

Update on SDG3 Global Cluster: keeping up momentum in these challenging times

Who we are

The SDG3 Global Cluster is currently formed by the following seven institutions from around the world:

- Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Barcelona) - Cluster leader
- Universidad de Caldas (Colombia)
- University College Dublin (Ireland)
- University Gadjah Mada (Indonesia)
- Makerere University (Uganda)
- Karolinska Institutet (Sweden)
- Western Sydney University (Australia)



What we've done so far

- In early 2019, the Open University of Catalonia (abbreviated as “UOC” in Catalan) began scoping activities to identify and reach out to a core group of universities for the SDG 3 Cluster focusing on health and well-being. With five universities on board by late Spring, the UOC held the first online meeting to introduce the members to one another and share opinions regarding potential focus topics for the cluster.
- Since August 2019, this dialogue and exchange with participating universities has intensified, and a team of consultants has been supporting the cluster in the co-creation of its strategy and action plan.
- Recognising that the higher education and global health partnering landscape is already very busy and complex, the consultants have conducted a landscape analysis to help identify where the cluster might best add value. The methodology included one-on-one calls with all the member institutions, a brief literature review, and a mapping of key stakeholders. The work painted a picture of the landscape where the cluster is operating, identifying the main actors and emerging trends within the higher education / SDGs / health space. Through this analysis, potential areas of work (by issue and activities) were identified. A teleconference then took place in December to allow members to provide feedback on the landscape analysis, and to share their reflections on the Cluster’s role, given the existing context and their own activities, ambitions, interests and resources. The members also discussed the purpose and aims of the face-to-face meeting that was scheduled for early 2020.
- Members then generously provided their valuable time and energy to co-create the agenda and prepare the in-person meeting, generating great excitement and momentum. They also prepared presentations introducing their universities, as well as individual and institutional ambitions for the cluster. The aim of the meeting was to align on a collective strategy and top-line action plan.
- Unfortunately, due to the COVID19 outbreak, the meeting has been postponed. In the current context, it is unclear when a face-to-face meeting will be possible. As a result, the Barcelona team has reached out to members via email and online working documents, to collectively pave a way forward.
- It is becoming increasingly evident that with its health and well-being focus, the SDG3 cluster has a clear and vital role to play in advancing the 2030 Agenda. Perhaps today, there is increased awareness and receptivity to the importance of health and a unique window of opportunity for the cluster to act. Moreover, the crisis has made the interlinkages between SDGs more visible and immediate. With its health focus and “glocal” nature, (global nature of the cluster and with strong individual institutional relevance, credibility and ability to act locally), the SDG cluster is incredibly well positioned to work in this space.

- The cluster's core group now needs to strategically align on focus areas and priorities and to continue generating momentum by working together on low hanging fruit, building on the work conducted to date.

Next steps

As the health cluster, this is an especially challenging time for members, with a lot of competing and more immediate priorities. The Barcelona team has therefore provided a “light-touch” way forward, to continue building and supporting the cluster and the members, while not taking up too much of their time. The consultants have developed a workbook summarising all the different contributions to date and providing tools that each member can work through at their own pace, to collectively define elements of the clusters' strategy and an action plan that can be coordinated and taken forward online. It is an iterative working document for the co-creation of the cluster's work over the next few months to a year. (Please see attached.) In parallel, the cluster will be holding ongoing coordination calls to move the work forward.