EngageSDG

Integrated report on the experiences and insights from the SADC partner universities' pilot projects (Deliverable 5.1)

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Contents

Executive summary

This deliverable, developed under the EngageSDG project, provides an interim overview of the design and early implementation of six pilot projects led by SADC partner universities. It synthesizes initial lessons learned and cross-cutting insights to inform the ongoing refinement of the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF), a key tool developed in Work Package 3 to guide Participatory Approaches (PAs) in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The EngageSDG project aims to strengthen the role of SADC universities as active contributors to the SDGs in their local environments through the application of PAs. The project promotes the engaged university model, positioning higher education institutions as catalysts at the interface of knowledge production, teaching, and policy dialogue. Under Work Package 5, six pilot project proposals were developed by SADC partner universities, South Africa (North-West University [NWU], University of the Western Cape [UWC]), Mauritius (University of Mauritius [UoM], University of Technology, Mauritius [UTM]), and Zambia (University of Zambia [UNZA], University of Lusaka [UNILUS]), building on the WP2 input reports and reviewed in dialogue with European partners.

Early implementation highlights, as evidenced in the proposals and first stages of activity, include successful stakeholder mobilisation, context-specific adaptations, and alignment of interventions with both SDGs objectives and institutional expertise. These early steps confirm the flexibility of the IPF to address diverse thematic priorities, from climate action to quality education and social inclusion. At the same time, emerging challenges are already visible. On the methodological side, several pilots show the need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation frameworks, specify tools and indicators more clearly, and ensure that PAs are operationalised through concrete methods rather than broad concepts. On the structural side, short timeframes and limited resources constrain the feasibility of ambitious models such as Living Labs, while sustainability beyond the pilot cycle often remains undefined. Additional issues include sustaining participant engagement, ensuring consistent reporting, and clarifying budgets to balance ambition with realistic implementation.

1. Introduction to the EngageSDG pilot projects

The EngageSDG initiative, as previously stated, seeks to enhance the capacity of SADC universities to actively contribute to the SDGs by utilizing effective PAs. In fact, Universities can be recognised as key actors at the interface of knowledge production, teaching, and policy dialogue, with the potential to catalyse inclusive, locally grounded pathways to sustainable development. By embedding higher education institutions within their communities as hubs of co-created knowledge, EngageSDG project aims to strengthen local pathways to sustainable development.

The project, running from 2024 to 2027, combines research, capacity-building, and institutional learning to establish a sustainable community of practice for engagement in the SADC region. As part of this structure, WP5 is dedicated to the development of six pilot projects. These pilots were designed and drafted by the SADC partner universities, then reviewed and refined in collaboration with European partners to ensure alignment with the IPF. The purpose is to test and improve the draft IPF developed in WP3, demonstrating how PAs can be adapted to diverse contexts while remaining methodologically robust and practically applicable.

This interim report therefore captures the current status of the pilots, summarizing their design and early implementation, and presenting initial lessons and contextual details. With implementation at various stages, ranging from preparatory work to early action, this document highlights initial learnings, achievements, and

challenges. A final report, to be produced at a later stage, will consolidate outcomes and provide recommendations for long-term institutionalisation and replication across the SADC region.

2. Overview of pilot project implementation (methodology)

All six pilot projects are guided by the Integrated Participatory Framework, which provides structured criteria and a common reference point for the selection and application of PAs. Each project uses the IPF to justify its choice of PA model, whether Community-Based Participatory Research, Living Labs, Participatory Action Research, and to align tools and methods with project objectives, available resources, participant profiles and local constraints. The IPF enables partners to ensure that engagement is not only context-sensitive but also inclusive, in line with the SDG principle of "leaving no one behind". In this way, the IPF supports methodological robustness while remaining sensitive to context, and it enables comparability across different themes.

The pilots most frequently adopt Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), although in several cases it is referred to as Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) to highlight the action dimension closer to Participatory Action Research (PAR). This illustrates a shared interest in linking inquiry with transformative action, though greater consistency in terminology will strengthen alignment with the IPF. Living Labs are also a common choice, particularly in pilots addressing climate resilience, offering structured environments for co-creation even though their time and resource demands often exceed the scope of short pilots. The reviews further highlight the importance of clarifying not only which PA model is selected, but also the concrete tools that will operationalize it, as this makes the link between methodology and implementation more tangible.

A strong collaborative attitude between EU partners and SADC universities has been essential in the development of pilot projects. The process involved group meetings with individual exchanges, fostering alignment, dialogue, and mutual learning. SADC universities defined and contextualized their projects, while European partners provided structured feedback on methodology, indicators, and overall coherence with the IPF and the cross-comparisons among pilots further supported mutual learning.

Since the projects are still in their early implementation phase, EU partners also introduced progress-reporting templates to ensure consistent communication, transparency, and joint ownership of the process.

Despite addressing different themes and contexts, the pilots present several shared features. All universities have drawn on the input reports developed under WP2 to frame their local challenges and design relevant interventions, demonstrating its value as a collective reference point. Although some pilots refer to multiple SDGs, a clear priority goal is visible in each case and will be further clarified in upcoming updates. Each pilot also defines specific objectives that are closely related to the local context and identifies distinct target groups, ranging from smallholder farmers to students and staff to farmers, households, youth, and schoolchildren. The scale of engagement varies from campus-based initiatives to community-wide interventions, yet in all cases the commitment to locally rooted and relevant participation is evident.

A strong emphasis on community engagement is another unifying feature, with all pilots actively involving stakeholders as co-designers of solutions, thereby validating the role of universities as connectors between knowledge and practice. It is also important to make explicit the horizontal nature of this exchange between institutions and communities, an aspect that sometimes is often implicit in the proposals but is is essential for fostering genuine collaboration.

3. Individual pilot project profiles[1]

This section presents a set of project sheets summarising the six pilot initiatives designed and implemented by the SADC partner universities under Work Package 5. Each sheet provides an overview of the project title, SDGs addressed, PAs applied, objectives, stakeholders, current state, next steps, and a reflection. The reflections draw both on the initial reviews and on the activities reports submitted by the universities, offering a short commentary on early challenges encountered during implementation, such as delays in mobilisation, resource constraints, or gaps in methodological precision, alongside the strengths and opportunities of each initiative. These concise sheets provide a snapshot of each project to facilitate comparison and highlight initial insights, while the Appendix contains the complete reviews and proposals for each university, including the activity reports.

North-West University (NWU)

Title	Re-imagining community education post COVID 19: Mobilizing unemployed youth as community assets to reduce the educational divide in a South African township (SDG 4; community-based research)
SDGs	**4 (Quality Education)**, 3 (Good Health and Well-being), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 17 (Partnerships for the goals).
PA models	PALAR (Participatory Action Learning and Action Research, PAR within the IPF). Methods photovoice, digital storytelling.
Objectives	Empower NEET youth as co-educators; design after-school programmes; create a Science Shop legacy.
Stakeholders	NEET youth; NGOs; community organisations; academic staff.
Current status	Build on NRF-funded project launched in 2023, ending in 2025. Community partners have been identified and agreements established in two sites. Youth participants were recruited, their training needs assessed, and tailored training provided in areas such as tutoring, CV writing, interview skills, and personal development. The trained youth have already started delivering educational support to school-going adolescents.
Next steps	The pilot runs until August 2025, with implementation assessment scheduled for early September and results expected by October 2025. Participatory evaluation will employ visual methods, digital storytelling, and the Sensemaker tool to capture both youth and NGO experiences.
Challenges	Retaining youth participants; limited continuity beyond NRF cycle; lack of structured pedagogical framework

Reflection

The NWU pilot stands out for its maturity, as it builds on a project already funded under the NRF, offering a valuable opportunity for ex post evaluation within the EngageSDG framework. The initiative demonstrates long-term participatory engagement but faces challenges in retaining youth participants and ensuring sustainability beyond the NRF cycle, s many move on to jobs or further studies, and in securing comprehensive reporting from NGO partners, which requires additional support. Indicators remain mostly research-driven rather than impact-oriented, limiting evidence of broader outcomes.

In terms of PAs, while the proposal mentions a Science Shop, it is not yet integrated into the PA model and methods but could be further developed to institutionalise community–university dialogue. Clarifying how EngageSDG adds distinctive value will also be key to strengthening the project's contribution.

University of the Western Cape (UWC)

[1] Full reports provided in annexures 1-6

Title	Community-Driven SDG Awareness and Empowerment Workshops: A Participatory Approach to Sustainable Development in Local Communities
SDGs	**17 (Partnerships for the Goals),** 4 (Quality Education), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).
PA models	CBPR (referred to as CBPAR in proposal); method: workshops.
Objectives	Raise SDG literacy, co-create action plans, strengthen community-academic partnerships.
Stakeholders	Disadvantaged communities in Cape Town area; university staff and students.
Current status	A partnership with Hugenote Kollege in Wellington has been secured. An initial online meeting in May 2025 and subsequent exchanges defined the engagement scope and participant selection. A site visit in July confirmed the venue, stakeholders were invited and accepted, and logistics such as responsibilities, materials, meals, and transport were finalised. The agenda is complete, with the first community workshop scheduled for 6 September 2025.
Next steps	The first engagement workshop will be held in September 2025, to be followed by a series of 6–8 workshops; Evaluation tools are being prepared to capture changes in awareness and empowerment, with preliminary results expected after the initial sessions and best practices documented for wider dissemination.

Reflection

The UWC pilot reflects the growing social commitment of universities and the need to link academic knowledge with community realities, which is highly valuable. Its participatory design is strong, but the functioning of workshops should be described more clearly to ensure they become spaces of co-design rather than traditional classrooms. The proposal also appears fragmented, which reduces clarity and narrative cohesion. A key challenge will be moving beyond awareness-raising to ensure concrete follow-up and sustained action. Some initial difficulties were experienced in aligning stakeholder schedules and recruiting participants, requiring repeated invitations, which underlines the importance of flexible coordination and early mobilisation.

As an option, establishing a Science Shop model could institutionalise dialogue with communities and provide continuity beyond the pilot.

University of Mauritius (UoM)

Title	Community engagement to gather thermal perception in built spaces and community empowerment to promote heat health using passive and Nature-based solutions (NbS) measures
SDGs	**11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities),** 13 (Climate Action), 3 (Good Health and Well-being).
PA models	Living Labs mentions as co-creation workshops or real-world labs.
Objectives	Empower households to adapt to heat stress using passive cooling strategies; reduce reliance on air-conditioning; strengthen resilience of vulnerable groups
Stakeholders	Local communities in urban and peri-urban Mauritius area.
Current status	An online survey has already gathered over 100 responses on household thermal perception. Initial engagements were held with three communities (La Valette, St Pierre, Baie du Cap). A co-creation workshop with La Valette is scheduled for early September, and real-world labs are planned from mid-September to capture summer data.
Next steps	The pilot runs from July to November 2025, with assessments from September to early December. Preliminary results from the survey and co-creation workshop will be available by mid-September, and final evaluation findings are expected by mid-December 2025.

Reflection

The UoM pilot is clearly articulated, well structured, and addresses the urgent issue of indoor heat stress and its health impacts, with particular attention to vulnerable communities. Challenges lie in refining methodological

precision, such as clarifying how data will be triangulated, tracking inclusion criteria, and making indicators more concrete. Some uncertainties also remain regarding the sustained interest of newly engaged communities, which may affect the planned triangulation and timely completion of activities.

To complement the current design, introducing Citizen Science practices (e.g. household climate measurements) could enrich the robustness of evidence and enhance community ownership. Strengthening student integration into curricula and developing open educational resources would also reinforce the educational dimension and sustainability of the initiative.

University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM)

Title	UTM's Community Carbon Footprint Initiative Promoting Participatory Climate Action
SDGs	**12 (Responsible Consumption and Production),** 13 (Climate Action), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 17 (Partnerships for the goals).
PA models	CBPR; Specific Methods: participatory workshops and focus groups, action learning cycles, participatory carbon footprint assessments and peer-to-peer learning and awareness campaigns
Objectives	Establish baseline carbon footprint, raise climate literacy, launch behavioural change campaign, set up monitoring system.
Stakeholders	Students, staff, and wider campus community.
Current status	Project activities started in June 2025. Foundation and contextual preparation, including stakeholder mapping and drafting participatory frameworks, has been completed. Preliminary consultations and awareness sessions have been initiated. The design of participatory carbon audit tools has begun, marking the start of the baseline assessment phase.
Next steps	The pilot will run until June 2026. In the coming months, the baseline carbon footprint assessment will be finalised, followed by capacity-building workshops and a behavioural change campaign. A participatory monitoring system will be developed during 2026, with assessment of project implementation scheduled from December 2025 to February 2026 and final evaluation results expected by May 2026.

Reflection

The UTM pilot demonstrates strong institutional ownership and is strongly aligned with SDG 13, effectively mobilising students and staff around climate awareness and behavioural change. The educational component could be further strengthened through curricular integration and formal recognition of learning outcomes. As an option, embedding Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) would help track behavioural change and enhance long-term sustainability. Some uncertainty remains around the project timeline, which seems to extend beyond the expected pilot cycle, and challenges have also arisen from student availability during peak academic periods and limited financial resources. Given these constraints, it may be advisable to consider scaling down or postponing selected activities as potential future developments. Overall, the project shows strong potential as a replicable model for climate-conscious education.

University of Zambia (UNZA)

Title	Safe urban schools through community-led greening
SDGs	**13 (Climate Action),** 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).
PA models	CBPR (mentioned as Community-based participatory Action research in the proposal) and Living Labs
Objectives	Develop risk maps, propose flood safety guidelines, pilot nature-based interventions.
Stakeholders	Schools, teachers, children, households, local authorities in Lusaka.
Current status	Preparatory meetings have been held with the CLARE-MECHANICS team to align the pilot with the larger project framework. Engagement with Ward Councillors in Kanyama and Kalingalinga led to the identification of two schools for implementation. Partners and stakeholders have been mapped and

	initial collaboration established, focusing on developing locally relevant flood risk mitigation strategies.
Next steps	The pilot will run from September 2025 to January 2026. Community engagement and co-creation activities will begin in the selected schools, leading to the drafting of flood response guidelines. Participatory evaluation involving stakeholders will be conducted from November to December 2025, with final results expected by the end of January 2026.

Reflection

The UNZA pilot is valuable for addressing the concrete problem of school safety in flood-prone areas of Lusaka, with a promising focus on nature-based Strengthening the evidence base and indicators would also increase robustness. By choosing schools as the central entry point, it highlights a critical gap in existing guidelines and practices and shows high potential for policy impact. Yet methodological details remain underdeveloped, with unclear design of Living Labs, no indicators, and a risk that participation could remain consultative. Some early challenges also emerged in the need to streamline the work plan and finalise the budget, which may affect timely implementation.

As an enhancement, Participatory Mapping adapted for children, starting from the mentioned reverse periscope technique, could be further developed and presented as a concrete element of the methodology. This would reinforce ownership, provide actionable evidence for authorities, and help visualise risks in a child-friendly way.

University of Lusaka (UNILUS)

Title	Climate-resilient agricultural practices through participatory knowledge exchange in Zambia's agro-ecological regions I and II
SDGs	**13 (Climate Action)**, 2 (Zero Hunger), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).
PA models	CBPR (referred to as CBPAR in proposal) and Living Labs; methods: co-creation workshops.
Objectives	Train smallholder farmers in climate-resilient practices; promote farmer cooperatives; strengthen local innovation and knowledge exchange, build climate resilience.
Stakeholders	Farmers in Regions I and II, Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Meteorology.
Current status	Stakeholder engagement meetings were held in July and August 2025 with the Kasisi Training Centre, the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Zambia Meteorological Department. Agreement was reached to prioritise workshops and on-farm trials, while omitting Living Labs due to the 12-month timeframe. Kasisi requested a detailed activity-based budget and the development of a comprehensive training module. Work on training topics has already started, and consultations with ministries confirmed strong institutional support and encouraged broader engagement with the Ministry of Green Economy and MSME.
Next steps	The revised budget will be submitted by late August 2025, followed by community mobilisation beginning in early September. Engagement with additional ministries will be pursued to strengthen policy alignment, while the draft training topics will be shared with EU partners for feedback. The training module and materials will be finalised for use in workshops and on-farm trials, which will run throughout the 12-month pilot.

Reflection

The UNILUS pilot is well aligned with the EngageSDG framework and addresses highly relevant local challenges, building on a strong stakeholder network that connects policy actors and communities. Objectives are clearly stated and target groups quantified, yet the proposal would benefit from stronger operational clarity and consistent use of data to support the situational analysis. Core elements such as PA models, indicators, and timelines also require fuller development to show not only what will be done, but how. Feedback from the first activity rounds also highlighted challenges: the need to drop Living Labs to fit within the short timeframe, the

requirement for a detailed activity-based budget, and the demand for robust training modules to meet farmer needs.

The initiative already combines CBPR and Living Labs, but exploring Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods could further enhance inclusivity and farmer ownership. While student involvement is present, integrating it formally into curricula with structured modules and stronger learning assessments would strengthen the educational dimension.

A brief synthesis of learnings from the pilots and next steps

A cross-cutting analysis of the six EngageSDG pilots highlights a series of lessons learnt and emerging trends that can inform the next steps of the project. These reflections, drawn from both the proposals and the first activity reports, show areas of convergence across pilots as well as differences shaped by local contexts, and together they provide useful insights for how the initiative may evolve going forward.

PAs

Most pilots adopt Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), though often referred to as CBPAR (Community-Based Participatory Action Research) to underline the action component, suggesting an interest in combining inquiry with transformative practice. At NWU, the methodology explicitly draws on Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR), which in the IPF is generally captured under Participatory Action Research (PAR). This choice signals a strong emphasis on learning cycles within participatory processes. Living Labs are also widely chosen (UoM, UNILUS, UNZA, UWC), providing a structured environment for experimentation and co-creation, although their time- and resource-intensive nature can be challenging in short pilots. In the great majority of the pilot project proposal, while the choice of PA models is appropriate, more emphasis is needed on the tools through which these PAs are implemented, in order to strengthen the clarity and concreteness of action.

SDGs and thematic priorities

A clear dual trend emerges. Four pilots (UoM, UTM, UNZA, UNILUS) converge on SDG 13 Climate Action, often combined with SDGs 2, 3, 6, 11 and 12. These projects deal with resilience in the face of climate challenges: heat health (UoM), carbon footprint reduction (UTM), flood safety in schools (UNZA), and climate-smart agriculture (UNILUS). In contrast, the South African pilots (UWC, NWU) focus on SDG 4 Quality Education, with strong links to inequalities, health, decent work, and institutional partnerships. This division reflects national contexts: Mauritius positions universities as laboratories for sustainability transitions, Zambia prioritises resilience in agriculture and schools, and South Africa emphasises education, social inclusion, and youth empowerment as entry points.

Target groups and scales of engagement

The pilots span a wide range of target groups: smallholder farmers (UNILUS), schoolchildren and teachers (UNZA), households and vulnerable families (UoM), students and staff (UTM), disadvantaged communities (UWC), and unemployed youth (NWU). The scale of engagement also differs significantly: some pilots focus on small, well-defined groups to test concrete measures (e.g., household-level thermal comfort solutions in UoM), while others aim for systemic change through cooperative structures or institutional integration (e.g., farmer networks in UNILUS, Science Shop legacy at NWU). This diversity demonstrates the flexibility of the IPF, but it also poses challenges for ensuring a comparable level of evidence and outcomes across different scales.

Cross-cutting challenges[2]

- Evidence base and contextual data: several projects would benefit from stronger use of local data and references to substantiate problem statements. Without a robust evidence base, pilots risk appearing aspirational rather than grounded in local realities.
- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E): indicators are often generic and not linked to measurable outcomes. The lack of baselines limits the ability to track change. Common M&E indicators across pilots would improve accountability and enable collective learning. For education-oriented pilots (NWU, UWC, UTM, UNILUS), aligning outcomes with competency frameworks would provide clearer evidence of skills and knowledge gained.
- Timeframe and feasibility: resource-intensive approaches like Living Labs and PALAR require multi-year cycles to demonstrate impact, yet the pilots run on 6-8months timelines. Ambition must be balanced with realistic implementation. In some cases, it may simply be a matter of clarifying which activities are expected to be connected to the pilot but will continue beyond the single initiative, or how the medium-term impact will be pursued through follow-up actions.
- Sustainability and institutionalisation: while NWU proposes a Science Shop legacy and UTM envisions curricular integration, most pilots have not yet clarified how results will be embedded beyond the pilot cycle. Long-term sustainability requires integration into curricula, extension services, or policy frameworks.

Mapping the SDGs against the PAs

University / Pilot Project	Primary SDGs addressed	PAs used	PA Tools/Methods
North-West University (South Africa)	SDG 4 (Quality Education); linked to SDGs 3, 8, 10, 11, 17	PALAR (Participatory Action Learning and Action Research); PAR	Photovoice, digital storytelling, Science Shop concept
University of the Western Cape (South Africa)	SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals); SDG 4, 10, 11, 16	CBPR / CBPAR	Community workshops, dialogue platforms
University of Mauritius	SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities & Communities); SDG 13 (Climate Action); SDG 3 (Health & Wellbeing)	Living Labs	Co-creation workshops, real-world labs, household surveys
University of Technology, Mauritius	SDG 13 (Climate Action); SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption & Production); SDG 11; SDG 17	CBPR with action learning	Participatory carbon footprint assessment, workshops, peer-to-peer campaigns
University of Zambia	SDG 13 (Climate Action); SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities); SDG 6 (Clean Water & Sanitation)	CBPR / Living Labs	Flood risk mapping, community co-design, participatory evaluation
University of Lusaka	SDG 13 (Climate Action); SDG 2 (Zero Hunger); SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption)	CBPR + Living Labs	Co-creation workshops, farmer training, on-farm trials

Next steps

- Clarify PA terminology (CBPR, CBPAR, PAR, PALAR) and provide explicit guidance in the IPF to avoid conceptual ambiguity.

[2] See conclusion

- Specify the tools and instruments that operationalise PA models, making the methodology more concrete and action-oriented.
- Explore set of M&E indicators, including baseline data collection, to track both process and outcomes across pilots.
- Discuss embedding pilots into curricula and recognise learning outcomes formally, ensuring that students benefit through credits, competencies, and interdisciplinary exposure.
- Reason on how ambitious models (Living Labs, PALAR) can be adapted to short pilot cycles.
- Explore, where feasible, institutionalising community–university platforms (e.g. Science Shops, monitoring teams, cooperatives).
- Document and disseminate methodological innovations to enrich the IPF toolbox.

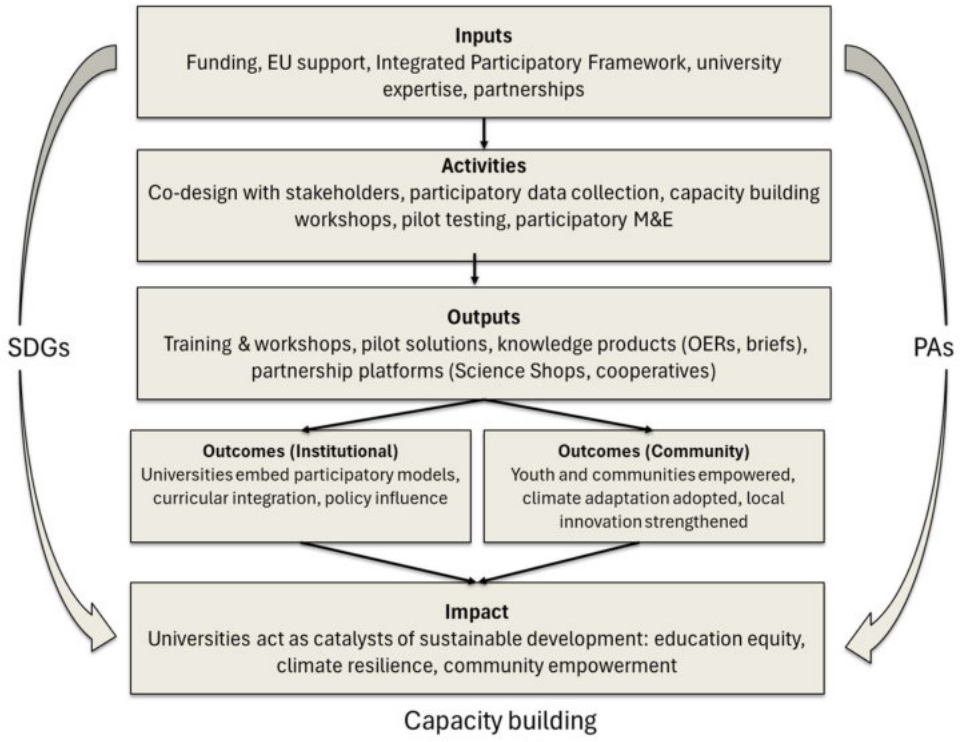
In conclusion, a preliminary summary of the planning and initial execution of six pilot projects run by SADC partner universities is given, incorporating cross-cutting insights and early lessons learned to guide the Integrated Participatory Framework's continuous improvement. Through the use of PAs, the EngageSDG project seeks to enhance SADC universities' capacity to actively contribute to the SDGs in their own contexts. Meanwhile, the pilot projects advance the engaged university model, which positions higher education institutions as hubs for knowledge creation and communication with local communities.

Derived Theory of Change

The purpose of a Theory of Change is to provide a clear roadmap that explains how and why an initiative is expected to achieve its intended impact. It sets out the logical pathway from inputs and activities through to outputs, outcomes, and long-term change, while making the underlying assumptions explicit. By doing so, it helps stakeholders develop a shared vision, guides strategic planning and resource allocation, and provides a framework for monitoring and evaluation. Importantly, it also serves as a communication tool that demonstrates to funders, partners, and communities how specific interventions contribute to broader goals such as the SDGs, ensuring transparency, accountability and alignment throughout the process.

If universities and communities co-design and test participatory solutions to pressing local challenges (education, climate resilience, livelihoods), then students, youth, farmers, and households will gain skills, confidence, and practical tools to act on SDGs in their contexts. As a result, universities will strengthen their role as engaged institutions, communities will build resilience and agency and regional capacity for sustainable development will expand, thus contributing to the SDGs.

- Inputs → Funding, EU support, Integrated Participatory Framework, university expertise, partnerships
- Activities → Co-design with stakeholders, participatory data collection, capacity building workshops, pilot testing, participatory M&E
- Outputs → Training & workshops, pilot solutions, knowledge products (OERs, briefs), partnership platforms (Science Shops, cooperatives)
- Outcomes (Institutional) → Universities embed participatory models, curricular integration, policy influence
  Outcomes (Community) → Youth and communities empowered, climate adaptation adopted, local innovation strengthened
- Impact → Universities act as catalysts of sustainable development: education equity, climate resilience, community empowerment.



Looking ahead[3]

The EngageSDG pilot projects across Southern Africa demonstrate how universities can mobilise PAs (PAs) to localise and operationalise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in contextually relevant ways. Each of the six pilots tested a combination of methods within the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF), linking the ambitions of global development goals with concrete local action. What emerges is a diverse yet coherent pattern in which specific SDGs are advanced through carefully chosen participatory models.

In South Africa, the pilots at North-West University (NWU) and the University of the Western Cape (UWC) concentrate on SDG 4, Quality Education, with strong connections to SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). At NWU, a Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR) model is used to mobilise unemployed youth as co-educators, drawing on methods such as photovoice and digital storytelling. This approach not only supports educational outcomes but also empowers youth as agents of change, contributing to SDG 8 on Decent Work and SDG 3 on Well-being. UWC, meanwhile, employs Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) through structured community workshops. Its emphasis on SDG awareness and empowerment underscores the role of universities in building local literacy around global goals, while strengthening partnerships and institutional legitimacy.

In Mauritius, the pilots turn attention to climate action and urban resilience. The University of Mauritius (UoM) applies a Living Labs model to address thermal stress and health vulnerabilities, engaging communities in co-creation of passive cooling and nature-based solutions. This aligns closely with SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities, SDG 13 on Climate Action, and SDG 3 on Health and Well-being. The University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM), adopts a CBPR approach to calculate and reduce institutional carbon footprints, linking behavioural change

[3] Read this in conjunction with university pilot reports in annexure

campaigns with SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production. Both pilots illustrate the value of participatory knowledge creation in shifting individual and collective practices towards sustainability.

In Zambia, participatory methods converge strongly on climate resilience. The University of Zambia (UNZA) combines CBPR and Living Labs to improve flood safety in urban schools, advancing SDG 6 on Clean Water and Sanitation alongside SDG 11 and SDG 13. By centring schools and children in risk mapping and co-design, the project underscores the need for PAs that empower vulnerable groups. The University of Lusaka (UNILUS) addresses agricultural resilience through CBPR and Living Labs, linking farmer training and knowledge exchange directly to SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, SDG 12, and SDG 13. In both cases, the participatory processes ensure that solutions are grounded in lived realities while fostering community ownership and policy alignment.

Taken together, the mapping demonstrates that PAs are not only methods of engagement but powerful vehicles for SDG localisation. They make abstract global targets tangible by embedding them in community dialogue, co-designed solutions, and shared monitoring practices. Challenges remain. Many pilots lack strong monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and baselines are inconsistently defined. Without clearer indicators, it becomes difficult to capture how PAs are contributing to measurable SDG progress. Furthermore, resource-intensive models such as Living Labs or PALAR often exceed the short timeframes of pilot projects, limiting their ability to demonstrate long-term change.

Looking ahead, the lessons of these pilots suggest several priorities for the future. First, PAs must be institutionalised within universities through integration into curricula, recognition of student learning outcomes, and the establishment of permanent platforms such as Science Shops or community advisory boards. Second, a common monitoring and evaluation framework across the region, with agreed indicators and baseline data, would strengthen evidence of impact and enable comparison across diverse contexts. Third, the evident divide between education-oriented pilots in South Africa and climate-focused pilots in Mauritius and Zambia could be bridged by deliberately integrating these domains—for instance, embedding climate resilience education in schools or linking agricultural training with SDG literacy initiatives.

The role of SADC universities as catalysts for sustainable development should be consolidated by scaling successful models through open repositories, regional learning networks, and policy engagement. PAs, when institutionalised and supported by robust monitoring, can transform universities into hubs of co-created knowledge, bridging local realities and global frameworks. In this way, the EngageSDG initiative moves beyond short-term pilots towards a sustainable ecosystem of engaged universities and empowered communities, actively shaping the region's trajectory toward the SDGs.

Implementing PAs for the SDGs across SADC Higher Education Institutions

The EngageSDG pilot projects have shown that PAs can be powerful mechanisms for linking global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with local realities across the SADC region. Yet the challenge remains: how can these promising practices be scaled and institutionalised so that every higher education institution (HEI) in SADC can contribute meaningfully to the SDGs? The answer lies in embedding PAs into institutional structures, creating regional mechanisms for collaboration, and ensuring sustainability through monitoring, partnerships, and resource mobilisation.

The first step towards implementation is institutionalisation within universities themselves. For PAs to have lasting impact, they must become a regular feature of teaching, research, and community engagement. This means integrating participatory projects into curricula at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels so that students gain credit and recognition for community-based learning. Short courses, micro-credentials, and certificates can further validate the skills and competencies students develop through these engagements. Institutional platforms such as Science Shops or community engagement hubs should also be created across HEIs, providing spaces where local problems can be matched with academic expertise in co-designed projects.

At policy level, universities need to align their strategies with participatory engagement and SDG priorities, ensuring that PAs are not add-ons but part of the academic core.

Scaling PAs also requires regional coordination. The SADC region would benefit from an ecosystem of practice that allows universities to share tools, lessons, and innovations. The Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF) developed under EngageSDG offers a structured model that can be rolled out across institutions, with space for local adaptation. Open repositories of participatory methods, toolkits, and case studies should be developed and maintained, enabling replication across diverse contexts. Capacity-building programmes, both online and in-person, can prepare academics, students, and community partners to apply methods such as Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), Participatory Action Research (PAR), and Living Labs with methodological rigour. Such a community of practice would allow SADC HEIs to move forward together, avoiding duplication and fostering mutual learning.

A critical part of implementation is the development of robust monitoring and evaluation systems. Many of the pilot projects revealed weaknesses in baseline data collection and indicators. To scale up, HEIs need a common framework of indicators that measure both the participatory process, e.g. inclusivity and depth of engagement, and outcomes, e.g. skills gained, behavioural change, or climate resilience achieved. A regional dashboard could be developed to showcase the collective contributions of HEIs to the SDGs, giving visibility to universities as key development actors. This would also enhance accountability and strengthen the case for resource mobilisation.

Resource mobilisation itself is central to sustainability. Participatory work is often resource-intensive, requiring time, facilitation, and community support. Universities should therefore establish multi-stakeholder advisory boards that bring together government, industry, and community representatives to jointly prioritise projects and secure funding. Regional organisations such as SARUA can facilitate pooled funding from SADC, AU, EU, and development partners, ensuring continuity beyond short project cycles. The private sector should also be engaged as a co-investor, particularly in areas such as climate resilience, agriculture, and digital innovation, where academic and industry interests intersect.

The pilots also revealed thematic differences that must be addressed. South African universities focused on education and social inclusion, while Mauritian and Zambian universities concentrated on climate action and resilience. Both entry points are valuable, and future implementation should seek to bridge these themes. Education projects should integrate elements of climate awareness and sustainability, while climate resilience projects should include components of SDG literacy and participatory education. Youth and women, as the most affected groups in both domains, can serve as entry points for interventions that combine skills development, empowerment, and resilience-building. In this way, PAs can address interconnected challenges rather than working in silos.

Ultimately, implementing PAs across SADC HEIs requires a vision of universities as catalysts for sustainable development. This vision is not about isolated pilot projects, but about transforming universities into knowledge brokers that mediate between communities, policy-makers, and industry. By embedding participatory research into curricula, recognising it in promotion frameworks, and linking it to policy dialogue, universities can create a culture where engaged scholarship becomes the norm. At regional level, a network of participatory hubs, living labs, and science shops would allow communities across SADC to co-create solutions with their universities, making the SDGs tangible in people's everyday lives.

Finlly, the EngageSDG pilots have provided a clear proof of concept: PAs work in translating the SDGs into local action. To implement them across all SADC HEIs, the region must institutionalise PAs within universities, build regional structures for knowledge sharing, adopt common monitoring systems, secure sustainable resources, and deliberately bridge education with climate action. If these steps are taken, PAs will no longer be short-term experiments, but rather the backbone of an ecosystem where SADC universities and communities co-create pathways towards sustainable and inclusive development.

Recommendations for Refining the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF)

The pilot report does not fundamentally change the IPF but does suggest some refinements, some of which have been mentioned above. These are: clarifying terminology, specifying operational tools, strengthening M&E, adapting ambitious models to short cycles, embedding results institutionally, and encouraging documentation and dissemination. These should improve the IPF to be more action-oriented, comparable, and sustainable.

The early implementation of the EngageSDG pilot projects has confirmed the value of the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF) as a unifying model for guiding participatory approaches across SADC universities. At the same time, the pilots have revealed areas where the IPF can be strengthened to ensure greater clarity, methodological precision, and long-term sustainability. The following recommendations emerge as refinements to enhance the framework's applicability and impact.

The first possible area of improvement relates to terminology. Across the pilots, different universities have used terms such as Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR), Participatory Action Research (PAR), and Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR) interchangeably. This inconsistency risks creating confusion and weakens comparability across projects. The IPF should therefore provide explicit guidance on the distinctions and overlaps among these models, clarifying their conceptual underpinnings and intended applications. A clear terminology section within the IPF would ensure that universities adopt models consistently and can learn from one another without misinterpretation.

A second recommendation concerns the operationalisation of methods. While the selection of PAs was generally appropriate, many pilots struggled to demonstrate the tools and instruments that would make participation concrete. Too often, Living Labs or CBPR were referenced in principle but not fully elaborated in practice. To address this, the IPF should be expanded to include illustrative toolkits that link each participatory model with specific techniques such as photovoice, participatory mapping, co-creation workshops, citizen science, or digital storytelling. By providing this methodological detail, the IPF can bridge the gap between abstract concepts and tangible implementation.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) represent another critical area for refinement. The pilots showed that indicators were often generic, lacking baseline data and measurable outcomes. Without these, the capacity to demonstrate SDG contributions is limited. The IPF should therefore propose a set of common participatory M&E indicators that capture both processes, e.g. inclusivity, levels of co-design, and stakeholder diversity, and outcomes, including empowerment, skill development, behavioural change, and resilience-building. Embedding participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) into the IPF would also ensure that communities and students are actively involved in assessing progress, enhancing ownership of results.

The pilots also underscored the tension between ambitious participatory models and short implementation cycles. Living Labs and PALAR, for instance, require time and resources that extend beyond the six- to twelve-month duration of most pilots. The IPF should therefore provide guidance on how such approaches can be adapted for shorter cycles, for example by clarifying which elements can realistically be achieved within a pilot project and which should be positioned as medium-term follow-ups. In doing so, the framework will help universities balance ambition with feasibility.

Institutionalisation is another theme that requires stronger emphasis in the IPF. While pilots demonstrated strong community engagement, many lacked clear strategies for sustaining results beyond the project period. The framework should explicitly encourage universities to embed participatory outcomes into curricula, through credit-bearing modules, service-learning, or micro-credentials. It should also promote the establishment of permanent structures such as Science Shops, community monitoring teams, or cooperatives, which can serve as

lasting platforms for dialogue and collaboration. In this way, participatory approaches will become part of the academic DNA of universities rather than temporary experiments.

Finally, the IPF should foreground documentation and dissemination as essential elements of participatory practice. The pilots generated innovative methods and insights, yet many were not captured systematically for wider use. By emphasising the production of open educational resources, case studies, and methodological toolkits, the IPF can create a shared regional knowledge base that supports replication and scaling across the SADC region.

The pilots confirm the value of the IPF but also highlight the need for targeted refinements. Clarifying terminology, specifying tools, strengthening monitoring and evaluation, adapting ambitious models to pilot timeframes, embedding outcomes institutionally, and promoting systematic documentation will make the IPF more robust, action-oriented, and sustainable. By adopting these recommendations, the IPF will not only guide individual universities but also provide a coherent regional framework for participatory approaches, ensuring that higher education in SADC plays a transformative role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Annexures

EngageSDG SADC Institutions Pilot Project

REVIEW REPORTS

EngageSDG

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Annexure 1. North-West University (NWU)

Re-imagining community education: Mobilizing unemployed youth as community assets to reduce the educational divide in a South African township (SDG 4)

EngageSDG

Co-funded by the European Union

Reviewer structure

- List of Reviewer/s
- Review activities' history.
- Review Summary including recommendations.
- Pilot project draft integrated with specific comments/inputs under each section, when applicable
- Report from North-West University about activities already implemented and pilot project advancement.

Reviewer/s:

- University of Bologna [red ink]
- University of Barcelona [green ink]

Review activities' history

- Desk analysis of pilot project and documentation submitted by the partner.
- 1:1 interview to assess pilot project advancement, held on 08/08/2025 (13:00 CEST time; online), people attending: Martina Santucci (Unibo), Livia Mercatelli (Unibo), Lesley Wood (NWU), Bibi Bouwman (NWU)

Review summary

The pilot project is based on an existing project launched in 2023 under the National Research Foundation (NRF). This project is currently in its final phase of implementation and will conclude its evaluation in September 2025. Within the EngageSDG framework, the idea that emerged following discussions with NWU is to use the results and data from the NRF project as a basis for evaluating how the participatory approach (PA) adopted has worked in practice. The proposal needs to clarify how EngageSDG adds distinctive value to what is already in place.

While this project has strong community relevance and a solid participatory foundation (PALAR), it would benefit from a more robust and structured pedagogical framework.

Currently, the learning processes youth involved are not formally linked to defined learning outcomes or competencies. We recommend adopting an established framework such as Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), LifeComp, or DigCompEdu to guide competency development and assessment. This would allow for clearer monitoring of personal, social, and professional skills acquired.

Additionally, the project does not specify whether youth participants receive any form of academic recognition. Introducing micro credentials or certificates would validate their achievements and support future employment or educational progression.

The use of digital storytelling is promising, but broader use of digital portfolios and learning platforms could increase impact and visibility. Producing open educational resources (OERs) based on project findings would also support replication and knowledge sharing.

Finally, it remains unclear how the educational outcomes of this project will inform university curriculum development or teaching strategies. Stronger institutional integration and dissemination within NWU would ensure long-term sustainability and cross-faculty learning. Overall, the project shows strong practical value, and with enhanced academic integration, it could serve as a model for climate-conscious education in Africa and beyond.

Pilot project draft

Project identification

- Project Title: Re-imagining community education ~~post COVID 19~~: Mobilizing unemployed youth as community assets to reduce the educational divide in a South African township (SDG 4; community-based research)
- Applicant: North-West University:
  - Prof Lesley Wood, Extraordinary Professor, Faculty of Education
  - Contact Information: Lesley.wood@nwu.ac.za; +27822969202

Introduction and context

Background

This community-based research (CBR) project will build capacity among academic researchers, including a PhD student, to conduct ethical and inclusive CBR. This focus is in alignment with the growing international trends for engaged research as a means to foster community-university collaboration to generate and disseminate knowledge for impact.

North-West university (NWU) belongs to a community of practice (COP) with several other South African universities that was formed in 2019 with the aim of reporting on activities linked to the SDG's. This COP reports annually to a subcommittee of Universities South Africa (USAF) on the status and progress made among its members on the integration of the SDGs into the academic project including how they address environmental responsibilities in operations. The NWU is an integrated multi-campus university that enables equity, redress and globally competitive teaching and research across all three of our campuses in the North-West and Gauteng province, South Africa. Core activities focus on teaching-learning and research, which are intertwined with community engagement and innovation in our eight faculties. The NWU officially came into being on 1 January 2004 as part of the South African government's plan to transform higher education. This is a public university- See website: www.nwu.ac.za/welcome. NWU acknowledges that the generous support and rich material generated by the very communities we serve; has important relevance for development. Reporting on SDG's and our impact have been included into the strategy, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all our community interactions and operations. See for example, http://services.nwu.ac.za/sustainability-community-impact. https://news.nwu.ac.za/research-must-have-impact-communities

Problem/challenge description

South Africa faces a severe youth unemployment crisis, particularly among those aged 16-25, with NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) youth at high risk of mental health challenges and social exclusion. Despite their lack of formal qualifications, these young people possess personal assets that can foster resilience. This study explores how engaging in participatory action learning and action can help NEET youth develop their collective capability to design and implement after school programmes (ASP), which not only benefit adolescents but also enhance the self-confidence, agency, and social networks of the NEET youth themselves. The study addresses the question of how the youth who are NEET can develop skills, knowledge and values to maximise their life opportunities by providing holistic and complementary support to adolescents in their communities so that these adolescents do not suffer the same plight. The study is based on the premise that NEET youth possess assets that needed to be identified, developed and used to bring about change in their own lives while also supporting other young people.

Project objectives

Overall objective

There are two major interrelated issues facing education in South Africa today. One is the *poor quality of education* for most learners (Spaull, 2012), and the other is that learners exiting the system find it increasingly hard to compete against their more privileged peers to *access higher education and/or employment* (Graham, 2014). This study *aims to address both issues by mobilising unemployed township youth and unemployed university graduates to lead community action to provide alternative learners with educational opportunities to complement and enhance formal education*. This study will *generate knowledge about how to enable relevant learning to continue*, whenever formal education is failing to equip learners to learn and develop to a level required for them to improve their life opportunities. Since youth unemployment and low-quality schooling in marginalized communities is a growing global problem, the research will be applicable in many contexts. The project contributes to the attainment of SDG 4 (Quality Education) as well as SDG 3 (Good health and wellbeing).

Specific objectives

The project will unfold in three cycles, with the following objectives:
Year One:
1) To research the experiences and support needs of learners in Khuma and other nearby townships in North-West in relation to education during and post COVID 19.
Year Two:
2) To research and develop, and then implement strategies to provide complementary educational support to learners
Year 3:
3) To evaluate the influence and effectiveness of the complementary educational support provided to learners
4) To determine how the sustainability of these strategies can be ensured.

Intended outputs and outcomes

The impact this project will have will be in the following areas:

1. The youth (NEET) involved as field workers will learn valuable research and life skills that will improve their employability.
2. The young people (learners) who will benefit from the support strategies will have opportunity to improve their educational outcomes.
3. The NPOs involved will be able to improve their support to the young people of the area.
4. The knowledge generated in the project will be used to develop a framework for providing complementary educational support to young people when formal education is not able to.
5. The knowledge generated will be applicable or able to be adapted to be relevant in similar contexts.
6. The involvement of young people in such a project may also help to prevent them from turning to anti-social pursuits such as crime, substance abuse etc.
7. The mental health of the NEETS may be improved as they find a sense of purpose within the project. An important part of the training of the field workers will be a focus on personal growth, and not just on technical skills development.

PA Model and methods

The project will adopt a *participatory action learning and action research* (PALAR) (Wood, 2020) approach, grounded in a transformative paradigm to promote preventative action towards social justice by viewing structural

and intersectional disadvantage as the problem (Burns et al., 2013), rather than viewing the individual or group as deficit in some way. In a country like South Africa, a sense of inferiority among certain groups has been ingrained over centuries, first with colonialism and then Apartheid, and profound, systemic problems have meant power relations are deeply entrenched in race, class, gender and language hierarchies (Nhamo, 2012). For this reason, the methodological process of PALAR is especially apt as it foregrounds action learning within the participatory action research process to create dialogical spaces where power relations can be minimised through the development of trusting relationships, critical reflection on ongoing interaction and recognition of all levels and forms of learning and development (Wood, 2020). The research process is *educative and emancipatory* as participants learn how to systematically find answers to their problems in collaboration with others, gaining confidence, hope and dignity as they develop both technical and personal skills.

Participant recruitment: A core project group will guide the process in two community sites comprising representatives from the community-based NPO, the university researchers and three unemployed youth volunteers/university graduates. Other expertise (e.g. physical education; legal expertise; urban planning) will be brought in as required at specific points of the project. This group will decide on the questions to explore, the research methods to use, and the action to take, as well as how to disseminate the knowledge created. The core group will meet regularly to reflect on the process and findings and plan the way forward. This group will recruit secondary participants as field workers (10) from existing youth (18-25) volunteers at community organisations, or by snowball sampling (Creswell, 2015) if needed. These participants will sign a contract outlining their responsibilities as volunteers in this project. .

Data generation and analysis: Participatory methods such as photo voice (Wang, 1999), drawing and collage will be used to capture the education experiences of the learners; interviews and focus groups will be used to explore the learning and development of youth participants; questionnaires or surveys will be used to determine the educational needs of young people; and digital storytelling will be used to disseminate the knowledge generated in different aspects of the project. Final determination of the methods will depend on what the core research group decides and the resources available to the field workers. Since the research unfolds in cycles, thematic data analysis (Creswell, 2015) will be ongoing throughout.

Partner community/stakeholders

The university researchers from various faculties will partner with township based non-governmental organisations whose focus is on youth development. One site is in Khuma, where Kogoro Social Investments run programmes for youth; and the other in Fochville, where Mandawana Youth club runs after-school programmes for high school children. Both communities report high youth unemployment, substance abuse and gang related violence.

Project activities and timeline

Work plan and Timetable		
Project Timeline	Project Activity	Project Milestone
Year one: 2023	Main objective will be to research the experiences and support needs of learners in Khuma and other nearby townships in North-West in relation to education during and post COVID 19. Ethics clearance – by Feb 2023 Start- up workshop with all collaborators by March 2023	Ethical clearance granted. Workshop done and plan finalised for year. Youth field workers recruited and trained. Oversight and management agreements finalised. Data generated and analysed. Research outputs and reports done and knowledge disseminated in community. Plan for 2024completed

	Finalising agreements with off-campus venues, where required. Recruitment and training of youth as field workers – March/April 2023 Field work: data generation – May -June 2023 Data analysis: July-August 2023 Research reports/articles/dissemination in community: September – November 2022 Collaborator workshop for reflection and planning for 2023 – December 2022 Think-tank of all collaborators plus invited stakeholders to identify how project can be sustained when funding of field workers stopped in this project- Dec 2023	
Year 2: 2024	Main objective to research and develop and then implement strategies to provide complementary educational support to learners, based on data generated in Year 1. Ethics renewed/extended: Jan 2024 5-day workshop to develop strategies and train youth in implementing them: Feb 2024 Youth work with learners in centres to implement support strategies: Mar - November 2024 Ongoing monitoring of implementation by core research group to adapt as needed – March-November 2024 Writing of reports/research outputs completed by Dec 2024 Reflection and planning meeting – Dec 2024	Ethics approval extended. Workshop done and strategies developed. Training of youth workers done Support offered to learners by youth fieldworkers. Monthly monitoring reports completed. Reports/outputs completed. Meeting held and plan developed for 2025
Year 3: 2025	Main objective is 1) to evaluate the influence and effectiveness of the complementary educational support provided to learners 2) To determine how the sustainability of these strategies can be ensured. Ethics approval extended Jan 2025 Start-up workshop to determine how to evaluate impact and effectiveness compared to base-lines gathered in year1 Feb 2025 Field workers trained in evaluation tools Feb 2025 Field workers continue to offer support and conduct evaluation March – November 2025 Data analysed – April-August 2025 Reports written/outputs produced by August 2025	Ethics approval extended. Data generation tools developed for evaluation purposes. Field workers trained in use of tools. Field workers conduct evaluation while ongoing support is delivered. Think tank conducted and plans made for sustaining work

Indicators for assessment

Indicators for assessment include the following:

- Ongoing monitoring and evaluation through quarterly reports, compiled into annual reports. The intended outcomes of the project will be used as indicators of progress.
- Data to assessment attainment of outcomes will be gathered through interviews with youth participants and community organisations.
- All participants and the project teams will be invited to share narrative assessments of their experiences in the project in regard to the extent of and challenges hindering their involvement, how they experienced power relations, changes in understanding or capacity, or tangible project results such as success in improving their life circumstances and these will be analysed using the Sensemaker tool.

Evaluation of learning

Ongoing assessment of the university-community partnership will be done via workshops, monthly meetings and in reflective reports.

Project team and resources

In addition to the project leader and Ms Bibi Bouwman, the following academics are involved.

NAME AND SURNAME	UNIVERSITY | RESEARCH INSTITUTE	DESIGNATION [PLEASE SPECIFY IF HONORS, MASTERS OR PhD STUDENT IN BRACKET]
R Mayimele	North-West University	Researcher, Education
P Jama	North-West University	Researcher, Education
K Puren	North-West University	Researcher, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
R. Nkhahle	North-West University	Researcher, Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences
D Mashiyane	North-West University	Researcher, Information Literacy
S Chizwina	North- West University	Researcher, Information Literacy
D. Mtshelwane	North- West University	Researcher, Faculty of Economics and Management Science
L Mahlangu	North- West University	Researcher
M Ramabina	North- West University	Researcher
L Seabelo	North- West University	Researcher
J Gaorongoe	North- West University	Researcher
B Rabanyane	North- West University	Researcher
M Moeng	North- West University	Researcher
N Nxumalo	North-West University	Researcher/ PhD Student/Education

NAME AND SURNAME	ORGANISATION | COMMUNITY	PARTICIPANT ROLE
T Matsobane	Mandawana Youth Club	Community leader.
P Maano	Kgorogo Social Investments/ Khuma Transnet Community Centre.	Community Leader.

NAME AND SURNAME	UNIVERSITY | RESEARCH INSTITUTE	DESIGNATION [PLEASE SPECIFY IF HONORS, MASTERS OR PhD STUDENT IN BRACKET]
N. Dassie	North-West University	Researcher/ Masters/ Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences

Challenges, risks and mitigation

When working with community partners, there is always a risk that they will decide to withdraw from the project or are unable to participate due to other commitments and pressures. The PA approach chosen, PALAR, necessitates the formation of a strong relationship and so if there are any problems experienced by any of the stakeholders, these can be resolved at the regular project meetings. Also, since we are working with unemployed youth, if they manage to find employment or enrol in further training opportunities, participants may change. However, the community organisations can always recruit more participants.

Ethics and permissions

Ethical approval has been granted by NWU. We will not enter the schools for research purposes but work with the existing users of the community-based organisations. The ethical considerations of respect for persons, justice and beneficence will be adhered to and any amendments needed as the project unfolds will be submitted to the appropriate ethics committee of the Faculty of Education.

Contribution to sustainability

This project is a pilot project for the imitation of a science shop concept. A Science Shop is a facility attached to a specific department of a university which provides independent, free, community-based research support in response to problems experienced by the community. It is a demand-driven and bottom-up approach to research. The project involves various faculties and support departments who have not previously conducted participatory research and so it builds capacity for this. The science shop will continue to be housed in the Directorate for Community Impact and Sustainability in the university to act as a mediator between community groups and university researchers. All projects registered in the science shop will have to identify which SDGs they address.

Support required

None envisaged – this project is in its third year.

Report from North-West University

Updated on August 23, 2025

State of the Art: Address the two points below

NOTE: if the pilot project proposed is a project that you have started outside the EngageSDG framework please specify which component you want to deepen or assess through the EngageSDG project and focus your activity report on that component only

1. a description (also in the form of bullet points) of the actions already taken so far to implement the pilot project (activities already completed; if the project implementation did not start yet include the preparatory meetings done with the stakeholders)
    - Community partners sourced and agreement done (2 sites and 2 organisations)
    - Youth participants recruited and training needs assessed.
    - Training to address identified needs completed (tutoring, CV writing, interview skills, personal development etc.)
    - Youth delivered training to school going adolescents.
2. constraints or problems experienced so far in the implementation phase, if any

- Difficulties with retaining the same youth participants since once they are trained, they may find a job or decide to return to study.
- Difficulties with getting the community NG0 partners to report comprehensively on activities undertaken by youth at their sites. We spent much time helping them to understand how to provide evidence both in written form and digitally.

Updated timeline: expected dates/months for completion of the pilot project implementation

- Pilot project running from June until August 2025
- Assessment of project implementation expected to run from September 1-15, 2025
- Assessment results available expected by 1 October 2025

Assessment methodology adopted: With youth participants: visual methods such as drawing and quilting; digital story telling; use of Sensemaker with youth and NGO participants.

EngageSDG

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Annexure 2. University of the Western Cape (UWC)

Community-Driven SDG Awareness and Empowerment Workshops: A Participatory Approach to Sustainable Development in Local Communities

EngageSDG

Co-funded by the European Union

Reviewer structure

- List of Reviewer/s
- Review activities' history.
- Review Summary including recommendations.
- Pilot project draft integrated with specific comments/inputs under each section, when applicable
- Report from University of the Western Cape about activities already implemented and pilot project advancement.

Reviewer/s

- University of Bologna [red ink]
- University of Barcelona [green ink]
- University College Cork [purple ink]

Review activities' history

- Desk analysis of pilot project and documentation submitted by the partner.
- 1:1 interview to assess pilot project advancement, held on 07/08/2025 (13:00 CEST time; online), people attending: Martina Santucci (Unibo), Livia Mercatelli (Unibo), Filippo Sartor (Unibo), Alessabdra Bonoli (Unibo), Pearl Erasmus (UWC)

Review summary

The aims of the project are clear because they correspond to the increasing importance of the social commitment of universities and the need to link academic knowledge with the realities of society. This is extremely valuable. Establishing platforms for dialogue between university staff and local communities is an effective tool to address local challenges and find innovative, but also sustainable and tailor-made solutions. This is clearly expressed in the project proposal.

We would only recommend describing in more detail how these platforms/workshops work. You said that you will use PAs, but in identifying resources and activities, it may seem that the workshops are more of a traditional classroom to teach the SDGs framework to local community members, rather than a laboratory where both university staff and members of the associations and community participate to discuss joint projects. We would suppose that this is the end result of a process that preliminary requires training and awareness of the context at different levels (international, national and local) for the local communities. We simply suggest providing more information on how this takes place.

The use of CBPR as partecipary apporch is well justified; however, as an additional input the initiative could also considering to explore the establishment of a Science Shop mode, in line with the IPF. This would institutionalise the dialogue with communities and transform one-off workshops into a continuous platform for co-designed projects and SDG literacy.

Additionally, the overall structure of the proposal currently appears somewhat fragmented due to the large number of subsections. This may impact readability and narrative cohesion. We suggest streamlining the structure by grouping related content and reducing redundancies, which would enhance the overall flow and clarity of the narrative.

The review highlights the project's strong participatory design, institutional commitment, and alignment with the SDGs. Key improvements include strengthening student engagement, integrating educational impact metrics, and enhancing digital accessibility. We propose developing a formal SDG module, promoting virtual exchanges, and sharing best practices through joint research and an open repository. These actions aim to enrich educational outcomes and ensure the sustainability and scalability of the pilot.

This pilot project supports the Engage SDG goal of strengthening SADC universities' contributions to sustainable development through PAs (PAs). It addresses the disconnect between global SDG frameworks and local community realities by creating community-based workshops that foster inclusive dialogue, raise SDG awareness, and empower local stakeholders to co-develop sustainable solutions. Using a Community-Based Participatory Action Learning and Research (CBPAR) model, the initiative builds on UWC's strong foundation in community engagement, interdisciplinary expertise, and existing partnerships in disadvantaged communities. The project seeks to create inclusive spaces for dialogue, increase SDG literacy, strengthen community-academic collaboration, and build local capacity for ongoing, community-led development.

Pilot project draft

Engage SDG SADC Institutions Pilot Project Proposal

Project Identification

Project Title: Community-Driven SDG Awareness and Empowerment Workshops: A Participatory Approach to Sustainable Development in Local Communities

Applicant SADC Partner University: University of the Western Cape (UWC)

Lead staff member(s): [Prof Frantz, DVC: Research and Innovation]

Contact Information: [jfrantz@uwc.ac.za, 021 959 2587]

Introduction and context

Background

This pilot project aligns with the Engage SDG objective to build capacity in SADC universities for SDG contribution through PAs (PAs). The project responds to the growing emphasis on societal engagement for higher education institutions internationally and within SADC by creating structured community engagement workshops that bridge academic knowledge with community realities. The initiative recognizes that sustainable development cannot be achieved through top-down approaches but requires genuine partnerships between institutions and communities, rooted in mutual respect and shared responsibility.

[It may be useful to identify one SDG as the primary target of the intervention, such as SDG 17 or another. This can support clearer project classification, strategic alignment, and impact assessment.]

Institutional context

The University of the Western Cape has a strong commitment to social transformation and community engagement, making it well-positioned to implement this participatory approach. UWC's historical focus on serving disadvantaged communities and its interdisciplinary expertise in health, education, development, theology, and social sciences provides a solid foundation for this pilot project. The university's existing community partnerships and collaborative infrastructure support the implementation of participatory methodologies for local engagement.

[While UWC's commitment to social transformation is clearly articulated, the proposal could be further strengthened by referencing specific past or ongoing projects that are thematically or methodologically aligned with the current initiative. Highlighting the expertise of selected team members who bring added value would also help highlighting the institution's operational capacity.]

Problem/Challenge description

Communities across South Africa are facing interconnected challenges related to poverty, inequality, climate change, education, and health disparities. These complex socio-economic and environmental issues cannot be addressed through isolated interventions or traditional academic approaches alone. There is a critical gap between global development frameworks like the SDGs and local community awareness and engagement. Communities often lack access to knowledge about how global development goals connect to their lived realities, and there are limited platforms for meaningful dialogue between academic institutions, civil society, and local stakeholders to co-develop contextually relevant responses.

[To enhance the contextual clarity and empirical grounding of the proposal, consider providing a more detailed description of the local context in which the project will take place. Including relevant data alongside source citations, would help substantiate the problem analysis and better justify the intervention.]

Project objectives

Overall objective

To demonstrate how participatory community engagement workshops can serve as an effective model for knowledge co-production that connects global SDG frameworks with local community realities, thereby contributing to sustainable development solutions that are grounded in community needs and priorities.

Specific objectives

1. **SDG Awareness Enhancement:** Increase community understanding of the SDGs and their relevance to local contexts through tailored awareness modules.
2. **Participatory Dialogue Facilitation:** Create inclusive spaces for active dialogue between students, community members, and practitioners around pressing local challenges.
3. **Community Empowerment:** Equip participants with knowledge and tools to initiate positive change within their own environments.
4. **Cross-sector Collaboration:** Foster sustainable partnerships between academic institutions, civil society, and local stakeholders
5. **Capacity Building:** Develop local capacity for ongoing community-led sustainable development initiatives.

Intended outputs and outcomes

Short-term outputs

- 6-8 community engagement workshops conducted with 20 participants each.

- Workshop materials and resources developed and distributed.
- Network of trained community facilitators established.

Medium-term outcomes

- Enhanced community awareness of SDGs and their local relevance
- Strengthened relationships between UWC and partner communities.
- Documented best practices for participatory community engagement.

Long-term outcomes

- Community-initiated sustainable development projects
- Sustained collaboration between academic and community partners
- Replicable model for SDG-focused community engagement across SADC institutions

PA Model and Methods

Selected PA Model: Community-Based Participatory Action Learning and Research (CBPAR)

Specific Methods

- Interactive SDG awareness modules with case-based learning using local examples
- Small group discussions and breakout sessions (maximum 20 participants per workshop)
- Interdisciplinary facilitation drawing on health, education, development, theology, and social sciences expertise.
- Participatory dialogue sessions connecting everyday community issues to global development goals.
- Collaborative action planning for community-led initiatives

Justification: CBPAR is most suitable for this intervention because it emphasizes co-learning between academic and community partners, respects local knowledge systems, and promotes community ownership of development processes. The small group format ensures meaningful participation and deep engagement, while the interdisciplinary approach addresses the complex, interconnected nature of sustainable development challenges.

Partner Community/Stakeholders

Primary communities

Local communities in the Western Cape region, with particular focus on disadvantaged areas where UWC has existing relationships and where SDG challenges are most pronounced.

Nature of Community Involvement: Communities will be full partners in the process, participating in workshop design, content adaptation, facilitation, and evaluation. Community members will help identify priority SDGs and local challenges, contribute local knowledge and experiences, and co-develop action plans for ongoing engagement.

Other stakeholders

- Partner educational institutions providing venues and logistical support.
- Local NGOs and community-based organizations
- Local government representatives where appropriate
- Civil society organizations working on sustainable development.

Project Activities and Timeline

Phase 1: Preparation and Design (Months 1-2)

- Stakeholder mapping and community partner identification
- Workshop content development and material preparation
- Venue arrangements and logistical planning
- Ethics clearance and permissions

Phase 2: Implementation (Months 3-8)

- Conduct 6-8 community engagement workshops (one per month)
- Document processes and collect feedback after each workshop.
- Facilitate ongoing dialogue between workshop participants

Phase 3: Evaluation and Consolidation (Months 9-10)

- Comprehensive evaluation of learning outcomes
- Documentation of best practices and lessons learned.
- Planning for sustainability and scaling

Key milestones

- Month 2: All workshop materials developed and ethics approval obtained.
- Month 4: First two pilot workshops completed and evaluated.
- Month 6: Mid-point review and adaptation of approach based on learning.
- Month 8: All workshops completed.
- Month 10: Final evaluation and documentation completed.

[A simplified Gantt chart or milestone timeline could help communicate activity sequencing and overlap more clearly, particularly for external reviewers.]

Indicators for Assessment

Quantitative indicators

- Number of workshops conducted (target: 6-8)
- Number of participants engaged (target: 120-160)
- Participant retention rates across workshop series

- Number of community-initiated follow-up activities

Qualitative indicators

- Participants' increased understanding of SDGs and local relevance (pre/post assessments)
- Quality of participatory dialogue and community engagement
- Strength of partnerships developed between academic and community stakeholders.
- Evidence of community empowerment and agency
- Sustainability of relationships and ongoing collaboration

Evaluation of Learning

The evaluation approach will employ participatory evaluation methods consistent with the project's PA approach:

Methods

- Pre- and post-workshop surveys to assess knowledge and attitude changes.
- Focus group discussions with participants to capture experiential learning.
- Reflective sessions with facilitators and community partners
- Documentation of emergent community initiatives
- Participatory evaluation workshops with all stakeholders

Learning Focus Areas

- Effectiveness of the CBPAR model in community SDG engagement
- Best practices for inclusive, participatory workshop design
- Strategies for sustaining community-academic partnerships
- Adaptations needed for different community contexts.

Project Team and Resources

University Staff (8 members)

- Project lead (academic coordinator)
- Community engagement specialist
- SDG content experts (2-3 from different disciplines)
- Workshop facilitators (2-3 with PA experience)
- Evaluation and documentation specialist

Students (20 participants)

- Graduate students in development studies, social sciences, and related fields
- Undergraduate students as co-facilitators and peer educators

Team expertise

- Participatory research methodologies
- Community development and engagement
- SDG framework and implementation
- Interdisciplinary knowledge in health, education, law, and social sciences
- Workshop facilitation and adult education

Resources required

- Workshop materials and supplies
- Venue costs and refreshments
- Transportation for community participants
- Documentation and evaluation tools
- Communication and coordination support

Challenges, risks and mitigation

Potential challenges and mitigation strategies are as follows:

1. Low community participation: Mitigation through strong community partnerships, convenient scheduling (Saturdays), and provision of refreshments and transportation support
2. Language and cultural barriers: Mitigation through multilingual facilitation and culturally sensitive workshop design
3. Sustainability beyond project period: Mitigation through capacity building of local facilitators and integration with existing community structures
4. Academic-community power imbalances: Mitigation through participatory design principles and community co-leadership
5. COVID-19 or health-related disruptions: Mitigation through flexible delivery modes and safety protocols

Ethical considerations

- Informed consent from all participants
- Respect for community knowledge and cultural practices.
- Equitable participation and benefit-sharing
- Protection of participant privacy and confidentiality

Compliance measures

- Full ethics clearance from UWC Ethics Committee (Use the ethics of the SDG project)
- Community consultation and consent processes
- Adherence to participatory research ethical guidelines
- Regular ethical review throughout implementation

Institutional requirements

- UWC institutional ethics approval
- Partner institution agreements where applicable
- Community partnership agreements and protocols

Contribution to sustainability

This pilot project will contribute to UWC's long-term sustainability strategy by:

Institutional learning

- Developing a replicable model for SDG-focused community engagement
- Building staff and student capacity in PAs
- Strengthening community partnership infrastructure

Strategic integration

- Informing UWC's community engagement strategy and policies
- Contributing to the university's SDG implementation framework
- Enhancing the institution's reputation for socially responsive education

Broader Impact

- Providing evidence and best practices for other SADC institutions
- Contributing to the EngageSDG project's institutional partnership framework
- Supporting regional capacity building in participatory development approaches

Support required

Support from EU Partner Universities

1. Technical assistance:
    - Guidance on participatory methodology refinement
    - Support for evaluation framework development.
    - Peer review of workshop materials and approaches
2. Capacity building:
    - Training opportunities for project staff in advanced pa methods
    - Exchange of experiences with similar projects in eu contexts
    - Access to relevant research and documentation tools
3. Documentation and dissemination:
    - Support for documenting and sharing best practices.
    - Assistance with academic publication of findings
    - Platform for presenting results to broader sadc and eu audiences.
4. Networking:

- Connection with similar community engagement initiatives
- Access to international PA communities of practice
- Opportunities for staff and student exchanges

[Including an indicative budget outlining the necessary resources is necessary to assess the overall feasibility of the proposal. Even a simple breakdown of core costs (such as workshops, transport, and materials) can demonstrate that the planned activities are realistically sustainable.]

Report from University of the Western Cape

Updated on August 29, 2025

State of the Art: Address the 2 points below

NOTE: if the pilot project proposed is a project that you have started outside the EngageSDG framework please specify which component you want to deepen or assess through the EngageSDG project and focus your activity report on that component only

The pilot projects aim to test and improve the draft Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF) developed in Work Package 3 and form the basis for expanding similar initiatives in the SADC.

A description (also in the form of bullet points) of the actions already taken so far to implement the pilot project (activities already completed; if the project implementation did not start yet include the preparatory meetings done with the stakeholders)

This pilot project aligns with the EngageSDG objective to build capacity in SADC universities for SDG contribution through PAs (PAs). The project responds to the growing emphasis on societal engagement for higher education institutions internationally and within SADC by creating structured community engagement workshops that bridge academic knowledge with community realities. The initiative recognises that sustainable development cannot be achieved through top-down approaches but requires genuine partnerships between institutions and communities, rooted in mutual respect and shared responsibility.

Institutional Context

The University of the Western Cape has a strong commitment to social transformation and community engagement, making it well-positioned to implement this participatory approach. UWC's historical focus on serving disadvantaged communities and its interdisciplinary expertise in health, education, development, theology, and social sciences provides a solid foundation for this pilot project. The university's existing community partnerships and collaborative infrastructure support the implementation of participatory methodologies for local engagement.

Problem/Challenge Description

Communities across South Africa are facing interconnected challenges related to poverty (SDG 1), inequality (SDG 5), climate change (SDG 13), education (SDG 4), and health disparities (SDG 3). These complex socio-economic and environmental issues cannot be addressed through isolated interventions or traditional academic approaches alone. There is a critical gap between global development frameworks like the SDGs and local community awareness and engagement. Communities often lack access to knowledge about how global development goals connect to their lived realities, and there are limited platforms for meaningful dialogue between academic institutions, civil society, and local stakeholders to co-develop contextually relevant responses.

Project Objectives

Overall objective

To demonstrate how participatory community engagement workshops can serve as an effective model for knowledge co-production that connects global SDG frameworks with local community realities, thereby contributing to sustainable development solutions that are grounded in community needs and priorities.

Specific objectives

1. SDG Awareness Enhancement: Increase community understanding of the SDGs and their relevance to local contexts through tailored awareness modules

2. Participatory Dialogue Facilitation: Create inclusive spaces for active dialogue between students, community members, and practitioners around pressing local challenges

3. Community Empowerment: Equip participants with knowledge and tools to initiate positive change within their own environments

4. Cross-sector Collaboration: Foster sustainable partnerships between academic institutions, civil society, and local stakeholders

5. Capacity Building: Develop local capacity for ongoing community-led sustainable development initiatives

Actions taken thus far:

- A partner for the community engagement was identified: Hugenote Kollege, Wellington.
- The first meeting with the partner institution was conducted online on the 6th of May 2025;
- Emails were exchanged between the two partnering institutions as to who to engage with and why;
- A site visit was conducted on the 17th of July 2025 to view the venue and conclude whether it would be conducive to all, and we concluded that it is;
- Participants and stakeholders were identified and, in collaboration and in agreement with our partner, invitations were extended to participants on the 17th of July 2025, and it was consequently accepted by them;
- Logistics were discussed, and responsibilities and deliverables were divided between UWC and Hugenote Kollege;
- Event materials, meals, and transportation have been organised
- Event agenda/program has been finalised
- The date for the community engagement will be the 6th of September 2025.
- Constraints or problems experienced so far in the implementation phase, if any:
- The constraints experienced were in syncing everyone's diaries to finally decide on a date;
- Recruitment of participants was slow and invitations had to be reissued to possible candidates when some declined;

Updated timeline: expected dates/months for completion of the pilot project implementation

Intended outputs and outcomes

Short-term outputs

• 6-8 community engagement workshops conducted with 20+ participants each

• Workshop materials and resources will be developed and distributed

• Network of trained community facilitators established

Medium-term outcomes

• Enhanced community awareness of SDGs and their local relevance

• Strengthened relationships between UWC and partner communities

• Documented best practices for participatory community engagement

Long-term outcomes

• Community-initiated sustainable development projects

• Sustained collaboration between academic and community partners

• Replicable model for SDG-focused community engagement across SADC institutions

PA Model and Methods

Selected PA Model: Community-Based Participatory Action Learning and Research (CBPAR)

Specific Methods

• Interactive SDG awareness modules with case-based learning using local examples

• Small group discussions and breakout sessions (maximum 30 participants per workshop)

• Interdisciplinary facilitation drawing on health, education, development, theology,

and social sciences expertise

• Participatory dialogue sessions connecting everyday community issues to global

development goals

• Collaborative action planning for community-led initiatives

Justification

CBPAR is most suitable for this intervention because it emphasises co-learning between academic and community partners, respects local knowledge systems, and promotes community ownership of development processes. The small group format ensures meaningful participation and deep engagement, while the interdisciplinary approach addresses the complex, interconnected nature of sustainable development challenges.

Annexure 3. University of Mauritius (UoM)

Community engagement to gather thermal perception in built spaces and community empowerment to promote heat health using passive and Nature-based solutions (NbS) measures

Reviewer structure

- List of Reviewer/s
- Review activities' history
- Review Summary including recommendations
- Pilot project draft integrated with specific comments/inputs under each section, when applicable
- Report from University of Mauritius about activities already implemented and pilot project advancement

Reviewer/s

- University of Bologna [red ink]
- University of Barcelona [green ink]

Review activities' history:

- Desk analysis of pilot project and documentation submitted by the partner.
- 1:1 interview to assess pilot project advancement, held on 08/08/2025 (09:00 CEST time; online), people attending: Martina Santucci (Unibo), Livia Mercatelli (Unibo), Alessandra Bonoli (Unibo), Mahendra Gooroochurn (UoM), Dayawatee Goburdhun (UoM), Krishnee Appadoo (UoM)

Review summary

The proposal clearly articulated, and the pilot project is well conceived and carefully structured. It addresses an urgent and highly relevant local challenge: the increase of indoor heat stress and its related health impacts, in particular the issues of thermal discomfort in households, with a specific focus on vulnerable communities.

The chosen approach is combining co-creation workshops and real-world labs and it is strongly aligned with the EngageSDG IPF. The project also puts forward participatory and practical solutions through passive and nature-based building strategies, making it not only innovative but also feasible in resource-constrained contexts. The proposal demonstrates clear coherence with the SDG 3, 11, and 13.

To complement the current participatory approach chosen, which is the living lab model, the introduction of Citizen Science practices (e.g., household climate measurements) could be considered, as they could enrich the robustness of the evidence and strengthen the community's sense of belonging. According to the IPF, citizen science is particularly suitable where community-based data generation is essential. In this context, household-level measurements of indoor climate conditions, collected directly by citizens with simple tools, would increase both awareness and the robustness of the scientific evidence base.

A few targeted improvements could further strengthen the proposal and increase its effectiveness, particularly in terms of methodological precision (for instance, in clarifying how qualitative and quantitative data will be triangulated, how beneficiary inclusion criteria will be tracked, and how indicators can be made more concrete).

The initiative shows strong community engagement and interdisciplinary relevance. We recommend formal integration of student participation into academic programmes, explicit use of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) principles, and development of open educational resources. These enhancements would reinforce the project's educational impact and its long-term institutional sustainability.

Pilot project draft

Project identification

- Project Title: Community engagement to gather thermal perception in built spaces and community empowerment to promote heat health using passive and NbS measures [Strengthen the title to make it more accessible]
- PA approach: co-creation workshops, real-world labs
- Applicant SADC Partner University:

  University of Mauritius

  Contact Information: Assoc Prof Dr Mahendra Gooroochurn, Mechanical and Production Engineering Department, Faculty of Engineering m.gooroochurn@uom.ac.mu, +230 57499119

Introduction and context

Background

The proposed pilot project has a strong community engagement component to transfer research outcomes on sustainable home design for grassroots implementation to develop climate resilience across communities, especially vulnerable and low-income segments. To increase penetration of the outcomes and to contextualise the solutions to the situation of the communities, the project aims to raise awareness on the climate change phenomenon and train community members into the application of passive building methods as an effective, sustainable way to tackle the issue of overheating of interior spaces.

Two PAs are envisaged for the project, firstly through co-creation workshops for the members to come up with viable solutions using local materials and products, with an emphasis on second-hand materials/products that may be available in their communities already. This will improve the circularity of the measures. The second PA considered is to actually showcase and gather measurable data through sensors/dataloggers installed in homes serving as pilots, and through surveys carried out prior and post the interventions. The need for demonstration is a vital component of such projects as too many prescriptions have been put forth as part of strategies and policies, which do not permeate at grassroots level, due to lack of evidence or showcases.

Institutional context

The University of Mauritius has laid strong emphasis on promoting sustainability through the SDG framework in its role as an education provider over the last decade by adapting the curricula of existing undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, as well as offering new programmes focused on sustainability and climate change. Moreover, the university plays a crucial role in undertaking in sustainability-related projects across all spheres of the economy, by offering technical expertise and contributing to the formulation of policies.

The university has developed its strategy on the quadruple helix model of engagement for rich collaborations with the civil society, private sector, governmental authorities and academia. The participation of the university in the EngageSDG project will allow the university to align further to its strategic plan for sustainability objectives and provide much-needed training on the Integrated Participatory Framework being developed. There is a lack of interaction between faculties at the university for developing synergies in research projects, which is one area the IPF can be beneficial. Moreover, the emphasis on the need to create outcomes for impacts in the community and industry is an essential consideration for moving forward and realising the quadruple helix approach, where the

EngageSDG will provide key tools and techniques for engagement through the PA framework, which has so far been mostly in the domain of social and humanities at the university.

[Include links or, at least, mention similar projects already undertaken (or ongoing) by the university or members of the team, to showcase prior experience]

Problem/challenge description

One of the prominent impacts of climate change is the progressive increase in ambient temperature, resulting in the impoverishment of the indoor environmental conditions. This has been experienced across Mauritius through increased complaints at work and in households about thermal discomfort, with the literature providing evidence of the adverse effects of excessive temperatures on human health, well-being, productivity and general welfare. This is anticipated to worsen as global warming becomes more severe with increase in carbon emissions. The increase in peak power demand, achieving record levels in the latest summer period in Mauritius, is largely due to excessive heat gains into the building interiors and consequently leading to heavy reliance on air-conditioning.

The project aims to start a pioneering effort to gather scientific information to characterise the thermal perception of communities in their homes across the island to be able to understand the extent of the problem. Workshops will be run with these communities to explain the underlying reason in view of democratising knowledge about climate change. The green building literature prescribes a more sustainable way to adapt to the increased summer temperatures and associated heat gains based on the passive building design paradigm. This approach tackles the problem at its roots and offers low cost, low technological and nature-based solutions, hence allows vulnerable communities and low -income families unable to invest in active cooling systems, to cope with this pressing challenge. The passive design approach is well-suited to align to traditional practices our ancestors used in what was termed as the creole house. Therefore, a second component of the pilot project is to train community members to empower them to co-create simple passive design measures for the specific context of their homes. The project will showcase the efficacy of the conceived measures through pilot tests in the communities, hence bringing the real-world component. By generating such scientific findings on community perspectives and efficacy of fundamental, low-cost building measures, the pilot project hopes to empower people to take grassroots action to tackle the pressing problem of health they are facing.

SDGs targeted: SDG3, SDG11 and SDG13

[Add references or citations in the section on context and current challenges, to ground the problem statement more firmly.]

[Comment: in terms of passive building strategies, it would be very interesting to mention which solutions are already considered suitable for your local context even a short reference or a link in the section on how the project responds to the identified challenges could be a valuable addition.

Response (UoM): the passive measures are based on prior research work undertaken for the tropical context of Mauritius. More information is available in the guidebook we created available here.]

Project objectives

Overall objective

The pilot project aims to engage with the community to understand their context and perspectives to validate observations reported in literature on heat health and the qualitative feedback from staff at the

university and the population at large. This will provide a scientific basis to make recommendations and devise policies. The pilot project also aims to engage with the community to co-create (PA workshops) and implement (real-world labs) climate adaptation solutions to tackle issues related to climate-induced heat health.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives formulated for the pilot project are:

- Gather perspectives from communities on heat health in their households through interviews and online surveys;
- Run information sessions with communities across Mauritius to raise awareness on climate change and the basis for the specific issue being caused with overheating;
- Empower community members through non-technical training workshops on simple, low-cost measures that can be taken to prevent excessive heat gains into their interior spaces based on passive design methods;
- Implement pilot tests in the communities to showcase the efficacy of the developed methods for selected households;
- Measure the efficacy of the awareness sessions, training workshops and pilot demos.

Intended outputs and outcomes

Short-term

- Increased awareness of the climate change phenomena and the ability to relate impacts faced by communities to global warming;
- Understanding of what influences their thermal comfort in their homes;
- A set of bespoke passive solutions to prevent excessive heat gains into interior spaces of households for the type, location of glazing, orientation and context of their homes;
- Showcase through demonstration and generate scientific findings on community perspectives and the efficacy of the proposed techniques.

Medium-term

- Mainstream the tools and techniques for passive design across the island;
- Empower communities to use local and second-hand materials/products in fabricating the passive elements for their homes;
- Seek funding for widespread implementation of the scientifically proven techniques, especially for vulnerable and low-income housing segments.

Long-term

- Advise policies and obtain government buy-in to incorporate the principles of passive design in building standards;
- Include passive design methods as the basis for securing green loans for the implementation of such measures.

PA Model and methods

The participatory knowledge production considered for the pilot project are co-creation workshops and real-world labs.

(Describe the specific methods that will be used within the selected model).

The co-creation workshops will allow to present the climate change basis of the problem being faced with excessive temperatures and the basis for passive building design to find cost effective and energy efficient solutions to the problem. This will also allow to incorporate any traditional knowledge the community members may have.

The real-world labs will provide a basis to implement, test and provide clear evidence for the proposed approach, through work in the communities themselves, as opposed to experimentation in university labs.

Model justification

The lack of climate action at grassroots level is a major reason for upheaval and dissension, especially from our youth, as nations around the world put forward numerous policies and strategies at high level through their NDCs, but with little permeation to where it really matters, i.e. at community and household levels. The main cause of this shortcoming is the lack of community engagement, and this stems from a disinterest from people dure to the overhype behind sustainability and circular economy, but with little practical outcomes. This can be addressed by integrating citizens throughout the conversation and incorporating them in the conception and development of the solutions. With such an approach, the chances of adoption are increased, and the risks are reduced considerably. The community engagement for empowerment will be achieved through co-creation workshops and the implementation part will be undertaken through real-world labs, with the communities being associated partners throughout the project.

[Comment: Clarification is needed on how intended beneficiaries are selected (in terms of gender, age, area). Additionally, it would be useful to specify how data emerging from the co-creation workshops will be triangulated with quantitative sensor data.

Response UoM: The communities targeted are those we have a prior working relationship with. The invitation is open for all members of that community to participate, so we do not directly control gender and age. I am not too sure what you mean by triangulation of the data. As far as sensor data are concerned, the instrumentation will be calibrated. As for response from participants, we'll be happy to use any technique for triangulation that you can recommend.]

Partner community/stakeholders

The specific communities for collaboration in the pilot projects are those which whom staff from UoM are involved already based on prior experience working with, as well as new communities interested in the scope and objectives of the project. The assistance of the various district councils and NGOs (again with whom staff have prior experience working with) will be sought.

(Describe the nature and extent of the community's involvement as partners in the process.)

The community members will be involved as close partners in the project, with involvement across all the activities, including awareness sessions, co-creation workshops and real-world labs. The assistance of students at the university for the implementation phase of the pilot project will also be sought. Prior dialogue has been initiated with student clubs at the university.

(Identify any other relevant stakeholders (e.g., local government, NGOs) who will be involved.)

NGOs and district councils will be contacted to join the community outreach. NGOs are already involved with the university with such initiatives. It is an opportunity for bringing in more NGOs. The district councils will be key for the medium and long term objectives to mainstream the project outcomes and to seek governmental support.

[Comment: Beyond NGOs, the inclusion of local authorities (is the case of district councils?) or relevant ministries could strengthen the project, especially if one aim is to support policy or guideline development.

Response (UoM): In the next stage of the project, we intend to engage with district councils, once we have the preliminary results from the feedback from the survey across Mauritius, from the community specifically and the real-world lab. That will provide an effective basis to get support from the governmental authorities. They will be invited to the dissemination workshop planned towards the end of the pilot.]

Project activities and timeline

No.	Project Activities	Month					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Community engagement for pilot tests to secure interest for participation						
2	Awareness sessions on heat health and climate change						
3	Dispensing of surveys and interviews for communities						
4	Co-creation workshops						
5	Implementation of pilot tests in selected premises.						
6	Data collection and monitoring						
7	Data analysis and interpretation						
8	Reporting and dissemination, publications						

Milestones

Milestone	Duration (months)	Activities	Progress report due date[1] (dd/mm/yy)	Description of deliverable

1	3	1,2,3,4	30/09/2025	Data on community feedback and details of the pilot tests.
2	3	5,6,7,8	31/12/2025	Quantitative measurements and feedback from pilot tests. Final report on pilot testing

[1] A progress report must be submitted at the end of each milestone.

Indicators for assessment

- Gather perspectives from communities on heat health for a targeted 100 participants or more.
- Run five information sessions with communities across Mauritius to raise awareness on climate change and the basis for the specific issue being caused with overheating;
- Empower community members through three non-technical training workshops with three different communities across the island;
- Implement pilot tests in the three communities to showcase the efficacy of the developed methods for selected households;
- The efficacy of the awareness sessions, training workshops and pilot demos will be assessed through pre and post evaluation.

The following instruments will be used to measure the extent of achievement of the project objectives through the awareness session, training workshop and in-situ pilot demonstrations:

1. Survey form to collect qualitative data on the level of awareness of participants on climate change prior and post the session;
2. Survey form on the thermal perception of participants in their homes.
3. Expert qualitative assessment of the bespoke measures proposed by each participant for his or her home through hands-on exercises during the co-creation workshops;
4. Sensor measurements to provide direct quantitative data on the efficacy of the passive measures for the pilots before and after installation.

(Indicators could measure things like the extent of community involvement, changes in understanding or capacity, or tangible project results related to the chosen SDG.)

- Likert scale evaluation for the survey assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of the

awareness and passive measures (items 1 and 2 above);

- The expert evaluation will be done using green building and passive design philosophy and will be qualitatively evaluated, with feedback provided to each participant;
- Statistical tests will be performed on the sensor measurements with and without the passive measures to evaluate the significance of the efficacy of the passive measures in regulating the indoor conditions.

[Make indicators more concrete by providing numerical targets.]

Evaluation of learning

The effectiveness of the instruments described above, as well as the general feedback received from the participants on the various interactions undertaken with them will serve as evaluation tools for assessing the approach chosen in this pilot project. This will be discussed in the project team, and based on the experience of other members from other pilot projects, the scope for improvement of the approach will be looked into.

Project team and resources

In the project proposal, it is estimated that 8 staff members and 20 students per project could be directly involved.

Detailed Budget breakdown

Item	Unit of Measure	No. of Units	Estimated Unit Cost/Rate	Total Cost (MUR)
Staff Costs				COST (Rs)
UoM Staff (4 staff)	manhours	300.00	1,000.00	300,000.00
Students	lump	8.00	22,500.00	180,000.00
Project Assistant	months	6.00	20,000.00	120,000.00
TOTAL (A)				600,000.00
Equipment Costs				COST (Rs)
Solar shade	meter	600.00	150.00	90,000.00
Sensor/Data Loggers	unit	8.00	10,000.00	80,000.00
Insulation boards	meter squared	1,000.00	75.00	75,000.00
Circulation fans	unit	10.00	7,000.00	70,000.00
TOTAL (B)				315,000.00
Other Direct Costs				COST (Rs)
Travels	unit	100.00	500.00	50,000.00
Workshop consumables and F&B	unit	20.00	10,000.00	200,000.00
Small tools and consumables for installations	lump	1.00	50,000.00	50,000.00
TOTAL (C)				300,000.00
Grand Total (A+B+C)				1,215,000.00

The expertise needed for the proposed pilot project pertains to the following:

- Climate change phenomenon and impacts
- Community engagement and survey design
- Sustainability in the built environment and passive design

The staff allocated from the university for the EngageSDG project are as follows, with the respective expertise:

Assoc Prof Dr Mahendra Gooroochurn – Project Lead, Climate change, Green Building Design and Construction;

Assoc Prof Dr Dayawatee Goburdhun – Climate change and community engagement;

Ms Krishnee Appadoo – Climate change, climate justice, community engagement;

Assoc Prof Dr Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur – climate economics and financing, citizen science.

Challenges, risks and mitigation

The main challenges in the project and associated risks and mitigation effort are as follows:

1. Getting interest from community members. The risk is low due to the prior working relationship of the staff involved with NGOs and community members. The risk will be further mitigated by opening the opportunity to engage in the project to other communities and NGOs, and by reaching out to district councils;
2. Weather variation is an important factor in the project when it comes to the installations to assess efficacy of the designs. The project schedule has been planned in such a way that workshops take place over the August and September periods, and installations take place over October, November and December, the latter being summer months, with the risk of cyclones and heavy rainfall as well. The staggering of the test period over three months allows to mitigate this risk with the vagaries of the weather.

Ethics and permissions

Ethics clearance has been secured for a research project aiming to collect feedback from the population on their energy usage and thermal perspective, and the proposed pilot is being undertaken within the scope of this project, with a specific focus on passive design to mitigate the problem of thermal comfort.

Contribution to sustainability

The following SDGs are targeted through this pilot project:

SDG3 - Good health and well-being

The pilot project deals with the crucial problem related to poor health and well-being associated with indoor spaces with uncomfortable temperatures, and in general what is termed as poor indoor environmental quality. With the impending worsening of weather patterns with heatwaves and temperature extremes, Mauritius will face harsher summers, and this has already started adversely affecting the comfort and productivity of office workers at the university, with more and more complaints from staff. This is a general observation over the whole island, although no formal study or scientific evidence has been gathered. By training communities to understand the root cause of excessive heat gains and enabling to take simple, low

cost measures to block this unwanted heat in summer periods, the project aims to promote better health, especially for vulnerable and low-income families, which are disproportionately affected by climate change impacts due to their limited capability to invest in active energy systems such as mechanical ventilation and active cooling, and the ensuing increase in utility bills.

SDG11 - Sustainable cities and communities

Following on the points mentioned for SDG3 above, the project promotes sustainable cities and communities by seeking synergies and active participation of community members to co- create their own solutions based on the passive building principles presented to them, by finding resources available locally. The project will also encourage the application of traditional knowledge that was applied in previous house designs to deal with the problem of overheating. The project aims to contribute to the concept of vibrant communities to support the achievement of SDGs.

SDG13 - Climate action

The project achieves both adaptation and mitigation by reducing the use of active energy systems such as HVAC, which are high consumers of energy, hence leads to significant amount of carbon emissions. Indeed, the share of air-conditioning for energy use in the built environment is known to represent at least 60%. On the other hand, SIDS like Mauritius, which contributes little to greenhouse gas emissions globally, but faces significant impacts of climate change, needs to be able to adapt, and one of the adaptation needed is against the impending aggravation of summer temperatures. The most effective way to adapt to temperature extremes is through passive design, which addresses the problem at its root. Hence the project is aligned fully to SDG13.

[It would be useful to indicate one SDG as the primary, with the others as secondary. This would facilitate clearer project classification during the analysis and monitoring phases.]

Support required

The University of Mauritius will welcome the assistance of EU partners in the following areas:

- Design of the community outreach, including the tools and techniques to hold the co- creation workshops to evaluate the efficacy of the interventions. The university has technical know-how on climate change and green building design.
- Design of the real-world labs, where pilots will be implemented to evaluate the purported improvement in indoor conditions in households. The university has expertise in collecting parameters in the spaces to provide quantitative data from an engineering perspective of thermal comfort. The university will benefit from design of the social instruments to gather people's perspectives on their wellbeing and comfort in their homes.

Report from University of Mauritius

Updated on August 29, 2025

State of the Art: Address the 2 points below

NOTE: if the pilot project proposed is a project that you have started outside the EngageSDG framework please specify which component you want to deepen or assess through the EngageSDG project and focus your activity report on that component only

a description (also in the form of bullet points) of the actions already taken so far to implement the pilot project (activities already completed; if the project implementation did not start yet include the preparatory meetings done with the stakeholders)

- An online survey to gather the perspectives of the population has been designed and dispensed, with over 100 responses received so far;
- Stakeholder meeting with a community at La Valette, which is a community with prior engagement for climate awareness and climate action for energy efficiency, water management and solid waste recycling at household level. The proposed pilot aims to further the collaboration to co-create climate solutions to tackle the pressing problem of overheating in homes, as well as organise real-world labs through 1-2 implementation to gather pre- and post-intervention performance data as well as the thermal perception of the community members. The meeting so far has been with the executive members of the association, and the co-creation is planned for the first week of September and the real labs starting in mid-September to collect indoor conditions during summer starting October 2025.
    - First engagement meeting with another community leader close to the University in the St Pierre region. A project description has been sent to the community for a subsequent meeting to introduce the pilot project aim and objectives, with a similar goal to organise a co-creation workshop and subsequently a real-world lab implementation. This second community will help in triangulating the results obtained.
        - An initial contact has been made with a third community at Baie du Cap, found along the south-west coast, a region known to have harsh summer conditions. A follow-up meeting with the community is being sought.

constraints or problems experienced so far in the implementation phase, if any

- The online survey and the prior engagement with the community at La Valette have progressed smoothly, and the planned project activities are anticipated to be completed successfully. The two other communities being engaged are new ones in this area of research, and there is some level of uncertainty in their interest. The results from the community engagement at La Valette will help to complete the set objectives for the pilot project. The desired triangulation by working with more communities is being attempted, but some uncertainties remain at the moment on the ability to complete the activities in time.

Updated timeline: expected dates/months for completion of the pilot project implementation

- Pilot project running from July 2025 until November 2025
- Assessment of project implementation expected to run from September 2025 until early December 2025.
- Full assessment results available expected by mid-December 2025.
- Preliminary assessment results for online survey and co-creation worshop expected by mid-September 2025.
- Assessment methodology adopted:
    - Online survey to gather the thermal perception in their homes during summer period, including any health associated issues, from the population at large;

- Co-creation workshop to present fundamental building design methods in a layman language for community members to work on adaptive solutions for their homes, by incorporating any traditional knowledge and locally-available materials;
- Real-world labs to serve as demonstration of the efficacy of the proposed passive design methods.

EngageSDG

Co-funded by the European Union

Annexure 4. University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM)

UTM's Community Carbon Footprint Initiative – Promoting Participatory Climate Action

Reviewer structure

- List of Reviewer/s
- Review activities' history
- Review Summary including recommendations
- Pilot project draft integrated with specific comments/inputs under each section, when applicable
- Report from University of Technology, Mauritius about activities already implemented and pilot project advancement

Reviewer/s

- University of Bologna [red ink]
- University of Barcelona [green ink]

Review activities' history

- Desk analysis of pilot project and documentation submitted by the partner.

Review summary

The pilot project presents a solid participatory foundation and is clearly aligned with SDG 13. Its relevance would be further reinforced by a more detailed description of the identified need or gap, supported by recent local data. The proposal would also benefit from clearer operational details, such as participant selection, the implementation of action-reflection cycles, and monitoring guidelines. Finally, the dissemination strategy could be expanded—for example through toolkits and policy briefs to strengthen the project's medium/long-term impact.

Regarding the chosen participatory approach, while the project builds on CBPAR and crowdsourcing, it might also have benefitted from integrating Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E), as emphasised in the IPF. Since the initiative is strongly focused on behavioural change and institutional transformation, embedding PM&E cycles would help track progress, strengthen accountability, and enhance long-term sustainability.

A question about the project timeline: is the pilot intended to last approximately 20 months, as I understand from the timeframe, or is the initiative that falls under Engage part of a broader strategy?

Our evaluation, from a European educational perspective, highlights the strong participatory foundation and relevance of the UTM initiative to SDG 13 (Climate Action). The project effectively mobilizes students and staff around climate awareness and behavioral change. However, the educational component could be further enhanced through clearer curricular integration, formal recognition of learning outcomes, and structured academic engagement. We recommend developing a participatory sustainability module that allows for credit-bearing activities and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The project's methodology—based on action-reflection cycles and peer learning—is pedagogically sound, but stronger alignment with academic structures would increase impact and scalability. Embedding the initiative into degree programs and institutional strategies would also help address long-term sustainability and continuity beyond the pilot phase. The project shows great potential as a replicable model for climate-conscious education.

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Pilot project draft

Project identification

Project Title: **UTM's Community Carbon Footprint Initiative – Promoting Participatory Climate Action**

The Projects aims to focus namely on SDG 11, 12, 13 and 17

Following the IPF Framework this project will focus on the community-based participatory action learning and research PA model and application of the Crowdsourcing method.

Applicant SADC Partner University:

Lead staff member(s):
Prof (Dr) Chandradeo Bokhoree, Head of Doctoral School, Doctoral School, sbokhoree@utm.ac.mu
Dr Toshima Makoondlall-Chadee, Senior Lecturer, School of Sustainable Development and Tourism, tmchadee@
Dr Preeya V. Ramasamy Coolen, Senior Lecturer, School of Sustainable Development and Tourism,
vr.coolen@utm.ac.mu

Introduction and context

Background

The pilot project aligns closely with the EngageSDG objective of building capacity within SADC universities to contribute effectively to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through PAs (PAs). By embedding climate-conscious practices within the operational fabric of the University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM), the initiative enhances the institution's ability to lead in sustainability and environmental responsibility. It exemplifies the international and regional emphasis on higher education institutions as catalysts for societal engagement, actively involving students and staff in monitoring, reducing, and reflecting on their personal environmental footprints. This participatory model fosters active citizenship and empowers the university community to become agents of climate action, thereby strengthening institutional capacity to integrate SDG-related practices. Moreover, the project promotes a culture of sustainability and climate consciousness, contributing to a broader regional and global movement toward inclusive, participatory, and sustainable development. Ultimately, it seeks to establish a replicable approach that can be adopted by other SADC universities, advancing their role as active contributors to SDG achievement through societal engagement.

Institutional context

The proposed pilot project aligns closely with the University of Technology, Mauritius's (UTM) ongoing commitment to sustainability and participatory engagement. Building on UTM's experience in using PAs (PAs) within teaching, research, and campus initiatives, the project offers a timely opportunity to localize Mauritius's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). By focusing on carbon footprint monitoring and awareness on campus, it strengthens UTM's role as a sustainability leader and empowers students and staff to actively contribute to climate action within their own institutional environment.

[The section would be stronger if it referenced specific projects currently ongoing and/or recently completed thematically or methodologically related to the proposed initiative, and highlighted the expertise of the core team members. This would provide stronger evidence of operational capacity and institutional readiness.]

Problem/challenge description

Contribution to the Broader Goal of Using PAs for Knowledge Production Relevant to Societal Challenges

Despite growing national and international calls for sustainability integration, the University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM) faces a significant challenge in operationalizing climate-conscious practices in a manner that resonates with its academic culture and engages its diverse stakeholders. Traditional top-down approaches to environmental responsibility have often resulted in limited buy-in and fragmented efforts, underscoring a need for more inclusive, context-sensitive models. UTM's pilot initiative tackles this gap by embedding PAs (PAs) within its institutional processes—empowering students and staff to co-create sustainability solutions while reflecting on their personal environmental footprints. This shift addresses both the systemic inertia and the lack of grassroots engagement, transforming the university into a living lab for climate action and societal innovation. In doing so, UTM will not only strengthen its capacity to contribute meaningfully to the SDGs but also set a precedent for other SADC institutions grappling with similar barriers to transformative, community-driven environmental stewardship.

[The description would be more convincing with concrete local context: recent data (referenced) on Mauritius's rising emissions and energy use, and evidence of extreme weather such as cyclones, floods, and coastal erosion. Linking these tangible changes to the national NDC target of emission reduction by 2030 (for example) would underline the urgency of raising awareness and promoting low-carbon practices at UTM.]

Project objectives

Overall objective

This pilot project contributes directly to the broader ENGAGE SDG goal of employing PAs (PAs) for knowledge co-production by fostering inclusive, locally grounded solutions to climate-related challenges in Mauritius. Situated within UTM's campus—a microcosm of the country's wider socio-environmental dynamics—the project creates a platform where students, staff, and researchers collaboratively engage in monitoring, reflection, and action. Through participatory carbon footprint assessments and climate awareness activities, the initiative enables the UTM community to co-generate actionable knowledge that addresses both institutional emissions and the wider need for climate-conscious behaviours in small island developing states (SIDS). It also supports the development of context-specific strategies that can be adapted to other local institutions and communities across the island. The Primary SDG Focus: **SDG 13 – Climate Action: "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts."**

Specific objectives

Smart objectives of the pilot project

- Baseline carbon audit. To conduct a participatory carbon footprint baseline assessment of UTM's main campus by the end of the first six months of the project.
- Awareness and capacity building. To train at least 50 students and staff in carbon literacy and sustainable practices through workshops and engagement activities within the first year.

- Behavioural change campaign. To design and implement a climate-conscious behaviour change campaign that reaches at least 70% of the campus community by month 12.
- Participatory monitoring system. To establish a student-staff participatory monitoring team and tools to track key indicators of carbon reduction progress by the second year.
- Model replication. To document and share a participatory campus sustainability model adaptable to other Mauritian institutions by the end of year two.

[The objectives seem well-defined and smart. One idea, as UB suggest, to strengthen the academic impact could be to explicitly link the project to modular activities that give entitlement to training credits; this would perhaps increase both motivation and long-term value.]

Intended outputs and outcomes

Short-Term Outputs (0–12 months)

- A detailed carbon footprint baseline report for UTM campus.
- Training materials and workshops on carbon literacy delivered.
- Creation of a Climate Action Student Ambassadors group.
- Awareness campaigns implemented across key departments and student bodies.
- Initial participatory data collection tools developed and tested.

Medium-Term Outcomes (12–24 months)

- Increased institutional and individual awareness of environmental impact.
- Observable reduction in specific emission-related behaviours (e.g., energy use, travel habits).
- Establishment of a functioning participatory monitoring system.
- Integration of sustainability-focused content in student-led research and coursework.
- A documented, contextually adapted PA model for replication.

Long-Term Outcomes (Beyond 24 months)

- Institutionalization of participatory climate action planning at UTM.
- Scalable model influencing national policy discussions on education and climate.
- Broader adoption of campus sustainability practices in other tertiary institutions in Mauritius.
- Empowered graduates who serve as change agents within society to support SDG 13 and other climate-related development goals.

PA Model and methods

The chosen approach is community-based participatory action learning and research.

Community-Based Participatory Action Learning and Research approach has been chosen for this project as it aims to co-produce knowledge and foster inclusive, locally grounded solutions to climate-related challenges in Mauritius, particularly within the University of Technology, Mauritius (UTM) campus. This methodology integrates community

engagement, participatory learning, and action-oriented research, aligning with the project's goal of involving students, staff, and researchers in a collaborative process to address institutional carbon footprints and climate awareness. Community-Based Participatory Action Learning and Research s emphasis on co-creation ensures that diverse perspectives,spanning academic expertise, local knowledge, and practical insights, harnessed to develop context-specific strategies, which is critical for Mauritius as a small island developing state (SIDS) facing unique climate vulnerabilities such as rising sea levels, intensified cyclones, and resource scarcity.

Specific methods of community based participatory action learning and research which will be used are as follows:

1. Participatory Workshops and Focus Groups:

Focus groups with 10- 15 members of the UTM community and regular workshops (e.g., monthly, 2-hour sessions) will be held to identify climate challenges (e.g., waste, energy use) and co-design solutions. Facilitators will lead conversations using instruments such as SWOT analysis to evaluate campus emissions' opportunities, threats, weaknesses, and strengths.

2. Action Learning Cycles:

Over the course of four months, iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting will be used. Small groups of five to ten people will test interventions (such as waste segregation trials) and get together every two weeks to discuss the results in group debriefs or reflective journals.

3. Participatory Carbon Footprint Assessments:

Community members will collaborate with researchers to conduct hands-on assessments using carbon calculator tools, collecting data on electricity, transportation, and water use across campus. Training sessions (4 hours) will equip participants with data collection skills.

4. Peer-to-Peer Learning and Awareness Campaigns:

Students and staff will lead climate awareness activities to share knowledge gained, using peer-led training (2-3 hours weekly) to cascade learning across UTM.

[The participatory approach is clear and well chosen, but it would benefit from a clearer explanation of how students and staff will be selected and organized.]

Partner community/stakeholders

Informing Institutional Strategy and SDG Engagement through PAs

This pilot project offers UTM a strategic opportunity to embed PAs (PAs) into its institutional response to sustainability challenges, beginning with the most immediate and accessible partners—**its student community**. By engaging students in co-producing knowledge on carbon footprints and climate-conscious behaviours, the project lays the groundwork for a culture of environmental responsibility and inclusive action on campus.

As the project evolves, its methods, tools, and lessons learned will inform a broader institutional strategy that promotes PAs as a core mechanism for teaching, research, and operational sustainability. The experience will help UTM:

- Pilot and refine a scalable PA model, starting with students and extending gradually to staff, alumni, local communities, and public or private sector partners;
- Strengthen its role as a living lab for sustainability, where participatory knowledge informs curriculum, institutional policies, and community outreach;
- Generate practical insights for implementing SDG 13 (Climate Action) at the institutional level while linking with other SDGs such as SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals);

Support future stakeholder mapping and engagement, enabling the university to identify and collaborate with additional actors—such as other local and international authorities, NGOs, and businesses—during an extended phase of the project.

In the long term, these experiences will not only enhance UTM's own sustainability practices but also position the university as a model for how higher education institutions in small island developing states (SIDS) can lead multi-stakeholder, participatory action for the SDGs.

Project activities and timeline

Implementation Timeline - the project activities are outlined in a phase manner as provided in the table below.

Phase	Timeframe	Key Activities	Milestones
Phase 0: Foundation & Contextual Preparation	Year 1, Q1	-Stakeholder mapping -Drafting participatory frameworks -Preliminary consultations and awareness sessions	100+ stakeholders engaged Draft framework ready
Phase 1: Participatory Carbon Footprint Baseline	Year 1, Q2	- Co-design carbon audit tools - Campus-wide data collection - Footprint analysis and reporting	Carbon baseline report completed
Phase 2: Capacity Building & Climate Literacy	Year 1, Q3	- 6–8 workshops for staff/students - Develop micro-learning tools - Peer-led outreach initiatives	50+ trained participants Climate literacy toolkit published
Phase 3: Behavioural Change Campaign	Year 1, Q1-Year 2, Q2	- Launch "Green Pulse" campaign - Events, competitions, visual branding - Campus-wide engagement survey	70% campus outreach achieved Campaign visibility established
Phase 4: Participatory Monitoring System	Year 1, Q3 - Year 2, Q3	-Form "Green Stewards" team - Develop dashboard and tools - Track indicators and publish progress	Monitoring system live First dashboard release

Phase 5: Model Documentation & Replication Strategy	Year 2, Q3	- Synthesize insights and learning - Develop toolkit and policy brief - Host dissemination event	Replication toolkit finalized Regional knowledge-sharing event held

Indicators for assessment

Objective	Quantitative Indicators	Qualitative Indicators
Baseline Carbon Audit	- % of campus facilities assessed for carbon footprint - Number of contributors (students/staff) to audit - Volume of data points collected	- Level of stakeholder understanding of carbon sources - Perceived usefulness of the audit process for decision-making
Awareness & Capacity Building	- Number of workshops conducted - Number of participants trained - % improvement in quiz/test scores post-training	- Change in perceptions of climate responsibility - Reflections on applicability of training to personal/professional contexts
Behavioural Change Campaign	- % of campus population engaged (via events, surveys) - Social media reach and engagement metrics - # of pledges or commitments made	- Campus community narratives of change - Testimonials reflecting shifts in daily behaviour and mindset
Participatory Monitoring System	- Number of indicators tracked - Frequency of data updates - # of student-staff stewards involved	- Transparency and trust in reporting process - Feedback on inclusivity and adaptability of monitoring tools
Model Replication	- # of institutions engaged in replication discussion - Downloads/accesses of toolkit materials - # of requests for technical support or training	- Institutional feedback on relevance of model - Reflections on challenges and enablers during adaptation process

[The indicators are appropriate, but more robust baselines and clearer measurement methods could be defined. For example, specify the baseline and target for emissions reduction, participation rates, and knowledge acquisition.]

Evaluation of learning

Evaluation objectives

1. Assess the extent to which participants acquire knowledge and skills in climate action and carbon management.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of participatory methods in fostering co-produced, actionable solutions.
3. Measure changes in climate-conscious behaviours and institutional practices at UTM.
4. Identify challenges and opportunities for scaling the approach to other Mauritian institutions.

Evaluation Framework

The evaluation will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to capture both measurable outcomes and nuanced learning experiences. It will follow a formative (ongoing) and summative (end-of-pilot) structure, aligned with project's iterative cycles of action, reflection, and learning.

Evaluation Methods and Plan

1. Pre- and Post-Project Surveys (Quantitative)
    - Method: Administer structured surveys to all 10-15 participants (students, staff, researchers) at the project's start and end . Questions will assess baseline and post-intervention knowledge (e.g., carbon footprint calculation), attitudes toward climate action, and self-reported behavioural changes (e.g., reduced plastic use).
    - Indicators: Percentage increase in correct responses (target: 30% improvement) and adoption of sustainable practices (target: 50% participation).
    - Analysis: Use statistical tools (e.g., paired t-tests) to measure significant changes.
2. Participatory Reflection Sessions (Qualitative)
    - Method: Conduct monthly reflection sessions with participant groups throughout the pilot. Facilitators will use guided questions to explore learning experiences, challenges (e.g., data collection barriers), and solution efficacy (e.g., waste segregation trials).
    - Indicators: Themes of empowerment, collaboration, and practical insights identified through thematic analysis of session transcripts.
    - Analysis: Employ NVivo software to code qualitative data.
3. Action Learning Logs (Mixed)
    - Method: Require participants to maintain individual or group logs (weekly, 200-300 words) documenting actions (e.g., carbon assessments), reflections, and outcomes (e.g., energy savings). Logs will be submitted digitally or physically.
    - Indicators: Frequency of action-reflection cycles (target: 80% participation) and evidence of co-produced strategies (e.g., recycling protocols).
    - Analysis: Quantify engagement rates and qualitatively assess learning depth via content analysis.
4. Carbon Footprint Outcome Assessment (Quantitative)
    - Method: Compare baseline carbon footprint data (collected in August 2025) with post-pilot data (January 2026) using the Carbon Calculator. Engage participants to monitor electricity, transportation, and waste metrics across UTM.
    - Indicators: Reduction in CO_2e emissions (target: 5-10% decrease) and accuracy of participant-collected data (target: 90% reliability).
    - Analysis: Use Excel for statistical analysis.

5. Stakeholder Feedback Interviews (Qualitative)
    - Method: Conduct semi-structured interviews (30 minutes each) with key stakeholders (e.g., UTM management) at the pilot's end to evaluate perceived learning impact and scalability potential.
    - Indicators: Themes of institutional support, community buy-in, and adaptation feasibility, assessed via interview transcripts.
    - Analysis: Apply grounded theory to identify emergent themes, ensuring alignment with SIDS needs.

Project team and resources

Category	Details (quantity /duration)	Cost (MUR)
IT equipment	Printer	150,000
	Laptop	75,000
Consumables for data collection	Stationery (paper, ink, pen drive etc)	80,000
Human resources	6 Academics	1,500,000
	Transport	75,000
Research materials / Publication fees	Journals, books (if required)	120,000
Dissemination		
Dissemination Activities	Workshops	500,000
Awareness	Micro-learning tools	100,000
	Information campaigns	200,000
Contingencies		70,000
Total		**2,870,000**

Challenges, risks and mitigation

Challenges and Risks with Mitigation Strategies are as follows:

Challenge/Risk	**Description**	**Mitigation Action / Proposed Solution**
Limited Institutional Resources	UTM, as a developing island university, may face constraints in funding, staffing, and infrastructure support.	Leverage in-kind contributions from departments; mobilize student volunteers; seek external funding and partnerships (e.g., SARUA, government, NGOs).
Low Engagement or Participation	Students and staff may show limited interest or time to engage in sustainability actions.	Embed activities into existing modules, student societies, and administrative routines; offer certificates or incentives for participation (e.g., Green Campus recognition).
Data Gaps or Inaccuracies	Difficulty in collecting consistent and reliable data on emissions due to fragmented systems.	Use simple, participatory data collection tools; involve students in supervised data audits; collaborate with technical partners for capacity building.
Resistance to Behaviour Change	Long-standing habits and lack of climate awareness may limit adoption of sustainable practices.	Conduct targeted sensitization and communication campaigns; share relatable success stories from peers; apply nudges and visible feedback mechanisms (e.g., energy dashboards).
Sustainability of the Initiative	Risk that the initiative may lose momentum after the initial project period.	Build internal ownership by establishing a sustainability committee; integrate climate goals into strategic institutional planning; create a long-term action roadmap.
External Disruptions (e.g., Cyclones, Health Pandemics)	Natural or public health disruptions may hinder implementation of activities.	Design flexible, hybrid participation models (in-person and digital); include contingency timelines in project planning.

Ethics and permissions

Anticipated ethical issues

- Informed consent. Participants (students and staff) may be involved in carbon audits, behaviour surveys and workshops. Ensuring voluntary participation and understanding of their role is key.
- Privacy and data protection. Collection of environmental footprint data may touch on personal habits or locations. Protection of identifiable data will be prioritized.
- Power dynamics and inclusion. There's a risk of unequal voice, certain groups may dominate decision-making or knowledge co-production. Safeguarding inclusivity across gender, age, academic rank, etc., is critical.
- Environmental messaging sensitivity. Behavioural change campaigns could unintentionally shame or pressure individuals. Tone and framing must foster empowerment rather than guilt.

Contribution to sustainability

The experience and findings from this pilot project will serve as a foundational step in embedding PAs (PAs) into UTM's institutional strategy for sustainability and SDG engagement. By actively involving students, staff, and stakeholders in carbon footprint assessment and behaviour change initiatives, the project will generate context-specific knowledge, tools, and practices that reflect the realities of a small island developing state (SIDS).

This hands-on experience will help UTM:

- Develop a structured model for the application of PAs in addressing environmental and sustainability challenges, which can be extended to other thematic areas such as waste management, water conservation, and sustainable mobility.
- Strengthen its institutional capacity to co-produce knowledge through interdisciplinary collaboration, experiential learning, and community engagement.
- Inform policy and planning, by providing evidence-based recommendations and success stories that can feed into UTM's green campus policy, curriculum development, and research priorities.
- Enhance alignment with the SDGs, particularly SDG 13 (Climate Action), while creating linkages with SDGs 4 (Quality Education), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Ultimately, the project will act as a catalyst to formalize UTM's commitment to participatory, inclusive, and locally relevant approaches for sustainable development, positioning the university as a leader in climate-conscious education and societal transformation in Mauritius and the wider region.

Support required

To be discussed collectively with designated or volunteering EU partner

Report from University of Technology, Mauritius

Updated on August 18, 2025

State of the Art: address the 2 points below

NOTE: if the pilot project proposed is a project that you have started outside the EngageSDG framework please specify which component you want to deepen or assess through the EngageSDG project and focus your activity report on that component only

1. *a description (also in the form of bullet points) of the actions already taken so far to implement the pilot project (activities already completed; if the project implementation did not start yet include the preparatory meetings done with the stakeholders)*

   This pilot project contributes directly to the broader ENGAGE SDG goal of employing PAs (PAs) for knowledge co-production by fostering inclusive, locally grounded solutions to climate-related challenges in Mauritius.
   Situated within UTM's campus—a microcosm of the country's wider socio-environmental dynamics—The project creates a platform where students, staff, and researchers collaboratively engage in monitoring, reflection, and action. Through participatory carbon footprint assessments and climate awareness activities, the initiative enables the UTM community to co-generate actionable knowledge that addresses both institutional emissions and the wider need for climate-conscious behaviours in small island developing states (SIDS). It also supports the development of context-specific strategies that can be adapted to other local institutions and communities across the island.
   This project is a new project being undertaken by the UTM. Currently project activities have already started since June 2025. Kindly refer to project document under section project activities and timeline.

   Accordingly, the full key activities have been undertaken:

Phase 0: Foundation & Contextual Preparation; Stakeholder mapping, Drafting participatory frameworks (completed)

Preliminary consultations and awareness sessions (partly completed)

Phase 1: Participatory Carbon Footprint Baseline: Co-design carbon audit tools (partially completed)

2. constraints or problems experienced so far in the implementation phase, if any:
   -UTM students are a key stakeholder of this project. A major constraint was that our students hectic calendar as the semester was ending beginning July 2025.
   - Foreseeing that the current funds allocated to the University under the Engage SDG project will not be sufficient in meeting all the activities under this pilot project.

Updated timeline: expected dates/months for completion of the pilot project implementation

- Pilot project running from [June 2025] until [June 2026]
- Assessment of project implementation expected to run from [Dec 2025] until [Feb 2026]
- Assessment results available expected by [May 2026] Assessment methodology adopted: The evaluation will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data to capture both measurable outcomes and nuanced learning experiences. It will follow a formative (ongoing) and summative (end-of-pilot) structure, aligned with project's iterative cycles of action, reflection, and learning.

EngageSDG

Co-funded by the European Union

Annexure 5. University of Zambia (UNZA)

Safe Urban Schools through Community Led Greening

Reviewer structure

- List of Reviewer/s
- Review activities' history
- Review Summary including recommendations
- Pilot project draft integrated with specific comments/inputs under each section, when applicable
- Report from University of Lusaka about activities already implemented and pilot project advancement

Reviewer/s

- University of Bologna [red ink]

Review activities' history

- Desk analysis of pilot project and documentation submitted by the partner
- 1:1 interview to assess pilot project advancement, held on 08/08/2025 (15:00 CEST time; online), people attending: Martina Santucci (Unibo), Livia Mercatelli (Unibo), Wilma S. Nchito (UNZA)

Review Summary

The project is valuable because of the very concrete and specific problem it addresses: the safety of schoolchildren/students in flood-prone areas of Lusaka. The focus on nature-based solutions is interesting and promising and directly linked to SDGs 6, 11 and 13. By choosing schools as its central entry point, the project highlights a critical gap in existing guidelines and practices.

However, the methodological description, particularly with regard to PAs, could be further developed to give more substance to the project idea. The project refers to living lab, but it is unclear how these will be created or how they will function, or whether they are the most appropriate tool for engaging the defined target groups. Without clearer design, there is a risk that participation will remain at the level of consultation or data collection, rather than true co-production.

As a possible enhancement, while the project refers to CBPAR (appointed as CBPR within the IPF) and Living Labs, it could also integrate Participatory Mapping, which the IPF highlights as particularly effective in visualising risks and engaging diverse stakeholders. Given the central role of children and schools, mapping exercises adapted to learners' capacities, starting from the mentioned reverse periscope technique, the idea could be further developed and presented as a concrete methodological element in the PA model and methods section. This would reinforce ownership, provide actionable evidence for local authorities, and help visualise risks in a child-friendly manner. Furthermore, the proposal would benefit from references to support the analysis of the problem presented in order to understand its extent, and from more concrete indicators to measure results. These improvements would increase the methodological soundness and make the project more persuasive for both local stakeholders and the EngageSDG framework.

Pilot project draft

Project identification

- Project Title: Safe Urban Schools through Community Led Greening

- Applicant SADC Partner University:
  Lead staff member: Prof. Ackim Zulu
  Lead staff member: Prof. Wilma S. Nchito

Introduction and context

Background

The project seeks to increase the community engagement skills of students from University of Zambia. It will also increase the interactions between the schools and the surrounding communities. Flooding is a recurrent problem in the two areas and this presents a risk to the children that have to commute to school. Raising awareness of flood risks is important for learners as they will apply what they have learnt to their families hence increasing the impact of the project. The aim is to build resilience of communities to face climate shocks and in the process not leaving children behind.

The project through engagement with school authorities and parents will translate proposed interventions into redesigned spaces. This will involve co-production of the designs. The students from Engineering, Geography and Computer Sciences will design solutions for the interventions. The designs will be vetted by the school authorities and parents and the most suitable solutions will be selected. This approach will enhance the students abilities of community engagement and interaction. It will also increase their skills of knowledge co-production.

Institutional context

The University of Zambia The pilot project draws from the experience of the Department of Geographical Sciences, Environment and Planning which has used PAs for local engagement. The university's stated mission is to '*provide quality and relevant higher education, research and innovation that shape the future of society'*. This mission indicates that the university desires to impact society and one way of doing this is to provide curriculum that produces skills that are relevant for society.

Some of the university faculties have been more proactive in engaging with the community and they have utilised PAs in funded projects. One such faculty is the Department of Geographical Sciences, Environment and Planning which has used PA methods like Learning Labs, knowledge co-production especially around the impacts of climate change in cities. The department had worked with departments such as Engineering, Education, Public health in creating interdisplinary research practices. This pilot project will therefore be led by the Department of Geographical Science

- *(Describe how the proposed pilot project draws on the university's existing experience or interest in using PAs for local engagement. Here you may reference the university's input report from Work Package 2 (T2.4)).*

Problem/challenge description

Flooding is a risk faced by residents of some unplanned settlements in Lusaka. Whilst flooding happens frequently, there have not been adequate efforts to utilize nature-based solutions to solve the problem. Flooding impacts children as they walk to and from their respective schools but flood response has not focused on equipping school children with the required skills. By engaging school authorities, school children and households, the project will seek to map the areas within communities considered as presenting the highest risk to school children during flooding

incidents. The living lab method will be utilised to develop a risk map and also propose solutions. One of the proposed solutions will be to devise a nature-based solution to these risks.

Flood impacts on schools and learner fall into several categories:

- Threats to the health of students, teachers, and staff during flooding and after the flood is gone (e.g. contaminated water, drowning, water borne diseases, and dislodged or spilled legacy toxins); and
- Reduced access to schools after a flood and the disruption to community services that can cause absences by both teachers and learners.
- Damage to buildings and facilities, including roads, sports fields, and access paths.

[The problem would benefit from empirical data and citations (frequency and intensity of floods, number of schools/children affected, health consequences). This would strengthen the case for urgency and ground the analysis in evidence. The the link between flooding risks and the absence of mandatory school safety guidelines should help situate the project in the national context.]

Project objectives

Overall objective

- The use of PAs in the upgrading process in unplanned settlements has been an ongoing process. The local authority is currently using community-based slum upgrading supported by UN-Habitat. This project will fall within the existing practice of involving the community in the co-creation processes. The project will continue the practice of stakeholder involvement as it includes the local authority and the ministry of Education and several other stakeholders from government and private sector.
- Teachers will be expected to increase interaction with their learners around flood risk actions and gather information on how learners behave during flooding.
- This knowledge gathered from learners will be used to create a response that can be used by schools to make learners aware and prepared during flooding to reduce risks.
- Knowledge produced locally will be disseminated by teachers and the community members to learners.
- This knowledge will also be useful beyond the schools and will be relevant to the larger communities.

Specific objectives

- The specific objectives are to;
    1. Identify the risks flooding causes to learners
    2. Develop draft guidelines for emergency preparedness for schools during flooding incidents
    3. Create a risk map around selected schools
    4. Propose nature-based solutions that can be used to mitigate flood risks around the affected schools

These objectives are directly linked to SDG 11 Creating Safe Cities. They are also linked to SDG 6 Ensure access to water and sanitation for all and SDG 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

[The objectives are relevant but could be written in smart format (achievable, relevant, time-bound). For example: To co-design least two nature-based pilot interventions in school communities within 4 months (can be?)]

Intended outputs and outcomes

Short term

The short-term goal is to identify risks presented by floods in collaboration with teachers and the community.

Medium term

Create a knowledge base of the risks and mitigation measures schools, learners and communities can take to reduce the flood risks.

Long term

The long-term goal is to develop "School flood response guidelines" with the DMMU and the Ministry of Education.

PA Model and methods

- Community-based participatory Action research
- Living Lab
- *(Identify the chosen model of participatory knowledge production for the intervention (e.g., Living Labs, science shops, community-based participatory action learning and research).*
- The community-based participatory action learning is the best method to get the stakeholders involved and in a space where knowledge can be produced. This will promote inclusivity and empowerment of the community around the schools. It is also expected to heighten commitment and ownership of the project and encourage them to pursue other projects within their communities.
- Living Labs will be used to create a space for collaborative problem solving and will present an opportunity for the university staff to train their students in PA and to learn from local knowledge and expertise.
- Communities have dealt with floods and found solutions for years and there is a lot to be learnt from them.

[The reference to Living Labs is not sufficiently detailed: Are they pre-existing or will they be created ad hoc? What concrete activities will they entail? (e.g., co-design workshops, participatory mapping, pilot interventions). How will children's participation be adapted to their age and capacities? (child-friendly mapping, storytelling, drawing).]

Partner community/stakeholders

- The project will be based in Kanyama (Ward 10) and Kalingalinga, which are two unplanned settlements that experience frequent flooding. Kanyama (Ward 10) and Kalingalinga, both experience frequent flooding. The local authority and the CLARE-MECHANICS project will help identify a school from each settlement. The two selected schools will be those affected by floods and they will be purposively selected.
- The community will consist of the teachers in the schools and the parents of the learners who are residents in the two settlements.
  The community will be involved in identifying the risks faced by children during incidents of flooding. This will be done during Living lab Sessions and FDGs. Participants will use a Reverse Periscope that will make them see the landscape at the level of a child (GDCI Guide).
- The community will also be involved in envisioning and planning a nature-based solutions to mitigate flood risk.
- The University of Zambia Students from School of Engineering, Education and Natural Sciences will work closely with the Lusaka City Council, Lusaka Water Security Initiative (LuWSI) Partners, Ministry of Education, DMMU.
- The students will be involved in constructing 4 Reverse Periscopes which will be used during community engagements.

[The involvement of schools, children and families is clear and essential, but the role of local authorities (Lusaka City Council, Lusaka Water Security, Ministry of Education) should be clarified. Involvement from the early stages, given that the output is expected to be guidelines, would increase relevance and be very useful in ensuring policy sustainability.]

Project activities and timeline

- Initial meeting with CLARE-MECHANICS Team

No.	Project Activities	Month					
		Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan
1	Engagement of research partners to agree on study sites						
2	Community engagement to secure commitment from schools and community						
3	Data collection through PAs Community mapping of flooding risks						
4	Living Labs to co-produce solutions						
5	Development of School flood response guidelines Training of teachers and community						
6	Trials of flood risk protocols by learners Distribution survey to learners and parents to assess raised awareness						
7	Analysis and interpretation of survey data						
8	Reporting and dissemination, publications						

Milestones

Milestone	Duration (months)	Activities	Progress report due date[1] (dd/mm/yy)	Description of deliverable
1	3	1,2,3,4	30/09/2025	Data on community feedback and details of the pilot tests.
2	3	5,6,7,8	31/12/2025	Quantitative measurements and feedback from pilot tests. Final report on pilot testing

Indicators for assessment

(Define appropriate indicators for measuring the achievement of the pilot project's specific objectives, outputs, and outcomes. These should be quantitative and qualitative.

- Understand perceptions of learners, teachers and the community on the risks posed by flooding.
- Co-create local area maps of the flood risk in the vicinity of schools.

- Hold a living lab with the community located around the selected schools in the two communities.
- Develop School flood response guidelines with the various stakeholders.
- Train teachers using the guidelines.
- Teachers train selected classes on the flood response guidelines.
- Revisit perceptions of flood risk to schools and learners after the training has taken place.
- Create a platform for stakeholders to discuss risks to learners in the two communities.
- *(Indicators could measure things like the extent of community involvement, changes in understanding or capacity, or tangible project results related to the chosen SDG.)*
- Changes in perception of risk will be a major indicator.
- Level of community interest and involvement will be an indicator.

[Current indicators are output-focused (risk maps). To capture real change, add indicators such as: number of schools implementing co-designed safety measures, or % of children reporting increased preparedness, or new school safety guidelines drafted. Qualitative indicators such as children's perceptions would also add value.]

Evaluation of learning

The projects effectiveness will be measured by the changes in perceptions and attitude towards floods by both learners and teachers. The level of understanding of the content of the School Flood Response Guidelines and willingness to implement the guidelines.

Project team and resources

In the project proposal, it is estimated that 8 staff members and 20 students per project could be directly involved. The team will consist of the 4 original team members and an additional 2 members of staff as will be required and 2 members of the MECHANICS project.

Expertise the team brings to the project: Engineering, computer modelling, Education Research, Climate Adaptation, Mapping, Data Collection and Analysis

Challenges, risks and mitigation

- Challenges may be the willingness of teachers at selected schools to participate without incentivizing them. The project will have to find a way of incentivizing them in order to keep them interested in participating in the pilot project.
- The project will have an alternate school on standby in each area in case the selected schools will prove to be difficult to engage in, however since engagement will be sanctioned by the District Education Office and engagement will come in form of a directive to the schools.

Ethics and permissions

- The pilot will ride on the CLARE-MECHANICS project under the centre for urban Research and Planning (CURP) in the Department of Geographical and Environment and Planning Department in the School of Natural and Applied Sciences.
  The pilot will not involve interactions with learners and thus will not need additional ethical clearance. It is envisioned that if the project is upscaled then there would be a need to engage learners and therefore seek clearance from the Ministry of Education. By avoiding direct interaction with learners the project will remain with the ethical considerations that cover the CLARE-MECHANICS project.

- The Principal Investigator commits to adhering to ethical principles required. Permission will be sought from the District Education Office for permission to engage with the Administration and teachers at the two selected schools.
- The CLARE-MECHANICS project to which this pilot will be attached has addressed the institutional requirements and procedures for ethical clearance.

Contribution to sustainability

- The experience and findings of this pilot project will inform the institutional strategy on working as interdisciplinary research team as it will involve team members and students form 3 different faculties (Education, Engineering and Natural and Applied Sciences). This will enhance the use of PAs and introduce them to faculties that do not normally use this methodology. The pilot will contribute to the universities continued engagement within communities in the city as it works towards SDG 11, 6 and 13.

Support required

Report from University of Zambia

Updated on August 29, 2025

State of the Art: address the 2 points below

NOTE: if the pilot project proposed is a project that you have started outside the EngageSDG framework please specify which component you want to deepen or assess through the EngageSDG project and focus your activity report on that component only

3. A description (also in the form of bullet points) of the actions already taken so far to implement the pilot project (activities already completed; if the project implementation did not start yet including the preparatory meetings done with the stakeholders)

   Project in brief:

   - The project addresses the problem of frequent flooding in Lusaka's unplanned settlements, which endangers school children's health, safety, and access to education, as current flood response efforts do not utilize nature-based solutions or focus on equipping students with the necessary skills to mitigate risks.
   - The goal of the project is to co-create and disseminate locally-produced knowledge on flood risk mitigation by engaging school children, teachers, and other stakeholders, thereby equipping schools and the wider community with the necessary tools to enhance preparedness and reduce risks.
   - The methodology followed hinges on community-based participatory action and the living lab models.
   - The expected outputs will culminate into school flood response guidelines.
   - The project addresses SDGs 6,11,13.
   - The project is anchored in the wider project called Climate Adaptation Response Methods to Enhance capability in High-resolution information for Adaptation: Initial Case Studies (CLARE-MECHANICS).

   Activities completed

   - The project team has met the Mechanics team to discuss the Pilot project.

- The project team has met with Ward Counsellors in the two study sites (Kanyama and Kalingalinga townships in Lusaka) and selected two schools for the Pilot.
- The team has identified the partners and stakeholders.

4. Constraints or problems experienced so far in the implementation phase, if any:
    - The work plan needs to be streamlined.
    - The budget needs to completed.

Updated timeline: expected dates/months for completion of the pilot project implementation

- Pilot project is expected to run from September 2025 to January 2026.
- Assessment of project implementation is expected to run from November to December 2025.
- Assessment results will be available by end of January 2026
- Assessment methodology adopted:
- The assessment methodology will be **participatory evaluation** that will involve stakeholders in the assessment. This will give a better understanding of the data and improved engagement with the findings.
- The draft guidelines developed will also be assessed by relevant practitioners (e.g Disaster Management Unit, teachers).
- Assessment of green solutions will be done by the stakeholders. How many trees, shrubs will be planted?

EngageSDG

Co-funded by the European Union

Annexure 6. University of Lusaka (UNILUS)

Climate-Resilient Agricultural Practices through Participatory Knowledge Exchange in Zambia's Agro-Ecological Regions I and II (Focusing on SDG13, SDG 2 and SDG12)

Reviewer structure

- List of Reviewer/s
- Review activities' history
- Review Summary including recommendations
- Pilot project draft integratet with specific comments/inputs under each section, when applicable
- Report from University of Lusaka about activities already implemented and pilot project advancement.

Reviewer/s

- University of Bologna [red ink]
- University of Barcelona [green ink]

Review activities' history

- Desk analysis of pilot project and documentation submitted by the partner.
- 1:1 interview to assess pilot project advancement, held on 06/08/2025 (14:00 CEST time; online), people attending: Martina Santucci (Unibo), Livia Mercatelli (Unibo), Saviour Chibeti (Unilus)

Review Summary

The project is clearly aligned with the EngageSDG framework and relevant for local challenges. One of its main strengths lies in the stakeholder network that has been identified, which enables both the integration of contextual policy knowledge and a direct connection with the communities involved.

The project's objectives are clearly stated, and it is appreciable that target groups have been quantified.

However, as detailed in the section specific comments in red throughout the document, there are areas where the proposal should be strengthened. The proposal would benefit from greater operational clarity to ensure its credibility and feasibility of implementation.

In particular, the contextual information needs to be consistently supported by data and clearly cited sources to ensure the consistency of the situational analysis.

The core sections of the project such as PA model and methods, indicators, timeline require to be more fully developed. It should be clear not only what the project aims to do, but how, and through which methodology these goals will be achieved.

While the project as participatory models already combines CBPAR (appointed CBPR within the IPF) and Living Labs and co-creation initiatives, an additional option, could be to explore Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methods to enhance inclusivity and reinforce farmer ownership of experimentation. The IPF identifies PRA as highly appropriate for farmer-led experimentation, and techniques such as seasonal calendars or participatory scoring would enhance inclusivity and contextual relevance of the knowledge generated.

The initiative stands out for its participatory and context-sensitive approach, engaging smallholder farmers through co-creation and field experimentation. However, the educational component—particularly its impact on university students—could be further developed.

Currently, student involvement is operational but not formally integrated into the academic curriculum. We recommend designing a structured academic module on participatory climate adaptation in agriculture, based on the project's outcomes and methodologies. This would allow students to gain academic credit and interdisciplinary competencies aligned with Education for Sustainable Development principles.

Additionally, the project would benefit from implementing more robust learning assessment tools (beyond reflective journals and surveys), as well as integrating digital platforms to disseminate knowledge and support regional replication.

Overall, the project shows strong practical value, and with enhanced academic integration, it could serve as a model for climate-conscious education in Africa and beyond.

Pilot project draft

Project identification

Project Title: Climate-Resilient Agricultural Practices through Participatory Knowledge Exchange in Zambia's Agro-Ecological Regions I and II (Focusing on SDG13 - Climate Action, SDG 2 - Zero Hunger and SDG12 - Responsible Consumption and Production)

Applicant SADC Partner University: University of Lusaka

Lead staff member(s):
Project Manager - Mr. Saviour Chibeti
Project Member - Dr. Chipampe Lombe
Deputy Vice Chancellor-Research - Prof. Kasonde Bowa;

Introduction and context

Background

Zambia's agricultural sector is one of the main cornerstones of its economy outside of the mining sector, contributing approximately 7% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This pilot project seeks to enhance the resilience of smallholder farmers in Zambia's Agro-Ecological Regions I and II by promoting climate-resilient agricultural practices in response to the increasing vulnerability of the agricultural sector to climate change through workshops to community members in Kasisi, Chongwe district. With agriculture contributing approximately 7% to Zambia's GDP and 80% of the domestic food supply produced by smallholder farmers, the sector plays a critical role in national food security and livelihoods. However, climate-related challenges such as erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and occasional floods have significantly threatened farmers' incomes and food production, as evidenced by the 2015–2016 El Niño-induced maize production drop of 20% and a 37% decline in household income. This project also aligns with the EngageSDG initiative to build capacity in SADC universities to apply PAs (PAs) toward achieving SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). By fostering collaboration between higher education institutions and farming communities, the project aims to co-develop sustainable, climate-resilient solutions that improve food security, boost income levels, and strengthen rural livelihoods.

[Indicate the source and year for each data presented. This provides a clear empirical basis upon which the intervention can be justified. In addition, it would be useful to articulate more clearly the connection between the national and regional levels.]

Institutional context

With a strong track record in community-based participatory research across agriculture and public health. The University of Lusaka, through its ongoing engagement in the EngageSDG project and the three other EU projects that the institution is currently undertaking, the university has demonstrated its ability to integrate PAs into teaching and

applied research. The pilot will build upon data collected from Work Package 2 of the EngageSDG project and institutional capacity in project monitoring, climate science, agricultural economics, and community extension.

The Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre, situated within the project area, will play a vital role in:

- Mobilizing farmers using existing community networks.
- Hosting demonstration plots and training sessions.
- Facilitating farmer-led experimentation and knowledge exchange.

With technical inputs from the Zambia Meteorological Department and Ministry of Agriculture, the project will ensure that interventions are not only locally relevant but also institutionally supported for policy scaling.

[The section remains too general to demonstrate the actual operational capacity. Is just mentioned the UNILUS's experience in participatory research and involvement in other European projects is mentioned but it would be important to specify which projects are currently ongoing or have been recently completed particularly those that are thematically or methodologically related to the proposed initiative. Moreover, it would be useful to present the operational teams members and highlight the most relevant and significant expertise.]

Problem/challenge description

Smallholder farmers in Zambia's Agro-Ecological Regions I and II are increasingly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change, smallholder farmers in Kasisi, Chongwe District, situated within Zambia's Agro-Ecological Region II, are increasingly vulnerable to the compounding effects of climate change—manifested in erratic rainfall patterns, prolonged dry periods, rising temperatures, and declining soil productivity. In the broader regional context, Southern Province has endured multiple consecutive years of drought, threatening staple crops like maize; Muchinga Province is experiencing late-onset rains followed by early cessation, disrupting the entire farming calendar; and Northern Province is facing increased rainfall variability despite its historically wet climate, making crop planning increasingly difficult.

In Kasisi like other parts of the country, this unpredictability has resulted in substantial crop failure, food shortages, and loss of income for households dependent on agriculture. With over 80% of Zambia's food supply produced by smallholder farmers, this trend presents a significant threat to national food security. Current support mechanisms remain insufficient, with many initiatives being donor-led and poorly aligned with the practical knowledge, experience, and resource levels of the affected communities.

While government and NGO interventions exist, they are often top-down and poorly aligned with local realities. There is a critical need for participatory, community-based approaches that equip local farmers with the knowledge and tools to implement climate-resilient agricultural practices**.** This pilot project seeks to bridge that gap by engaging community members in co-creation workshops and real-world labs that not only raise awareness of climate change but also promote context-specific options where farmers are trained to apply low-cost, locally adapted techniques such as water harvesting, crop diversification, mulching, and improved planting methods. By embedding scientific learning within community engagement, the project will build local capacity and promote grassroots-led action to enhance resilience in the face of a changing climate.

[Where available, local or regional-level data should be included on crop yields, smallholder farmers income, water availability, and the presence of farmer cooperatives, also in order to highlight any differences or similarities between the two regions covered by the project. As in the section on context, all statements should be supported by concrete data to ensure the soundness of the analysis. These data must be cited, with a clear indication of the source and year.]

Project objectives

Overall objective

To promote participatory knowledge production and community empowerment aimed at enhancing the climate resilience of smallholder farmers in Kasisi, Chongwe District, thereby contributing to climate action and sustainable development in Zambia.

Specific objectives

- To train at least 100 smallholder farmers in Kasisi and surrounding areas on context-specific, climate-resilient agricultural practices, including drought-resistant crops, water harvesting, and sustainable soil management.
- To co-establish and support a "Living Lab" in Kasisi in collaboration with the Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre to serve as a real-world platform for testing and adapting participatory farming innovations.
- To empower local communities through the formation and operationalization of at least 10 farmer-led cooperatives that encourage peer learning, joint planning, and grassroots adaptation strategies.
- To monitor and evaluate changes in household resilience, crop yields, and income levels resulting from the adoption of new practices over the 12-month pilot.
- To build strategic partnerships with the Zambia Meteorological Department, Ministry of Agriculture, and academic institutions for enhanced knowledge flow, policy alignment, and long-term institutionalization of participatory climate adaptation practices.

Intended outputs and outcomes

Short-term outputs

i. Needs assessment and stakeholder analysis completed.
ii. Training workshops held for smallholder farmers - Participatory tools and curriculum developed.
iii. Training materials and sessions conducted for targeted farmers.
iv. Formation of functional farmer cooperatives.

Medium-term outcomes

i. Increased knowledge and adoption of resilient practices among smallholder farmers.
ii. Strengthened institutional collaboration and policy support.

Long-term outcomes

i. Improved resilience of smallholder farming systems.
ii. Improved household food security and income levels.

iii. Strengthened community-university partnerships - Contributions to national and regional climate adaptation strategies (Tufa et al., 2023).

iv. A model for participatory agricultural adaptation replicable in other regions.

PA Model and methods

Selected PA models:

1. Co-creation workshops

2. Community-based participatory research (CBPAR)

3. Living Labs

[The methodology requires more depth, both in its justification and in the description of how it will be applied in practice.
The choice of co-creation workshops, CBPAR and Living Labs is appropriate, but the methodological choices should be better justified by explaining why they were chosen in light of the IPF and how they complement each other and can work in synergy.
The operational details also require further clarification. Clarify por example how farmers and cooperatives will be selected: what criteria will be used (e.g. gender, vulnerability, location) and whether the 10 cooperatives already exist or will be selected from a larger pool.
It should also be explained how farmers will be involved in practice: will they be organised into subgroups? Will a train-the-trainers approach be used to improve local ownership and sustainability?
Consider using GIS tools to map the spatial distribution of farmers and cooperatives. This could support community engagement, planning and monitoring.
A schematic representation of the participatory process would help to make the idea more operational. If participation is to be used as an indicator, explain how it will be measured.]

Partner community/stakeholders

The target communities are the Smallholder farmers in Chongwe district, Zambia.

Nature of Involvement**:** Communities will co-design interventions, participate in training, share traditional knowledge, and contribute to local adaptation strategies. Farmers will serve as co-researchers throughout the project lifecycle, including problem identification, data collection, experimentation, and evaluation. The methods to be used are Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) - Farmer Field Schools (FFS) - Focus group discussions - Participatory mapping and seasonal calendars - Collaborative experimentation and field trials. Farmer-led and community-based PAs are best suited for this project because they emphasize inclusivity, empower local actors, and ensure the relevance and sustainability of interventions. These approaches draw on local knowledge, foster co-learning, and build trust among stakeholders (Chambers, 1994; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Mwangi, 2024).

Other stakeholders

i. Kasisi Agricultural Training Center
ii. Zambia Meteorological Department

iii. Ministry of Agriculture

[It would be useful to clarify how the workshops findings are expected to feed into future training programmes, policy dialogue, or institutional practice. Consider whether partnerships with the Ministry of Agriculture or the Zambia Meteorological Department are envisioned to extend beyond the pilot phase. Since the Ministry of Agriculture is a broad entity, specify whether a particular department, unit, or interface has already been identified for collaboration. This would strengthen the proposal's institutional anchoring and long-term relevance.]

Project activities and timeline

Key activities

i. Stakeholder consultation and co-design (4 months)
ii. Training and capacity-building workshops (4 months)
iii. Establishing cooperatives and farmer networks (4 months)
iv. Monitoring and evaluation (ongoing through 12 months)

Milestones

i. Community consultation reports
ii. Training completion certificates
iii. Mid-term review report
iv. Final evaluation report

[A more structured visual representation (Simplyfy Gantt or mileston chart) of the project timeline is needed, it would help communicate sequencing, dependencies, and overlap of activities across the 12 months.]

Indicators for assessment

i. Number of farmers trained (quantitative)
ii. Number of cooperatives formed.
iii. Reported changes in farming practices (qualitative)
iv. Changes in crop yields and income levels (quantitative)
v. Level of stakeholder participation and satisfaction

[The indicators listed are appropriate but too generic. Each indicator should include: a defined baseline, a clear target, and a measurement method.
For example:

- Number of farmers trained: Baseline: 5; Target: 100; Verified through attendance and pre/post-training surveys.
- Change in crop yields → Baseline yield level in the target area; Target increase (+5%); Measured through farmers' records and field observation.

For qualitative indicators as the change in farming practices it should also be specify how they will be measured: through interviews, focus groups, or participatory scoring.]

Evaluation of learning

The project will use reflective journals, surveys, and group discussions to evaluate learning outcomes. Lessons learned will be documented and used to inform revisions of the Institutional Pilot Framework (IPF).

Project team and resources

Team:

Mr. Saviour Chibeti, Mathematician (Monitoring & Evaluation, and spearheading overall project)
Mr. Isaac Bwacha, Agricultural Economics (Agricultural extension and stakeholder engagement)
Dr. Chipampe Lombe (Project evaluation)
Mr. Henry Phiri, Data Analytics (Climate Science)
Mr. Kelvin Chungu, PhD Student (Climate Science)
Prof. Kasonde Bowa (Project evaluation)
20 students for fieldwork and community liaison roles from Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre

Expertise:

Climate science, participatory learning, agricultural extension, project evaluation, and statistical analysis.

Challenges, risks and Mitigation

Risks

i. Weather-related disruptions
ii. Low community participation
iii. Delays in institutional approvals

[It is essential to expand this section and provide a more in-depth analysis of the potential risks and their implications. Considering that for example, if the project fails to involve the 100 smallholder farmers envisaged, this would probably be perceived as a failure.]

Mitigation

Flexible planning, continuous engagement, early ethics submissions.

Ethics and permissions

i. Ethics clearance will be sought from the University Research Ethics Committee.
ii. Participants will give informed consent.
iii. The project will adhere to principles of respect, fairness, and community benefit.

Contribution to sustainability

The pilot will feed directly into the university's community engagement strategy and inform ongoing curriculum redesign for sustainability-oriented education. Findings will contribute to long-term SDG-aligned institutional practices.

[The absence of a budget is a significant limitation. Even a preliminary or ideal budget estimate would strengthen the proposal by indicating its feasibility and making it clear whether the planned activities are realistically achievable or whether the ambition needs to be revised based on likely resource constraints. This version can be indicative and subsequently revised, but it should reflect the actual needs to carry out the activities described.

The main budget categories should be specified. A brief description may also be included to justify each expenditure item and its proportional relevance. This will help reviewers assess cost-effectiveness and ensure alignment between resources and results.]

Support required

The project team would welcome support from EU partner universities in:

i. Reviewing training modules
ii. Sharing best practices in participatory climate resilience
iii. Joint publications and dissemination activities

Ethics and permissions

Ethical clearance will be sought from the University of Lusaka Research Ethics Committee. The project will adhere to ethical principles including informed consent, transparency, and protection of participant data.

References

1. Chambers, R. (1994). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Analysis of Experience. World Development, 22(9), 1253-1268.
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Report from University of Lusaka

Updated on August 20, 2025

This report provides a summary of stakeholder engagement meetings conducted in July and August 2025 for the project *Climate-Resilient Agricultural Practices through Participatory Knowledge Exchange in Zambia's Agro-Ecological Regions I and II*. The project contributes directly to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13 on Climate Action, SDG 2 on Zero Hunger, and SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production.

The first meeting was held on 29 July 2025 at the Kasisi Training Centre with the institution's director and project team. During this meeting, the project objectives and planned activities were presented. The Kasisi team emphasized the importance of farmer participation and suggested incorporating on-farm trials to ensure that the recommended agricultural practices are validated under local conditions. Given the limited 12-month timeframe, they further advised that the Living Labs component be omitted as a standalone activity. Instead, they recommended focusing on workshops and on-farm trials, which would sufficiently allow for participatory knowledge exchange within the available project duration.

A follow-up meeting was held at Kasisi Training Centre on 5 August 2025, where discussions were centered on the project budget. Kasisi expressed concern that the draft proposal lacked a clear allocation of costs per activity, which could potentially affect implementation and accountability. It was therefore agreed that the project team would prepare a detailed activity-based budget, integrating feedback from EU partners and the consortium. This revised budget is scheduled to be submitted to Kasisi by 22 August 2025.

In addition to budgetary matters, Kasisi also tasked the project team with developing a comprehensive training module and associated materials that will be used during the farmer training workshops. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying key training topics that respond to the needs of smallholder farmers in Agro-Ecological Regions I and II. The team has already begun working on this task and will soon share a draft list of proposed training topics with EU partners for their review and feedback, while the development of the full training module is underway.

Further consultations were also held on the 4th of August with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Zambia Meteorological Department. Both institutions welcomed the project and pledged their full support, particularly in providing climate change data and technical expertise. They also encouraged the project team to engage the Ministry of Green Economy and Environment as well as the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSME). Their inclusion was deemed important for strengthening the project's policy impact and ensuring that its benefits extend to a wider segment of farmers and entrepreneurs.

Overall, the meetings yielded several key outcomes. There was consensus on prioritizing on-farm trials and workshops while dropping Living Labs to align with the project's timeframe. The need for a revised and detailed budget was acknowledged, with a deadline set for 22 August 2025. Kasisi's request for the development of a training module and materials was taken on board, and the process of identifying and drafting training topics has already commenced. Support from government institutions was reaffirmed, particularly in data provision and technical guidance, and the expansion of stakeholder engagement to additional ministries was recommended.

The next steps involve submitting the revised budget to Kasisi by the agreed deadline and scheduling another meeting in early September 2025 to coincide with community mobilization activities to be started on 9th of September. At the same time, the project team will initiate engagement with the Ministry of Green Economy and the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises Development to ensure that policy alignment and broader farmer support are achieved. In parallel, the draft list of training topics will be shared with EU partners for their input, after which the project team will continue developing the complete training module and supporting materials for use during the workshops.

In conclusion, the stakeholder engagements have been highly productive and confirm a strong commitment from both Kasisi and government partners. The feedback received has allowed the project team to refine activities, budget structures, and training content to ensure feasibility within the 12-month implementation period. Continued collaboration among all partners will be crucial in achieving the project's objectives and contributing meaningfully to climate-resilient agriculture in Zambia's agro-ecological regions.