Call for Proposals
Localizing the SDGs: Listening to the Voices of the ‘Furthest-behind’
Deadline: 13 March, 2017

The United Nations in Lebanon, in collaboration with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs at the American University Beirut, is seeking proposals for a project titled, “Localizing the SDGs: Listening to the Voices of the ‘furthest-behind’”. The project aims to approach the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially the sustainable development goals (SDGs), in Lebanon through an innovative frame, focusing on a bottom-up approach that would cater to the needs of target communities, in this case those left furthest behind, and engage them. The project also aims to ensure that we take into consideration the needs of those ‘furthest-behind’ in national and local deliberations over the localization of the 2030 Agenda in Lebanon and in the formation of development policies in the country.

Deadline: March 13th, 2017

Eligible country: Lebanon

Eligibility criteria:

- Tertiary Education Institutions, including:
  - Public/State-controlled Institutions of Tertiary Education
  - Private Institutions of Tertiary Education
- Nonprofits other than Institutions of Tertiary Education

Project objectives and priorities:

This call will fund up to three individual projects that:

- Use a participatory action research approach in generating information on the needs of those left ‘furthest-behind’.

- Generate knowledge on the perceptions and views of those left ‘furthest-behind’ concerning their priorities related to the SDGs or elements related to development planning discourses.

- Aid in channeling the views of those left ‘furthest-behind’ to policy-making spaces to contribute to the localization of the SDGs in Lebanon at a local and national policy level.
- Contribute to the localization of the SDG agenda based on target community perceptions, needs, and priorities.

The research should aim to address the following questions in general:

- What are the perceptions and views of the ‘furthest-behind’ groups’ concerning the SDGs?
- How can we include the ‘furthest-behind’ groups in debates and deliberations on the usefulness and relevance of sustainable development (local and national) and the SDGs?
- What are the relevant needs of those left ‘furthest-behind’ that should be taken into consideration during national and local deliberations over the localization of the 2030 Agenda in Lebanon, and in the formation of development policies in the country?

Priority will be given to projects that examine the needs of those left ‘furthest-behind’; this category of men and women may include, but is not limited to, the following target communities:

- Rural poor
- Female-headed households
- Unemployed young women and men or youth living in the peripheries
- Older persons
- Child laborers
- Persons with disabilities
- Refugees
- Migrant domestic workers
- LGBTIQ community
- Small informal business owners

Eligible activities:

- Qualitative and/or quantitative research methodologies
- Community dialogues
- Capacity building of the target population (targeted skills can be further elaborated in the proposal)

The above list is not exhaustive; any inquiries about the relevance of proposed activities can be sent to Maysa Baroud at mb95@aub.edu.lb.
Funding information:

Grants awarded will range between $9,000 – $14,000 USD, depending on the scope of the research proposed and the number of grants awarded. Proposals must be for a four-month project.

Project requirements:

- Research design must be participatory, and must ensure a direct and interactive dialogue with ‘furthest-behind’ groups, providing a space for these groups to influence what kinds of research questions are asked and supporting them to participate in identifying and representing the answers. Members of target communities must be research partners in the project. It is vital to involve them in all steps of the research, from choosing research questions (giving a sense of ownership), to evaluation and dissemination of findings.
- The research, whenever appropriate depending on the target group, is to integrate a gender analysis.
- A rationale for identifying the targeted community during the research design must be presented, in order to ensure that those targeted communities are a part of the ‘furthest-behind’. Application of gender lenses whenever appropriate according to the target communities should be considered.
- The sampling method must be described, including, to the extent possible, a reflection on the representativeness and generalizability of results, given the limited scope and resources for each study. The study must be geographically variable (e.g., cover multiple locations in the country such as multiple governorates) in order to capture the variations in conditions for constituencies within the selected target group. The sampling method should also be gender-sensitive.
- The research process should include an empowerment aspect, so that the participants from ‘furthest-behind’ groups gain awareness of how they can participate and make their voice heard in local and/or national development and through which mechanisms and instruments.
- The proposal must include a section on ethical considerations for the study. This section must include how the researcher plans to manage participant expectations, particularly participant expectations of tangible research outcomes, but also, expectations as they relate to short-term versus long-term outcomes of the study. Special attention must be given here to how the researcher will balance between the research benefits, and benefits to the community.
- The research must involve students directly to ensure a learning dividend and to facilitate interaction and exchange between students and marginalized groups. The students could be involved in design, field research, analysis and communication of results to relevant stakeholders. Students may be volunteers or interns at higher education institutions, or at nonprofits other than institutions of higher education.
- Research findings must be disseminated to the target community; results must be communicated in a way that is useful for community development.
- Research should to the extent possible cooperate with UN agencies to avail itself of the substantial UN field presence.
- Proposals must include a detailed work plan describing the scope of the work, a research
timeline, associated milestones, and a description of the methodology proposed, including materials (e.g., interview guides, focus group discussion guides, consent forms, etc.) to be used during implementation of the project. Applications must also include CVs of the scholar and/or research team members, and total amount of grant requested with a budget breakdown.

**Expected deliverables:**

Each scholar/grantee will deliver:

- Initial and continuing updates on the research proceedings, to be prepared in the form of progress narrative reports, and to be presented during a stakeholder workshop meeting and follow-up meetings.
- A final presentation of the main findings of the research (involving target community members, if possible), to be presented to decision-makers and other stakeholders during a stakeholder meeting for the project.
- A Working Paper of 25-30 pages highlighting the background, methods, findings and discussion/conclusion of the research. The Working Paper will be published by the Issam Fares Institute in collaboration with the UN in Lebanon, and will be converted into a Policy Brief to be distributed by the Issam Fares Institute.
- A list of activities outlining the steps taken to ensure dissemination of study findings to target communities, as well as a plan developed with the target community for dissemination/advocacy to decision-makers locally/nationally.
- A one-pager on the implications of the findings for the localization of the SDGs/the sustainable development agenda in Lebanon with recommendations for integration of the findings.

**How to apply:**

Proposals must comply with the abovementioned objectives and eligibility criteria. Proposals must be submitted by email to Maysa Baroud at mb95@aub.edu.lb no later than March 13, 2017. Proposals received beyond this deadline will not be considered. The winners will be announced on April 13, 2017 (this date is tentative and subject to change).
Project Concept Note

Localizing the SDGs: Listening to the Voices of the ‘Furthest-behind’

Introduction and Background

The 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focus on three main aspects: social, economic and environmental sustainable development. The 17 goals aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. Fundamental to the SDGs is the notion of leaving no one behind. The SDGs build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), adding new areas for global actions such as economic inequality, sustainable consumption and climate change. The SDGs’ success, however, will largely depend on the ability and implementation of governments around the world. In Lebanon, mired by a protracted refugee crisis, the SDGs provide an opportunity for work on much needed policies and sustainable development initiatives on the local level. Within this context, the United Nations (UN) in Lebanon in collaboration with the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs aim to approach the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals in Lebanon through an innovative frame, focusing on a bottom-up approach that would cater to the needs of the target communities and engage them, since localizing the SDGs involves promoting local multi-stakeholder ownership of the agenda. The approach would also provide the foundations for ensuring the consideration of the voices of those ‘furthest-behind’ in national and local deliberations over the localization of the 2030 Agenda in Lebanon and in the formulation of national development policies. ‘Furthest-behind’ refers to those communities and/or members of a community who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged in a society.

The Issam Fares Institute is an independent, research-based, policy-oriented institute. Inaugurated in 2006, it aims to harness, develop, and initiate policy-relevant research in the Arab region. The institute is committed to expanding and deepening knowledge production on themes relevant to the needs of societies in the Arab world.

As a policy institute based in an academic institution, the Issam Fares Institute holds a unique position for channeling policy research to policy implementation. Its main mission is to facilitate exchange and dialogue between producers of knowledge on the one hand, and decisions makers and civil society actors on the other hand. By organizing relevant workshops, lectures, conferences, and panel discussions, the Institute creates a space to ensure that the various stakeholders share their knowledge and experiences, and interact about it with a larger audience.

The Issam Fares Institute, as such, has a strong convening power and provides a platform for engaging with different stakeholders.
Objectives

The project will aim to contribute to the following objectives:

1. Debate and deliberate on the usefulness and relevance of sustainable development (local and national) and the SDGs to the ‘furthest-behind’ populations by organizing and hosting four stakeholder dialogue sessions over the course of one year.

2. Generate knowledge on the ‘furthest-behind’ groups’ and populations’ views of the SDGs or elements related to development planning discourses and channel the views of those left ‘furthest-behind’ to the policymaking spaces to contribute to the localization of the SDGs in Lebanon at a national policy level. This will take place through a call for research papers that will aim to tackle the objectives highlighted in this concept note, which will be guided by research questions and interests identified during the first stakeholder workshop. Scholars are required to use a rights-based approach to generate data that can inform policy dialogue.

3. Disseminate study findings, with the assistance and knowledge of the Issam Fares Institute, which contain policy relevance, as well as ensure that policymakers are aware of the findings and their implications for the sustainable development agenda in Lebanon.

The project does not pre-define a set of research questions, so as to maintain the space for target communities as partners in the research to have a key role in shaping and implementing the agenda.

Stakeholders and Target Communities

There are two distinct groups of participants in this project. The first group of stakeholders to be targeted is those with a leveraging and decision-making power in the Lebanese context, and will include governmental institutions, civil society, the private sector, and academia. The second group will include local target populations who can contribute to the realization of the new SDG agenda, and whose voices are crucial to an inclusive approach to sustainable development, and in localizing and implementing the SDGs. Target populations will include, but are not limited to, those that are left ‘furthest-behind’, such as unemployed young women and young men, the rural poor, refugees, the LGBTIQ community, female headed households, the older persons, persons with disabilities, migrant domestic workers, and small informal business owners. Members from these target populations will be research partners in the project.

Stakeholder meetings will take the form of workshops, symposia, or ground level panel discussions that bring together diverse stakeholders (two to three hours or longer if/when
necessary). Involving stakeholders in dialogue, as well as grounding the implementation of development goals in research, will allow for deconstructing the broad goals of ‘development’ into tangible and manageable priorities, while engaging the local communities they aim to benefit.

As part of the UN Country Team in Lebanon’s support for the rolling out of the SDGs in the country, this project is particularly focused on securing a space for the voices and perceptions of the ‘furthest-behind’ and marginalized communities in Lebanon, particularly the very poor and highly vulnerable urban and rural communities, in addressing and localizing the SDGs. In order to ensure that research proposals respond to this and the objectives outlined above, the following criteria must be fulfilled:

- Research design must be participatory and must ensure a direct and interactive dialogue with ‘furthest-behind’ groups, providing a space for these groups to influence what kinds of research questions are asked and supporting them to participate in identifying and representing the answers.
- The research, whenever appropriate depending on the target group, is to integrate a gender analysis.
- The rationale used to identify the targeted groups/populations must be presented in order to ensure that those targeted communities are a part of the ‘furthest-behind’. Application of gender lenses whenever appropriate according to the target communities should be considered.
- The sampling method must be described, including, to the extent possible, a reflection on the representativeness and generalizability of results, given the limited scope and resources for each study. The study must be geographically variable (ex: cover multiple locations in the country such as multiple governorates) in order to capture the variations in conditions for constituencies within the selected target group. The sampling method should also be gender-sensitive.
- The research process should also seek to empower/capacitate participants from ‘furthest-behind’ groups (for example, through the development of certain skills, or the provision of relevant trainings, which will be addressed on a study by study basis), raising awareness of how they can participate in local and/or national development and through which mechanisms and instruments. It is also vital to involve individuals from those groups in all steps of the research, from choosing research questions (giving a sense of ownership), to evaluation and dissemination. (Issam Fares Institute would need here to create a mechanism that would facilitate such participation – time element needs to be taken in consideration as well).
- The proposal must include a section on ethical considerations for the study. This section must include how the researcher plans to manage participant expectations, particularly participant expectations of tangible research outcomes, but also,
expectations as they relate to short-term versus long-term outcomes of the study. Special attention must be given here to how the researcher will balance between the research benefits, and benefits to the community.

- The research must involve students, student volunteers, or interns directly to ensure a learning dividend and to facilitate interaction and exchange between students and marginalized groups. The students could be involved in design, field research, analysis and communication of results to relevant stakeholders.
- Research should to the extent possible cooperate with UN agencies to avail itself of the substantial UN field presence.

Project Work-Plan

Stage 1 (Last week of November 2016)
- First stakeholders dialogue session to identify and specify the key target communities and to agree on the research approach and goals. Stakeholders will agree on specific research questions during this meeting. This meeting, which should be launched in mid-November, will also serve to finalize the call for proposals.
- Stakeholders invited to this meeting will include members or representative of international and local NGOs, including women organizations, members or representative of grass-roots movements (representing community members), policymakers, and academics.
- Including grass-roots movements in this meeting will serve to integrate the voice of those left ‘furthest-behind’ into the research plan and call for proposals.

Stage 2 (January 2017 – April 2017)
- Call for papers based on the results of the first stakeholder session – small to mid-size research grants to be provided to academic faculty and/or civil society organizations across Lebanon for participatory and innovative research which aims to ‘listen’ to the voices of the ‘furthest-behind’. The research projects aim to explore the perceptions of those ‘furthest-behind’ concerning the different components of the SDGs and broadly on development planning discourses; and the relevance of the SDGs to their needs. Study findings will feed into national and local deliberations over the localization of the 2030 Agenda in Lebanon, and in the formulation of national development policies. Please see separately the call for proposals.
- Selected proposals will be announced by the beginning of April-2017, after which research is expected to begin. The selection will be made by a committee comprised of the Issam Fares Institute project group and representatives of key UN agencies.
- A committee will be formed to review the proposals. The committee will consist of members from the Issam Fares Institute, two faculty members from different faculties at AUB, and representatives from key UN agencies.

Stage 3 (April-May 2017)

- Second stakeholders’ dialogue session will aim at discussing the research process. During this meeting, research proposals will be reviewed, with a focus on the participatory methodologies and sharing preliminary lessons/good practices. These are essential to debate the ways the research is ongoing and ways to maintain its relevance to the needs of communities.

Stage 4 (July 2017 – September 2017)

- Two stakeholders dialogue sessions:
  - A closed session with policymakers, and various other stakeholders (including UN agencies) to discuss the results. This meeting will include community members (those left ‘furthest-behind’), who will present study findings and share testimonials.
  - A public symposium to present the papers and findings of this year-long project; open to the public.

Follow-up meetings will be held with the researchers during the research implementation period, between April 2017 and July 2017, to discuss the study’s progress and budget issues as they arise. These meetings will be organized by the Issam Fares Institute project group, and will be attended by representatives of the Institute, and interested UN partners in areas relevant for the research.

Main Outputs

Each researcher/grantee will deliver:

- Initial and continuing updates on the research proceedings, to be prepared in the form of progress narrative reports, and to be presented during a stakeholder workshop meeting and follow-up meetings.
- A final presentation of the main findings of the research (involving target community members, if possible), to be presented to decision-makers and other stakeholders during a stakeholder meeting for the project.
- A Working Paper of 25-30 pages highlighting the background, methods, findings and discussion/conclusion of the research. The Working Paper will be published by the Issam Fares Institute in collaboration with the UN in Lebanon, and will be converted into a Policy Brief to be distributed by the Issam Fares Institute.
- A list of activities outlining the steps taken to ensure dissemination of study findings to target communities, as well as a plan developed with the target community for dissemination/advocacy to decision-makers locally/nationally.
- A one-pager on the implications of the findings for the localization of the SDGs/the sustainable development agenda in Lebanon with recommendations for integration of the findings.

Outputs from the Issam Fares Institute will include:

- Summary of the stakeholders’ workshops to be shared in the Issam Fares Institute newsletter, and on the Issam Fares Institute webpage
- Scholarly publications
- Policy briefs and other relevant documents for policymakers

**Social Media Engagement**

The Issam Fares Institute will introduce innovative and eye catching ways to disseminate the deliberations of the dialogue sessions and findings of the research, and to engage with the wider public. The communications team within the Institute will use innovative tools to ensure this project has media and social media coverage in all its events and all its publications. Videos, as well as media bytes, will also be published periodically to draw attention to the project’s events and publications. The Institute will also welcome any kind of collaboration between our communications office and that of our partners to join efforts for more visibility and media interaction.