



# IFLA Statement on Evidence for Sustainable Development

24 October 2022

As we approach the half-way point in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the need to enhance the way we make and implement development policies is clear. With the pandemic having slowed, halted, or even reversed progress in so many areas, there is little room for mistakes or wasting opportunities. Rather, we need to harness all possibilities open to us - including the power of digital collaboration shown by efforts to respond to COVID - and strive to make our actions as effective as possible. In particular, we have seen what can be achieved by using digital

In achieving this, evidence will have a crucial role, all the more so given the complexity of the policy agenda that the Sustainable Development Goals set out. Tracking progress, understanding interconnections, making and disseminating innovation, and ensuring accountability are all impossible without the creation, curation, preservation and application of evidence, understood as including data, information and knowledge.

Open access, open science and open scholarship more broadly have a key role to play in this. Ensuring the publication and dissemination of information relevant to sustainable development under open licences facilitates maximum involvement in research, and its subsequent application. Yet equally necessary are structures and partnerships which allow for collaborations, and ensure that information is discoverable and usable.

This is already formally recognised in key texts, with the [2030 Agenda](#) commissioning the Global Sustainable Development Report in order to provide an evidence base for decision-making, while the [Samoa Pathway](#) sets out use and retention of knowledge as key to capacity building. However, we remain far from a world where enough evidence is gathered, safeguarded, and made accessible and usable in support of sustainable development.

Libraries represent an essential link in the chain between those who are gathering or producing evidence, and those who should be using it to take decisions. They fulfil a number of roles, including supporting research, and managing data and dissemination (including through supporting the development of technical possibilities for this), enabling the sharing of and access to information, the effective packaging of information for decision-makers, teaching the skills needed for information access and use, and long-term preservation in the service of future research and accountability.

This task is shared by libraries of different types, from academic and national libraries involved in supporting research and managing data and outputs, to parliamentary libraries supporting legislators and government libraries which help inform decision-makers directly. As a result, ensuring the availability, accessibility and applicability of evidence for sustainable development requires a healthy library field as a whole. School and public libraries support both public engagement in development issues and citizen science,

In the light of the above, IFLA makes the following recommendations:

Governments should:

- Recognise the role of libraries of all types in supporting better sustainable development policy making and ensure that they use them fully and effectively, including as part of the science-policy interface
- Support open access and science across all disciplines, in line with the UNESCO Declaration on Open Science, as well as around their own publications.
- Encourage and support libraries of all types to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals

The UN system should

- Encourage and support the role of libraries in enabling decision-making, both within the UN itself, and in Member States
- In line with the [IFLA Statement on Open Access in Intergovernmental Organisations](#) (2019), ensure that its own publications are fully open access as soon as possible

Libraries should:

- Reflect on how to provide services in a way that best supports decision-making (and accountability) around sustainable development, including by facilitating interdisciplinary research
- Promote the Sustainable Development Goals in their communities
- Advocate broadly for the importance of evidence-based approaches
- Map and showcase their contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals