

From Local to Global Understanding the Bigger Picture

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Local Problems Are Part of a Bigger Picture

A social problem may appear in one school, one neighbourhood, one city, or one country, but it rarely exists only there.

Many local problems are shaped by wider systems, such as the economy, education, public policies, social norms, digital transformation, environmental change, migration, or global inequalities.

When we connect a local issue to a bigger picture, we begin to understand why it continues and why solving it may require cooperation beyond one person, one organization, or one community..

Local Experience, Wider Causes

People usually experience social problems through daily life. A young person may experience unemployment, discrimination, poor mental health, digital exclusion, or lack of participation as a personal challenge. However, these experiences may be connected to wider causes.

For example, youth unemployment in one town may be linked to local businesses, but also to national education policies, economic instability, digital skills gaps, migration trends, or changes in the labour market.

Looking only locally may show part of the problem, but not the full picture.

What Are Global Systems?

Global systems are large networks, structures, and processes that influence how societies work across countries and regions.

They include economic systems, environmental systems, political systems, digital systems, education systems, and social systems.

These systems shape opportunities, resources, rights, responsibilities, and access. They can create progress and cooperation, but they can also reproduce inequality when some groups or communities have less power, fewer resources, or limited access to decision-making.

Why Local Problems Connect to Global Issues

Many social problems repeat in different countries because they are connected to similar global pressures.

- Climate change affects local communities through floods, heat, pollution, or food insecurity.
- Digital transformation creates opportunities, but also digital exclusion for people without access, skills, or safe online environments.
- Migration, poverty, unemployment, misinformation, discrimination, and inequality may look different in every context, but they are often connected to wider global patterns.

Understanding these connections helps us avoid seeing a local problem as isolated or accidental.

Example: Digital Exclusion

Digital exclusion may appear locally as students without devices, young people without digital skills, or organizations unable to use online tools.

At first, it may look like a technical problem. Looking deeper, it can be connected to poverty, education inequality, rural infrastructure, language barriers, disability access, gender inequality, or lack of investment in digital learning.

It can also be connected to global digital transformation, where more services, jobs, learning opportunities, and civic participation move online.

Example: Youth Mental Health

Youth mental health challenges may be visible in schools, universities, families, or youth organizations.

Young people may experience stress, isolation, anxiety, low motivation, or lack of support.

These challenges can also be connected to wider systems: economic insecurity, social media pressure, discrimination, conflict, uncertainty about the future, climate anxiety, limited access to mental health services, or stigma around asking for help.

A local problem becomes easier to understand when we see how many wider factors influence it.

The Role of the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, are a global framework created to address major social, economic, and environmental challenges.

They help connect local problems with global priorities such as poverty reduction, quality education, gender equality, reduced inequalities, climate action, decent work, health and wellbeing, and strong institutions.

The SDGs do not solve problems by themselves, but they help us understand how local action can contribute to wider change. They also help organizations, youth groups, and communities describe their impact in a shared global language.

Connecting Your Local Problem to the SDGs

A single local problem can connect to more than one SDG. For example, youth unemployment may connect to decent work, quality education, reduced inequalities, and poverty reduction.

A problem related to accessibility may connect to reduced inequalities, sustainable cities, quality education, and decent work.

The goal is not to choose the “perfect” SDG. **The goal is to understand** how your local problem is part of wider development challenges and how your future solution could contribute to broader social impact.

Local Action Can Support Global Change



Local action matters because global change is built through many smaller efforts. A campaign, training activity, youth project, community initiative, or Social Impact NFT can raise awareness, support organizations, mobilize people, and connect local experiences with wider social causes.

When local action is connected to global systems, it becomes easier to explain why the issue matters, who is affected, and how the proposed action contributes to long-term change.

Reflection Before Moving Forward

Think about the social problem you have been working on in the previous activities.

- Which wider systems may influence it?
- Is it connected to education, economy, digital access, discrimination, climate, health, participation, or public policies?

Try to identify at least one global trend or SDG connected to your issue. This will help you prepare for the next activity, where you will map your local problem to broader systems and explain how local action can contribute to wider social impact.

