging knowledge, technology, and innovative learning approaches.
- **Multi-Level Governance and Coordination:** Enhancing institutional capacities and policy coherence across governance levels.
- **Partnerships for the Goals:** Mobilizing multi-stakeholder collaboration to accelerate SDG implementation.
- **Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Empowering local actors to advance resilient and inclusive urban development.
- **Scaling Impact Through Networks:** Sharing lessons from the CIFAL model to expand sustainable development solutions globally.

METHODOLOGY

The programme is structured around five complementary components:

1. Opening

The session will be opened by Dr. Ebru Canan-Sokullu, Deputy Director of the Division for People and Social Development and Deputy Head of the CIFAL Global Network, who will welcome participants and set the context for the discussion. She will be followed by welcoming remarks from Mr. Rabih El- Haddad, Head of the UNITAR Representation Office in New York and Director of the Division for Multilateral Diplomacy, who will highlight the objectives of the event and its strategic relevance within the context of the 2026 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF).

2. Introduction to the CIFAL Model as a Global Mechanism for Localized Implementation and Capacity Development

Mr. Alex Mejia, Head of the CIFAL Global Network and Director of the Division for People and Social Development, will provide a strategic overview of the CIFAL Global Network as UNITAR's global platform for localized capacity development and SDG implementation. His intervention will position the Network within the broader context of the 2026 HLPF theme, highlighting the critical role of locally embedded capacity development, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and knowledge exchange in accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

The keynote will establish the strategic framework for the discussions that follow, demonstrating how the CIFAL Global Network serves as a scalable and collaborative model for translating global commitments into locally driven action while strengthening institutional capacities, fostering innovation, and promoting coordinated implementation across diverse regional contexts.

3. Moderated Strategic Dialogue: Local Action, Global Impact

The core of the session will consist of a dynamic, moderator-led dialogue exploring how localized capacity development and multi-stakeholder partnerships contribute to transformative, equitable, innovative, and coordinated implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Moderated by Ms. Adriana Lopez, General Coordinator of the CIFAL Global Network, the dialogue will bring together representatives from the following

CIFAL Centres:

- CIFAL Dominican Republic
- CIFAL Durban
- CIFAL Istanbul
- CIFAL Miami
- CIFAL Nigeria (online)
- CIFAL Saudi Arabia
- CIFAL Surrey (online)
- CIFAL Victoria (online)

Rather than delivering formal presentations, participating Centres will engage in an interactive conversation guided by a series of strategic questions aligned with the 2026 HLPF theme. Drawing on their diverse regional experiences, participants will be invited to share practical examples, innovative approaches, and key lessons demonstrating how localized capacity development, institutional collaboration, and cross-sector partnerships can accelerate SDG implementation and generate sustainable impact at the local level.

4. Moderated Foresight: CGN: A Glocal Knowledge Delivery Mechanism

Building on the discussion, the session will transition into a forward-looking conversation facilitated by Dr. Ebru Canan-Sokullu, exploring the evolving role of the CIFAL Global Network as a Glocal Knowledge Delivery Mechanism.

The discussion will consider opportunities for strengthening collaboration across the Network, enhancing knowledge exchange, scaling successful practices, and positioning the CGN as a strategic platform for accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda beyond 2030.

Call for Action

The dialogue will foster peer learning and cross-regional exchange, encouraging participants to build on one another's experiences, identify common challenges and enabling factors, explore innovative solutions, and reflect on opportunities for strengthening collaboration across the CIFAL Global Network. The discussion will also seek to identify strategic recommendations that can inform the Network's future priorities and contribute to the broader global dialogue on accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

5. Closing Reflections

The session will conclude with closing reflections by Mr. Alex Mejia, Director, Division for People and Social Development and Head of the CIFAL Global Network, UNITAR, summarizing the principal messages emerging from the discussion and reaffirming the role of the CIFAL Global Network in supporting localized implementation of the 2030 Agenda through partnerships, innovation, and capacity development.

TARGETED AUDIENCE

- Directors and Chairpersons of CIFAL Centres. (in-person and online)

Participation will be at both strategic and technical levels, fostering a focused and action-oriented dialogue on accelerating SDG implementation through transformative, equitable, innovative, and coordinated approaches.