



EngageSDGs

Final capacity development programme on the use of PAs



Developing the capacity of SADC higher education institutions to use participatory approaches for community-based engagement with selected SDGs.

Project number:	101129394
Date of entry into force:	1 December 2023
End of the eligibility period:	30 November 2026
Duration:	36 months
Website:	https://engagesdg.sarua.africa/



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Introduction

EngageSDG is an Erasmus+ Capacity Building in the field of higher Education project. Capacity-building Projects are transnational cooperation projects based on multilateral partnerships, primarily between higher education institutions (HEIs) from Programme and eligible Partner Countries. They can also involve non-academic partners to strengthen the links with society and business and to reinforce the systemic impact of the projects.

The project is aligned to the concept of the engaged university, i.e. a university as a proactive institution that bridges academia with society, fostering mutual growth & innovation. Its role transcends traditional teaching and research, becoming a pivotal player in societal transformation. This project particularly aligns to two significant components: attaining the SDGs towards sustainability and, secondly, using participatory approaches to engaging with communities. The latter concept relies on research approaches that are inclusive and collaborative as used in teaching, research, and governance that engage diverse stakeholders in co-creating knowledge and solutions.



Development of the Capacity Development Programme

The development of the EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme was informed by the findings of the Work Package 2 State of Play analysis, which highlighted significant capacity development needs across Southern African higher education institutions regarding the understanding and practical application of Participatory Approaches (PAs). Although universities increasingly recognise community engagement as one of their core mandates, many institutions continue to rely on traditional outreach models rather than genuine collaborative approaches that position communities as equal partners in knowledge production. The needs analysis further revealed that academics, researchers and professional staff often lacked formal training in participatory methodologies, facilitation techniques and mechanisms for integrating participatory approaches into teaching, research, institutional planning and sustainable development initiatives.

The consortium therefore agreed that the capacity development programme should not simply provide theoretical knowledge about participatory approaches but enable participants to experience participation through the learning process itself. This pedagogical philosophy is consistent with the principles underpinning the EngageSDGs project, namely that sustainable development challenges require collaborative learning, distributed expertise and the co-production of knowledge between universities, communities, governments, industry and civil society.

To achieve this objective, the consortium adopted a blended capacity development model consisting of two complementary components. The first component comprised an intensive synchronous learning experience, allowing participants to interact directly with facilitators and peers through collaborative online workshops. The second component consisted of a comprehensive asynchronous programme designed to provide sustained learning opportunities beyond the project events and to ensure the long-term accessibility and sustainability of the programme.

This dual structure recognises that professional learning occurs over time and that participants require opportunities not only to acquire new knowledge but also to revisit concepts, reflect on practice, experiment within their own institutional contexts and progressively build competence. Together, these two components create an integrated learning pathway that supports both immediate professional development and continuous institutional learning.

The synchronous capacity development programme¹

The synchronous component represented the first stage of the capacity development programme and served as the principal collaborative learning event within Work Package 6. Delivered as an interactive online workshop, the programme brought together academics, university leaders, professional staff and community engagement practitioners from across the SADC region to explore the practical application of participatory approaches within higher education. The workshop was intentionally designed as an active learning environment rather than a traditional conference. Participants were encouraged to contribute their own institutional experiences, engage in dialogue with colleagues from different countries, and critically reflect on existing approaches to community engagement and sustainable development.

The structure of the programme reflected the progressive development of participant understanding. Initial sessions established a shared conceptual foundation by introducing participatory approaches, knowledge co-production and the relationship between participation and the Sustainable Development Goals. Subsequent sessions explored the theoretical foundations of the Engaged University and demonstrated

¹ Refer to Annexure A and Deliverable 7.1 and Report on event



how participatory approaches challenge conventional relationships between universities and society by promoting collaboration, mutual learning and shared ownership of development processes.

Programme event

The synchronous component of the EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme was delivered as a one-day virtual workshop on **29 June 2026**, bringing together higher education leaders, academics, researchers, community engagement practitioners and professional staff from across the SADC region. Designed as an interactive learning experience rather than a traditional conference, the programme combined expert presentations, participatory discussions, practical tools and authentic case studies to strengthen participants' understanding and application of Participatory Approaches (PAs) within higher education. The workshop aimed to equip participants with the knowledge and practical competencies required to co-create context-responsive SDG initiatives with communities, industry and policymakers while reinforcing the role of universities as engaged partners in sustainable development.

The programme commenced with an introductory session that established a common understanding of Participatory Approaches and their relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants explored the evolution from traditional knowledge transfer towards knowledge co-production, examined the importance of participatory approaches for addressing complex societal challenges, and considered the priority SDGs most relevant to higher education institutions within the SADC region. This opening session provided the conceptual foundation for the remainder of the programme by positioning participation as both a methodology and an institutional philosophy.

The second session focused on the theoretical foundations of participatory practice through the concept of the Engaged University. Participants explored the principles that underpin authentic community engagement, including reciprocity, trust, collaboration and distributed expertise. The session challenged conventional views of universities as producers of knowledge by demonstrating how higher education institutions can become facilitators of collaborative knowledge creation alongside communities, governments and other stakeholders. This provided participants with a deeper understanding of how participatory approaches contribute to institutional transformation and societal impact.

The third session shifted from theory to practice by introducing participants to a range of participatory methods together with approaches to participatory monitoring and evaluation. Participants examined practical methodologies for facilitating collaborative research and community engagement, while also considering mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness, inclusiveness and impact of participatory initiatives. This session equipped participants with practical tools that could be adapted for use within teaching, research and community engagement projects in their own institutions.

A distinctive feature of the workshop was the presentation of six EngageSDGs pilot projects through three thematic parallel sessions. Participants selected a thematic stream aligned with their professional interests, allowing for more focused discussion and peer learning. The case studies demonstrated the practical application of participatory approaches across a wide range of contexts, including inclusive education, youth empowerment, community agency, climate resilience, environmental sustainability, safe communities, climate adaptation, food security and community well-being. Rather than presenting only successful outcomes, the sessions explored the participatory processes, partnerships and lessons learned during implementation, providing participants with authentic examples of how participatory approaches can be translated into meaningful community impact within diverse SADC contexts.

The final technical session introduced participants to the practical resources developed through the EngageSDGs project, including the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF), the SDG Toolkit and the Open Educational Resources (OERs). These resources provide structured guidance for planning, implementing and evaluating participatory initiatives and were specifically designed to support continued learning beyond the workshop. The programme concluded with a reflection on key learning points and an invitation to

continue professional development through the project's asynchronous online programme, thereby creating a seamless progression from intensive collaborative learning to sustained self-paced capacity development.





Co-funded by
the European Union



Participatory Approaches for SDG Action in SADC Higher Education

EngageSDGs one-day virtual capacity development programme

Date: 29 June 2026
Time: 08:30–17:30 SAST
Format: Virtual (Zoom)

Cost: Free
To register: [Click here](#) 

Background
This workshop forms part of the EngageSDGs project (Developing the capacity of SADC higher education institutions to use participatory approaches for community-based engagement with selected Sustainable Development Goals), which is co-funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) programme. For more information about the EngageSDGs project, please visit: <https://engagesdg.sarva.africa/>

Purpose
The workshop aims to equip higher education leaders and practitioners with practical participatory approaches and tools to co-create context-responsive SDG solutions with communities, industry and policymakers across the SADC region, while strengthening the role of universities as relevant and responsive partners in society.

Outcomes
Participants can design, implement and evaluate participatory SDG initiatives relevant to SADC contexts.

Who should attend?
University leadership, academics, professional staff, community engagement units, project managers.



Programme

SESSIONS	TIME (SAST)	
Welcome and introduction	08:30–09:00	Mr Kibrome Haile (OBREAL)
Session 1: Introduction to Participatory Approaches (PAs) & SDGs	09:00–10:00	Prof René Pellissier (SARUA)
Purpose To establish a shared understanding of participatory approaches as a foundation for SDG localisation in higher education. • What are Participatory Approaches? • From knowledge transfer to knowledge co-production - Why PAs matter for SDG implementation in SADC • Priority SDGs for higher education in the region		
Session 2: Foundations & the Engaged University Model	10:00–11:15	Prof Lesley Wood (NWU)
Session 3: Participatory Methods and Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E)	11:30–13:00	Dr Elizabeth Folan O'Connor (UCC) and Dr Siobhan O'Sullivan (UCC)
Session 4 ¹ : Thematic SADC case studies (EngageSDG pilots) Parallel breakout sessions (Choose only ONE theme to attend live)	14:00–15:30	Dr Emmanuel Jengwa (SARUA)
Option A: Theme 1 - Inclusive education, youth empowerment and community agency 1. Re-imagining community education post Covid-19: Mobilising unemployed youth as community assets to reduce the educational divide in a South African township. 2. Community-driven SDG awareness and empowerment workshops: A participatory approach to sustainable development in local communities.		Prof Lesley Wood and Mrs Bibi Bouwman (NWU) Prof Jose Frantz and Dr Lumka Magidigidi (JWC)
Option B: Theme 2 - Climate resilience, environmental sustainability and safe communities 3. UTM's community carbon footprint initiative. Promoting participatory climate action 4. Creating safe urban schools through community-led nature-based solutions		Prof (Dr) Chandradeo Bokhoree and Dr Preeya V. Ramasamy Coolen (UTM) Dr Ackim Zulu and Prof Wilma Nchito (UNZA)
Option C: Theme 3 - Climate, food, health and community well-being 5. Empowering communities to adapt to climate-induced elevated temperatures in their dwellings. 6. Climate-resilient agricultural practices through participatory knowledge exchange in Zambia's agro-ecological regions I and II		Dr Mahendra Gooroochurn (UoM) Mr Saviour Chibeti (UNILUS)
Session 5: Tools: The IPF, SDG Toolkit, OERs	15:30–16:45	Dr Franz Ferdinand Rothe, Dr David Nyaluke
Wrap-up & way forward	16:45–17:00	Ms Elizabeth Colucci (OBREAL)

¹ Session 4 is designed as break-away sessions. Participants can select one theme to attend.

Continued education

Participants are warmly invited to continue their learning journey through the extended virtual version of the programme, which offers an opportunity to engage more deeply with the themes, case studies and practical tools introduced during the workshop. The programme allows participants to further explore participatory approaches to the SDGs, deepen their understanding, and apply key ideas more directly to their own institutional or community contexts

Participants who complete the programme will also be eligible to receive a certificate of completion, recognising their engagement and commitment to advancing community-based and participatory approaches to sustainable development.

Registration for the programme

[Click here](#)

A significant feature of the programme was the inclusion of practical methodologies and tools. Participants were introduced to a range of participatory methods, including Participatory Action Research, community facilitation techniques and participatory monitoring and evaluation, enabling them to appreciate both the theoretical principles and practical implementation of participatory approaches. These methods were illustrated through authentic case studies drawn from the EngageSDGs pilot projects, allowing participants to observe how universities across the consortium had successfully implemented participatory approaches within diverse community contexts. The pilot projects demonstrated the adaptability of participatory approaches across multiple thematic areas, including climate resilience, inclusive education, youth empowerment, environmental sustainability, food security and community well-being.



Throughout the programme, emphasis was placed on dialogue, peer learning and collective reflection. Interactive tools such as Mentimeter, facilitated discussions and breakout sessions enabled participants to compare institutional experiences, identify common challenges and jointly develop potential solutions. Rather than positioning facilitators as experts transmitting knowledge, the programme encouraged all participants to contribute their own expertise, thereby modelling the principles of distributed knowledge and collaborative learning that underpin participatory approaches.

The final sessions introduced participants to the Integrated Participatory Framework developed under Work Package 3, together with supporting tools, resources and Open Educational Resources developed within the project. These sessions provided participants with practical guidance for translating conceptual understanding into institutional action, while simultaneously introducing them to the resources that would support continued learning through the asynchronous programme.

Throughout the day, the programme employed participatory learning methods that reflected the educational philosophy of the project itself. Interactive discussions, collaborative reflection, thematic breakout sessions and peer learning opportunities enabled participants not only to acquire new knowledge but also to experience participatory approaches in practice. This alignment between pedagogy and content ensured that the workshop modelled the principles of collaboration, dialogue and knowledge co-production that underpin the EngageSDGs project, while laying the foundation for participants to embed these approaches within their own institutional and community contexts.

The asynchronous capacity development programme²

Recognising that meaningful professional learning extends beyond individual workshops, the consortium developed a comprehensive asynchronous capacity development programme that constitutes the long-term educational legacy of EngageSDGs, suitable for self-paced learning. Whereas the synchronous programme provides an intensive collaborative learning experience, the asynchronous programme enables participants to continue developing their knowledge independently through a flexible, self-paced learning environment that accommodates diverse institutional contexts, professional responsibilities and learning preferences.

The asynchronous programme was specifically designed to ensure sustainability beyond the lifetime of the Erasmus+ project. All learning materials have therefore been developed as modular educational resources that can be reused, adapted and integrated into institutional staff development programmes, postgraduate education, professional development initiatives and community engagement training across the SADC region. By making these resources openly available, the project contributes to the creation of a sustainable regional repository of knowledge on participatory approaches that will continue supporting higher education institutions long after project completion.

The curriculum is organised into five interrelated modules that progressively develop participant competence. Beginning with an introduction to the philosophy of participatory approaches, the programme gradually explores the theoretical foundations of participation, practical methods and facilitation techniques, authentic case studies from the EngageSDGs pilot projects, and finally the application of the Integrated Participatory Framework within institutional settings. This progression allows participants to move systematically from conceptual understanding towards practical implementation while continually reflecting on their own institutional contexts. Each module combines a variety of educational resources designed to accommodate different learning styles and levels of prior experience. Short video presentations provide concise conceptual explanations, while curated readings introduce participants to contemporary scholarship and international practice. Interactive activities encourage participants to apply theoretical concepts within their own institutions, supported by reflection exercises that promote critical thinking

² Refer to Annexure B



regarding existing practices and opportunities for institutional transformation. Practical templates, implementation guides and planning tools further enable participants to transfer learning directly into professional practice.

Assessment within the asynchronous programme follows the principles of authentic assessment that underpin the EngageSDGs educational philosophy. Rather than relying solely on traditional knowledge tests, participants are required to demonstrate their understanding through practical application within their own institutional environments. Reflective journals, case study analyses, self-assessment activities and practical assignments progressively build towards the development of an institutional Participatory Action Plan, requiring participants to design a realistic intervention that addresses a genuine institutional or community challenge using participatory principles. This approach ensures that assessment becomes an integral component of institutional change rather than merely an evaluation of theoretical knowledge.

Through a combination of flexibility, accessibility and authentic application, the asynchronous programme provides universities with a sustainable professional development resource capable of supporting individual learning, institutional capacity development and regional collaboration. It also establishes a strong foundation for the emerging EngageSDGs Community of Practice, enabling participants to continue sharing experiences, resources and innovations while collectively advancing the role of participatory approaches within higher education across Southern Africa.

Module 1: Introduction to Participatory Approaches and the Sustainable Development Goals

The first module establishes the conceptual foundation for the entire capacity development programme by introducing participants to the philosophy, principles and value of Participatory Approaches (PAs) within higher education. It explores the shift from traditional, expert-driven models of knowledge production towards collaborative knowledge co-creation, where universities, communities, government, industry and civil society work together to address complex societal challenges. Particular emphasis is placed on the relationship between participatory approaches and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), illustrating how inclusive participation can strengthen the relevance, legitimacy and impact of higher education institutions. Participants are encouraged to reflect critically on their own institutional contexts and to identify opportunities for embedding participatory practices within teaching, research and community engagement activities.

Module 2: Foundations of Participatory Approaches and the Engaged University

Building on the introductory concepts, the second module examines the theoretical and philosophical foundations that underpin participatory practice. Participants explore concepts such as community engagement, knowledge democracy, distributed expertise, social innovation and the Engaged University. The module considers how power, trust, reciprocity and mutual respect influence partnerships between universities and communities, highlighting the importance of equitable relationships in achieving meaningful societal impact. Through contemporary examples and reflective activities, participants develop an appreciation of participation not merely as a research methodology but as an institutional philosophy capable of transforming governance, curriculum development, research and regional development. The module challenges participants to reconsider the traditional role of universities and positions higher education institutions as collaborative partners in sustainable development rather than providers of knowledge alone.

Module 3: Participatory Methods, Facilitation and Monitoring & Evaluation

The third module focuses on the practical application of participatory approaches by introducing participants to a range of methodologies, facilitation techniques and evaluation tools. Participants examine approaches such as Participatory Action Research (PAR), co-creation, citizen science, Living Labs,



appreciative inquiry and participatory monitoring and evaluation. Equal emphasis is placed on the practical skills required to facilitate collaborative processes, manage diverse stakeholder groups, address power dynamics and build trust among participants. The module also introduces methods for monitoring and evaluating participatory initiatives, enabling participants to assess both project outcomes and the quality of participation itself. By combining methodological knowledge with practical facilitation skills, this module equips participants with the competencies required to design, implement and evaluate participatory initiatives within their own institutional and community contexts.

Module 4: SADC Case Studies in Participatory Practice

This module translates theory into practice through an exploration of authentic case studies developed by the EngageSDGs consortium across Southern Africa. Drawing on pilot projects implemented in diverse institutional and community settings, participants examine how participatory approaches have been successfully applied to address challenges relating to inclusive education, youth empowerment, climate resilience, environmental sustainability, food security, public health and community well-being. Rather than presenting examples of best practice alone, the module critically analyses the processes, challenges, successes and lessons learned from each project, allowing participants to appreciate the contextual nature of participatory work. Through comparative analysis and guided reflection, participants identify transferable principles that can inform the design of future participatory initiatives within their own institutions while recognising the importance of adapting approaches to local cultural, social and institutional contexts.

Module 5: Applying the Integrated Participatory Framework

The final module brings together the knowledge and skills acquired throughout the programme by introducing participants to the EngageSDGs Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF) as a practical planning, implementation and evaluation tool. The framework provides a structured yet flexible approach for designing participatory projects that align institutional priorities with community needs and the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants learn how to use the framework to assess readiness for participation, identify relevant stakeholders, select appropriate participatory methods, establish monitoring and evaluation indicators and develop sustainable implementation strategies. The module culminates in the development of an institutional Participatory Action Plan, enabling participants to apply the framework to a real challenge within their own university or community. In doing so, the programme moves beyond theoretical understanding towards practical institutional transformation, ensuring that participants leave with a concrete strategy for embedding participatory approaches within their professional practice and contributing to the long-term development of engaged universities across the SADC region.



Co-funded by the European Union



EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme

Participatory Approaches for SDG Action in SADC Higher Education

Self-paced Online Certificate Programme

Continue your learning journey. Learn anytime. Apply everywhere.

Mode: Fully Online

Duration: Approximately 20–25 learning hours

Learning: Self-paced

Assessment: Portfolio of Evidence

Certification: EngageSDGs Certificate of Completion

Cost: Free

Background

Following the successful EngageSDGs Capacity Development Workshop, participants are invited to continue their professional learning through the EngageSDGs Asynchronous Capacity Development Programme.

Developed by experts from universities across Europe and Southern Africa, this self-paced online programme enables participants to deepen their understanding of participatory approaches and their application to teaching, research, community engagement and institutional transformation.

The programme is hosted online, allowing participants to learn at their own pace while engaging with practical examples, interactive activities and real-world case studies from across the SADC region.

Purpose

To strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to design, implement and monitor participatory approaches that promote collaborative knowledge and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Programme Objectives

Participants will be able to:

- ✓ Explain the principles of Participatory Approaches
- ✓ Apply participatory approaches within teaching, research and community engagement
- ✓ Design meaningful university-community partnerships
- ✓ Use the EngageSDGs Integrated Participatory Framework
- ✓ Apply participatory monitoring and evaluation methods
- ✓ Develop institution-specific participatory action plans
- ✓ Strengthen institutional contributions towards the SDGs

Programme Structure

MODULE 1

Introduction to Participatory Approaches

- Why participation matters
- Universities and the SDGs
- Knowledge co-production
- Principles of participation

Learning Activities

- Videos
- Readings
- Reflection

MODULE 2

Foundations of Participatory Approaches

- Community engagement
- Power and participation
- Trust building
- The Engaged University

Learning Activities

- Interactive exercises
- Case studies
- Discussion activities

MODULE 3

Participatory Methods and Tools

- Participatory Action Research
- Co-creation
- Citizen Science
- Living Labs
- Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Learning Activities

- Practical tools
- Templates
- Application exercises

MODULE 4

SADC Case Studies

Real examples from EngageSDGs pilot projects including:

- Community education
- Climate resilience
- Food security
- Safe communities
- Carbon footprint initiatives
- Youth empowerment

Learning Activities

- Videos
- Reflection
- Case analysis

MODULE 5

Applying the Integrated Participatory Framework

- Planning participatory projects
- Institutional implementation
- Monitoring impact
- Building sustainable partnerships

Learning Activities

- Self-assessment
- Action planning
- Final Portfolio

Each module includes short videos, readings, downloadable resources, interactive activities and reflection opportunities to help you apply learning in your own context.

For more information about EngageSDGs, please visit: <https://engagesdg.sarua.africa/>

Learning Resources

Participants receive access to:

- Recorded expert presentations
- Reading material and guides
- Practical tools and templates
- Case studies from SADC and Europe
- Reflection journals
- Downloadable resources
- Self-assessment activities
- Discussion forum (optional)

Assessment

Participants complete a Portfolio of Evidence consisting of:

- ✓ Module reflections
- ✓ Short quizzes
- ✓ Practical exercises
- ✓ Case study analyses
- ✓ Institutional Action Plan

A Journey of Transformation



Together we build engaged universities for a sustainable future.

Assessment Criteria

Criterion	Weight
Understanding of Participatory Approaches	20%
Application to practice	20%
Critical reflection	15%
Integration of SDGs	10%
Use of the Integrated Participatory Framework	15%
Institutional Action Plan	20%
Total	100%

Certification

Participants successfully completing all modules and assessments will receive the

EngageSDGs Certificate

Participatory Approaches for Sustainable Development



Co-funded by the European Union



[Click here to enrol](#)

Strengthening higher education through participation, collaboration and knowledge co-creation.





Annexure A. Synchronous capacity development programme

See D7.1 for report + demographics of participants.

Below is a transcript of the comments during the event as provided by zoom.

Outcomes

The one-day workshop introduced participatory approaches (PA) as a core mechanism for aligning SADC higher education institutions with the SDGs, framing universities as engaged, collaborative knowledge partners rather than ivory-tower institutions. Presenters covered theoretical foundations (modes of knowledge production, helix models, disciplinarity), practical PA methods (PAR, CBPR, citizen science, living labs), and monitoring and evaluation approaches. Six pilot case studies from South Africa, Zambia, and Mauritius were showcased, alongside two open-source tools — the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF) and the UCC SDG Mapping Toolkit — for practical implementation. ¹²

Decisions made

- **Engaged university model adopted as the project's north star:** universities must move from knowledge transmission to knowledge co-production with communities, government, civil society, and industry. ³
- **Participatory approaches confirmed as the bridge** between current SDG challenges (Horizon 1) and desired sustainable futures (Horizon 3) via the Three Horizons Framework. ⁴
- **IPF and SDG Mapping Toolkit released as open-source tools** for institutions to self-select appropriate PA methods based on budget, timeframe, and local constraints. ⁵
- **Asynchronous online program (5 modules + certificate)** confirmed as the follow-on to today's synchronous workshop; launch expected within approximately one month. ⁶
- **Community of Practice to be established** as the ongoing forum for participants to continue collaboration beyond the workshop. ⁷

Concepts covered

- **Modes of knowledge production (1–4):** Mode 1 = discipline-internal theory; Mode 4 = sustainability/transformation-oriented, society-integrated research. ⁸
- **Disciplinarity spectrum:** multidisciplinary → interdisciplinary → **transdisciplinary** (includes non-scientific community as knowledge holders). ⁹¹⁰
- **Quintuple Helix model:** university + government + industry + civil society + **natural environment** as co-producers of knowledge, especially relevant for climate-vulnerable SADC contexts. ¹¹
- **Participatory approaches surveyed among participants:** ~70% had used PAR; ~61% CBPR; lower uptake of PPI, citizen science, and living labs. ¹²
- **Ethics of care:** participatory research requires transparency, respect, empowerment, trust, and flexibility in levels of involvement; remuneration for community co-researchers identified as best practice. ¹³¹⁴

Challenges raised



- Overworked academics and under-resourced universities limit capacity for sustained engagement. 16
- Funding timelines too short for relationship-building required by genuine PA; international funding declining. 17
- Participatory fatigue risk for both academics and community members when institutional support is absent. 18
- Ethical clearance processes not designed for iterative, process-based participatory research. 19
- Implementation of engagement remains uneven despite policy existence across SADC. 20

Q&A Highlights

- **Q (Joy):** How can universities engage with very limited resources and overwhelmed academics? → **A (Rene):** Change must start with the university committing to the engaged model and revising internal measurement criteria; small steps and community of practice building are the entry point. 2122
- **Q (Stephen):** How do we reform promotion criteria to incentivize community-engaged research? → **A (Leslie):** Engaged research is still devalued; change requires paradigm shift at leadership and faculty level, publishing engaged work to gain academic legitimacy. 23
- **Q (Jose):** Engaged university must start internally — co-creation within the institution before going to external communities. → Affirmed by Leslie as a critical prerequisite. 2425
- **Q (Kebattenne):** What SADC-level policy consolidates these efforts across the region? → **A (Rene):** SARUA reports to SADC Secretariat annually; a follow-up will be raised at the upcoming Vice-Chancellors' Dialogue and potentially the Ministers' meeting. 2627

Going forward

- SADC research uptake strategy gap to be raised at Vice-Chancellors' Dialogue (end of August, Johannesburg). 27
- All presentation slides and Vevox poll images to be shared with participants post-event. 28
- Full workshop recording to be edited and distributed. 29
- **Participants:** Complete the post-workshop evaluation form. 30
- **Participants:** Sign up for the Community of Practice and submit topic suggestions. 7
- **Rene/SARUA:** Follow up with SADC Human and Social Development colleague on policy gap ahead of Vice-Chancellors' Dialogue. 27
- **Rene/SARUA:** Distribute all slides, demographic report, and recording link to participants. 31
- **All:** Explore IPF at the Engage SDGs website and test with real or fictional project data. 32
- **All:** Enroll colleagues in the forthcoming asynchronous 5-module online program once launched. 22

Q&A Highlights



- **Q (Joy):** How can universities engage with very limited resources and overwhelmed academics? → **A (Rene):** Change must start with the university committing to the engaged model and revising internal measurement criteria; small steps and community of practice building are the entry point. 2122
- **Q (Stephen):** How do we reform promotion criteria to incentivize community-engaged research? → **A (Leslie):** Engaged research is still devalued; change requires paradigm shift at leadership and faculty level, publishing engaged work to gain academic legitimacy. 23
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Pending

- SADC research uptake strategy gap to be raised at Vice-Chancellors' Dialogue (end of August, Johannesburg). 27
- All presentation slides and Vevox poll images to be shared with participants post-event. 28
- Full workshop recording to be edited and distributed. 29

Action items

- **Participants:** Complete the post-workshop evaluation form. 30
- **Participants:** Sign up for the Community of Practice and submit topic suggestions. 7
- **Rene/SARUA:** Follow up with SADC Human and Social Development colleague on policy gap ahead of Vice-Chancellors' Dialogue. 27
- **Rene/SARUA:** Distribute all slides, demographic report, and recording link to participants. 31
- **All:** Explore IPF at the Engage SDGs website and test with real or fictional project data. 32
- **All:** Enroll colleagues in the forthcoming asynchronous 5-module online program once launched. 22



Annexure B. Asynchronous and self-paced capacity development programme

EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme

Participatory Approaches for SDG Action in SADC Higher Education

Self-paced Online Certificate Programme

Continue your learning journey. Learn anytime. Apply everywhere.

Background

Following the successful EngageSDGs Capacity Development Workshop, participants are invited to continue their professional learning through the EngageSDGs Asynchronous Capacity Development Programme. Developed by experts from universities across Europe and Southern Africa, this self-paced online programme enables participants to deepen their understanding of participatory approaches and their application to teaching, research, community engagement and institutional transformation.

The programme is hosted online, allowing participants to learn at their own pace while engaging with practical examples, interactive activities and real-world case studies from across the SADC region.

Purpose

To strengthen the capacity of higher education institutions to design, implement and evaluate participatory approaches that promote collaborative knowledge production and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Programme objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. Explain the principles of Participatory Approaches
2. Apply participatory approaches within teaching, research and community engagement
3. Design meaningful university-community partnerships
4. Use the EngageSDGs Integrated Participatory Framework
5. Apply participatory monitoring and evaluation methods
6. Develop institution-specific participatory action plans
7. Strengthen institutional contributions towards the SDGs

Who should attend?

The programme is designed for

- Academic staff
- Researchers
- Community engagement practitioners
- Professional support staff
- University leaders
- Postgraduate students
- Doctoral candidates
- Government officials
- NGOs
- Development practitioners



Delivery

Mode	Fully online
Duration	Approximately 20–25 learning hours
Learning:	Self-paced
Assessment	Portfolio of Evidence and MCQs
Certification	EngageSDGs Certificate of Completion
Cost	Free

Module 1. Introduction to Participatory Approaches

Topics

- Why participation matters
- Universities and the SDGs
- Knowledge co-production
- Principles of participation

Learning activities: ✓ Videos ✓ Readings ✓ Reflection

Module 2. Foundations of Participatory Approaches

Topics

- Community engagement
- Power and participation
- Trust building
- The Engaged University

Learning activities: ✓ Interactive exercises ✓ Case studies ✓ Discussion activities

Module 3. Participatory Methods and Tools

Topics

- Participatory Action Research
- Co-creation
- Citizen Science
- Living Labs
- Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation

Learning activities: ✓ Practical tools ✓ Templates ✓ Application exercises

Module 4. SADC Case Studies

Real examples from EngageSDGs pilot projects including

- Community education
- Climate resilience
- Food security
- Safe communities
- Carbon footprint initiatives



- Youth empowerment

Learning activities: ✓ Videos ✓ Reflection ✓ Case analysis

Module 5. Applying the Integrated Participatory Framework

Topics

- Planning participatory projects
- Institutional implementation
- Monitoring impact
- Building sustainable partnerships

Learning activities: ✓ Self-assessment ✓ Action planning ✓ Final Portfolio

Learning resources

Participants receive access to

- Recorded expert presentations
- Reading material
- Practical guides
- Templates
- Case studies
- Reflection journals
- Downloadable resources
- Self-assessment activities

Assessments

Participants complete a Portfolio of Evidence consisting of

- Module reflections
- Short quizzes
- Practical exercises
- Case study analyses
- Institutional Action Plan

EngageSDGs online Digital Repository

The programme is hosted on the project-designed DAE (see D4.1 and D4.2). Below is a screenshot of the site.

✓ Module 1: Introduction



Module 1

Introduction to Participatory Approaches & the SDGs

This module introduces participants to the foundations of Participatory Approaches (PAs) and their critical role in advancing sustainable development within the SADC region. We begin by exploring what Participatory Approaches are and why they matter, highlighting how these inclusive, collaborative methods shift research and development from top-down models to co-created community-driven processes. We then examine how PAs directly support the Sustainable Development Goals, demonstrating how local knowledge, stakeholder engagement, and shared decision-making accelerate SDG localisation and strengthen the relevance, uptake, and impact of interventions. Finally, we discuss the role of universities as anchor institutions for sustainable development, showing how higher education can leverage PAs to deepen community engagement, shape local innovation ecosystems, and contribute meaningfully to regional transformation. Together, these three themes position PAs as essential tools for building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable futures across the SADC region.

Module 1 consists of three topics:

1. [The Magic of Participatory Approaches](#)
2. [The SDG Accelerator: Participatory Approaches](#)
3. [Universities as Anchors for Sustainable Development in SADC](#)

This module will introduce you to foundational concepts, values & significance of Participatory Approaches (PAs) in the context of HE & sustainable development in SADC including:

1. Justification;
2. Support SDG localisation & community engagement;
3. Universities as anchors for sustainable development through participatory practice;
4. PAs in transforming research, teaching & institutional culture.

This module provides the conceptual grounding needed for subsequent modules on methods, case studies & applied tools.

[The Magic of Participatory Approaches](#)

[The SDG Accelerator: Participatory Approaches](#)

[Universities as Anchors for Sustainable Development in SADC](#)

✓ **Module 2: Foundations of Participatory Approaches and the SDGs**



Module 2

Foundations of Participatory Approaches and the SDGs

This module introduces participants to the basic principles and core assumptions of Participatory Approaches (PAs), highlighting the importance of diversity of knowledge and partners. It emphasises the importance of self-reflection on the part of researchers, particularly as it relates to the ways individual and collective perspectives can shape these approaches. This module also highlights the central role of relationships in Participatory Approaches, highlighted the ways that these approaches are deeply rooted in individuals and communities. The module closes with a discussion of the ways [the Engaged University Model](#) pulls these ideas together, putting theories into practice.

Module 2 consists of three topics:

1. [A Paradigm Shift Toward Distributed Expertise](#)
2. [Building Relationships for Participatory Approaches](#)
3. [The Engaged University Model](#)

[A Paradigm Shift Toward Distributed Expertise](#)

[Building Relationships for Participatory Approaches](#)

[The Engaged University Model](#)

✓ **Module 3: Participatory Methods**

Module 3

Participatory Methods

This module explores some of the key methods and considerations involved in adopting Participatory Approaches. It reviews the foundational ideas as context for a discussion of the core methods of Participatory Approaches with examples from projects in Ireland. It goes on to discuss key challenges and ethical considerations faced by anyone seeking to integrate these approaches into their work while highlighting the important role these projects can have in the larger community.

This module has two topics:

- [Participatory Research: Methods and Challenges](#)
- [Participatory Research: Ethics](#)

[Participatory Research: Methods and Challenges](#)

[Participatory Research: Ethics](#)

✓ **Module 4: Case Studies for the SDGs in the SADC Region**

Module 4

Case Studies for the SDGs in the SADC Region

Case studies offer an invaluable opportunity to see these ideas in practice. Please review the case studies below from the EngageSDG partners and reflect on the ways they might inform practice at your institution or in your community.

Reports on the following case studies are available below as PDFs:

- "Climate-Resilient Agricultural Practices through Participatory Knowledge Exchange in Zambia's Agro-Ecological Regions I and II" (University of Lusaka)
- "Community engagement to gather thermal perception in built spaces and community empowerment to promote heat health using passive and Nature-based solutions (NbS) measures" (University of Mauritius)
- Safe Urban Schools through Community Led Greening (University of Zambia)
- UTM's Community Carbon Footprint Initiative – Promoting Participatory Climate Action (University of Technology, Mauritius)
- Mobilising Unemployed Youth as Community Assets to Reduce the Educational Divide in South African Townships (North-West University)
- Community Engagement in Conjunction with the Hugenote Kollege, Wellington (University of the Western Cape)

✓ Module 5: Resources and Tools for Participatory Approaches

Module 5

Resources and Tools for Participatory Approaches

This module will provide you with some useful tools and resources for your own use of Participatory Approaches. It includes an overview of the EngageSDG project's Integrated Participatory Framework which will help you decide on which approach(es) best fit your project and context. The resources below will introduce you to the IPF and explain some of the thinking behind it. You'll also find an overview of the [SDG Toolkit](#) developed by University College Cork which seeks to support and encourage the integration of the SDGs across university curricula.

[EngageSDG Integrated Participatory Framework](#)

[SDG Toolkit](#)