

ENGAGE SDGs Capacity Development Programme Report (Deliverable 6.1)

Participatory Approaches for SDG Action in SADC Higher Education

29 June 2026



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The Capacity Development Programme

Deliverable 6.1 focused on the design, development and implementation of the EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme, aimed at strengthening the capacity of higher education institutions across the SADC region to apply participatory approaches for community-based engagement in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The programme represents one of the project's flagship outputs, translating the knowledge, tools and lessons generated through earlier work packages into a structured professional development initiative for academics, researchers, university leaders and community engagement practitioners.

The capacity development programme was intentionally designed in two complementary formats to maximise both participation and long-term impact. The first was a synchronous one-day capacity development workshop, held online on 29 June 2026,¹ bringing together participants from across the SADC and European partner institutions. The workshop combined expert presentations, interactive discussions, practical participatory methods, and thematic breakout sessions showcasing the six EngageSDGs pilot projects. Sessions covered the foundations of participatory approaches, the engaged university model, participatory monitoring and evaluation, practical community case studies, and the introduction of key project tools, including the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF), the SDG Toolkit and Open Educational Resources (OERs).

Synchronous capacity development programme

On 29 June 2026, the EngageSDGs consortium successfully delivered its flagship Capacity Development Programme on Participatory Approaches for SDG Action in SADC Higher Education, marking a significant milestone in the implementation of Work Package 6 of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) project. Hosted by the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA) in collaboration with consortium partners from Europe and Southern Africa, the programme brought together university leaders, academics, researchers, practitioners and development stakeholders from across the region to strengthen institutional capacity for community-engaged scholarship and sustainable development. The workshop represented the culmination of several years of collaborative work undertaken through the project and translated the conceptual and methodological outputs developed under previous work packages into practical capacity-building interventions for higher education institutions.

¹ This report focuses on the one-day synchronous version presented on 29 June 2026.





Co-funded by
the European Union



EngageSDGs

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.sarua.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 Halle (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 (UWC)
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

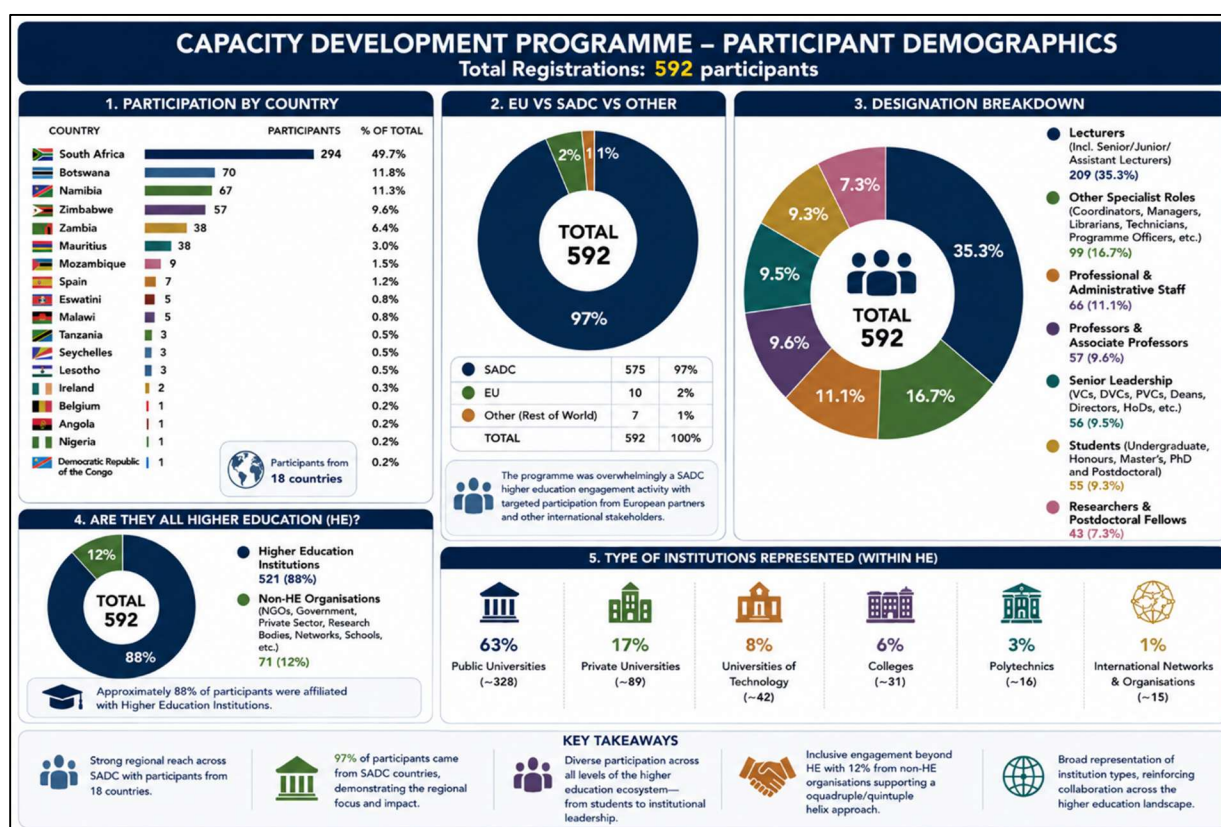
Participants who complete the programme will also be eligible to receive a certificate of completion, recognising their engagement and commitment to advancing community-based and participatory approaches to sustainable development.

Registration for the programme [Click here](#)

The programme was developed in recognition of the increasingly important role that universities must play in responding to complex societal challenges. Across Southern Africa, higher education institutions are expected not only to generate knowledge but also to contribute actively to social transformation, economic development and environmental sustainability. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires universities to move beyond traditional models of teaching and research towards collaborative partnerships with communities, government, industry and civil society. The Capacity Development Programme therefore sought to equip participants with both the conceptual understanding and the practical tools required to embed participatory approaches within teaching, research, innovation and institutional engagement strategies.

The workshop enabled participants to engage directly with project experts, exchange experiences across countries and disciplines, and reflect on how participatory approaches could be embedded within their own institutional contexts. Recognising that many stakeholders would not be able to participate in the live event, the consortium also developed a second, asynchronous version of the programme. This self-paced online course is designed to provide sustainable access to the project outcomes beyond the lifetime of the workshop and to support wider dissemination throughout the SADC region. Participants can complete the programme independently while engaging with recorded lectures, readings, practical activities and self-assessment exercises. Successful completion of the asynchronous programme provides participants with certification, extending the long-term capacity-building impact of the project.

Programme registrations



The workshop represented an important transition within the EngageSDGs project itself. Following the completion of the regional situational analysis, the development of the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF), the creation of digital resources and the implementation of institutional pilot projects, the consortium entered a new phase focused on strengthening institutional capacity and supporting the wider adoption of participatory approaches across the SADC higher education sector. Rather than simply disseminating project outputs, the workshop aimed to foster critical reflection, peer learning and practical application while establishing a foundation for long-term collaboration through the EngageSDGs Community of Practice.

Continuing education - Asynchronous version of capacity development programme

HE leaders and decision makers will be 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 this programme will be eligible to receive a certificate of completion, recognising their engagement and commitment to advancing community-based and participatory approaches to sustainable development.

The asynchronous programme is structured into five integrated learning modules (aligned to the sessions in the synchronous version of 29 June 2026 as described above), each building progressively on the previous one:

1. **Introduction to Participatory Approaches and the Sustainable Development Goals**, introducing the principles of participatory approaches, knowledge co-production and the role of universities in SDG localisation.
2. **The Engaged University and Community Engagement**, exploring the engaged university model, public value, stakeholder partnerships and universities as anchor institutions for sustainable development.
3. **Participatory Methods, Tools and Monitoring & Evaluation**, focusing on practical participatory research methods, stakeholder engagement techniques, monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.
4. **Participatory Practice through EngageSDGs Case Studies**, presenting the six pilot projects implemented across the SADC region and illustrating how participatory approaches can address challenges related to education, climate resilience, environmental sustainability, health, food security and community well-being.
5. **Applying the EngageSDGs Toolkit and Integrated Participatory Framework**, enabling participants to utilise the project's practical resources, including the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF), the SDG Toolkit and Open Educational Resources (OERs), to design and implement participatory initiatives within their own institutions and communities.

These complementary versions of the capacity development programme create a comprehensive learning pathway that combines interactive engagement with long-term, self-directed professional development. The synchronous programme fostered dialogue, networking and immediate knowledge exchange, while the asynchronous programme ensures that the project's knowledge products remain accessible, scalable and sustainable beyond the project period. Deliverable 6.1 therefore represents not only a successful capacity-building intervention but also a lasting educational resource that supports the continued adoption of participatory approaches for SDG implementation across higher education institutions in the SADC region.

Reimagining the role of the university

The programme commenced by challenging participants to reconsider the traditional purpose of universities within society. While global university rankings continue to reward research productivity, citations and international reputation, the workshop questioned whether these measures adequately reflect the contribution that universities make towards addressing pressing societal challenges. Participants were encouraged to reflect critically on fundamental questions concerning who benefits from university research, who should benefit, and the extent to which communities participate in defining research agendas. This

framing established the central premise of the workshop: that universities must increasingly become institutions that generate public value through collaborative knowledge production rather than remaining isolated producers of academic knowledge.

Central to this discussion was the evolution of knowledge production itself. Participants explored the progression from Mode 1 knowledge production, characterised by discipline-based academic inquiry, through application-oriented and innovation-driven modes, towards Mode 4 knowledge production, where sustainability, societal transformation and environmental responsibility become the primary objectives of research. This progression illustrated how contemporary universities are required to move beyond disciplinary boundaries and embrace collaborative approaches that integrate academic expertise with the lived experiences and knowledge of communities. The workshop further demonstrated how this evolution naturally leads towards increasing levels of interdisciplinarity and ultimately transdisciplinary collaboration, where scientific and non-scientific knowledge systems interact to co-create solutions to complex societal challenges.

Building on these concepts, the workshop introduced participants to the progression from Triple Helix to Quadruple and Quintuple Helix models of innovation. These frameworks position universities alongside government, industry, civil society and the natural environment as equal partners in knowledge co-production. Within the SADC context, where many development challenges are interconnected and deeply rooted within local communities, these models provide an important conceptual basis for designing participatory approaches capable of addressing issues such as poverty, climate resilience, food security, public health and sustainable livelihoods.

The engaged university as the foundation for sustainable development

A central theme throughout the programme was the concept of the Engaged University, which emerged as the overarching framework through which participatory approaches can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Rather than conceptualising engagement as an additional university function, presenters argued that engagement should fundamentally reshape the way universities approach teaching, research and innovation. The Engaged University was presented as an institution that recognises knowledge as something that is co-created through reciprocal partnerships with communities and external stakeholders rather than produced exclusively within academic institutions.

Participants examined the historical evolution of the engaged university within Southern Africa, beginning with universities established primarily for nation-building and elite human capital development, progressing through regional cooperation initiatives following the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, and culminating in contemporary models that position engagement alongside teaching and research as a core institutional function. This historical perspective demonstrated that while community engagement has long existed within universities, it has evolved from one-directional outreach towards collaborative partnerships characterised by mutual learning, shared ownership and public value creation.

The workshop further demonstrated how engagement transforms each of the university's traditional functions. Teaching evolves into community-engaged learning that integrates academic study with real-world societal challenges. Research becomes collaborative and participatory, focusing on generating evidence that directly benefits communities while simultaneously contributing to scholarly knowledge. Service transforms into engaged citizenship, where staff and students actively participate in addressing societal

challenges through sustained partnerships with external stakeholders. Collectively, these changes position universities as anchor institutions capable of facilitating long-term social transformation while supporting regional development priorities and the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Participatory Approaches as catalysts for knowledge co-production

Having established the conceptual foundations of the engaged university, the programme turned its attention to the practical implementation of participatory research. Presentations from University College Cork explored participatory research as a methodology that challenges conventional relationships between researchers and communities by promoting collaboration, democratic participation and mutual learning throughout the research process. Participatory research was described not simply as a research method but as a philosophy that recognises communities as equal partners in defining research questions, generating knowledge, analysing findings and implementing solutions.

Participants were introduced to a broad range of participatory methodologies, including Participatory Action Research (PAR), Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), Citizen Science, Living Labs and Public and Patient Involvement (PPI). Rather than promoting a single methodology, presenters demonstrated that participatory research encompasses a flexible family of approaches capable of responding to different institutional contexts, community needs and research objectives. Particular emphasis was placed on selecting methods that are appropriate to local circumstances while maintaining core principles of inclusion, reciprocity, transparency and shared decision-making.

Equally important was the discussion of participatory monitoring and evaluation. Participants explored how evaluation itself can become a participatory process involving stakeholders in the co-design of evaluation frameworks, data collection, analysis and interpretation. The programme highlighted the complementary role of qualitative, quantitative, creative and mixed-method approaches within participatory evaluation and emphasised the importance of balancing formative evaluation aimed at improving implementation with summative evaluation focused on measuring long-term impact. Ethical considerations, including power relationships, remuneration of community co-researchers, trust-building and sustained engagement, were recognised as essential components of successful participatory practice.

Participant reflections and interactive learning²

The workshop incorporated several interactive Vevox activities that provided valuable insights into participants' existing knowledge, experiences and perceptions of participatory research. Responses to the opening word cloud demonstrated a remarkable level of consensus regarding the perceived value of participatory approaches. Participants associated participatory research with concepts such as inclusivity, empowerment, innovation, co-creation, trust, partnerships, social justice, community voice, sustainability and knowledge sharing. These responses reflected a collective understanding that participatory approaches are fundamentally concerned with strengthening relationships, promoting equity and generating solutions that are relevant to the needs and aspirations of communities.

² Annexure G

A subsequent poll explored participants' previous experience with different participatory methodologies. The results revealed that Participatory Action Research (68%) and Community-Based Participatory Research (61%) were already well established among participants, while Citizen Science (16%), Living Labs (11%) and Public and Patient Involvement (3%) had been utilised far less frequently. These findings demonstrated that although participatory traditions are already present within many SADC universities, significant opportunities remain for expanding institutional capacity in emerging participatory methodologies that are increasingly being adopted internationally.

Participants also reflected on preferred methods for participatory monitoring and evaluation. Qualitative interviews emerged as the most highly valued approach, followed closely by mixed-method research and focus group discussions. Surveys and creative methods also received strong support, suggesting that participants recognise the value of methodological diversity while continuing to place particular emphasis on approaches capable of capturing lived experience, contextual understanding and collaborative dialogue. These responses reinforced one of the workshop's central messages: that participatory research requires methodological flexibility rather than adherence to any single research tradition.

Demonstrating participatory practice through pilot projects

One of the programme's greatest strengths was the presentation of pilot projects undertaken by consortium partners, illustrating how participatory approaches can be translated into practical interventions addressing diverse societal challenges³.

The North-West University Science Shop project demonstrated how participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) can mobilise unemployed youth as community assets while addressing educational inequality in South African townships. Through digital storytelling, photovoice, focus groups, creative expression and sustained community partnerships, the project illustrated the transformative potential of participatory approaches to build resilience, strengthen trust and generate locally owned solutions. The University of the Western Cape presented an innovative community engagement initiative that utilised the Integrated Participatory Framework to improve SDG literacy among community organisations. By combining values-based reflection, capability approaches and participatory action research, the project enabled community organisations to recognise how their existing work contributes to national and global development priorities while strengthening their capacity to engage with the Sustainable Development Goals. The University of Lusaka demonstrated how participatory knowledge exchange can strengthen climate resilience among smallholder farmers through Farmer Field Schools, participatory action research, field demonstrations and peer learning. The project illustrated the importance of co-creating locally appropriate agricultural solutions while enhancing adaptive capacity and food security within climate-vulnerable communities. The University of Mauritius showcased a participatory initiative addressing thermal comfort and climate adaptation through community engagement, online surveys, co-creation workshops and nature-based solutions. The project demonstrated how participatory approaches can contribute simultaneously to improved public health, climate resilience and evidence-informed policy development while empowering communities to design practical responses to increasing temperatures associated with climate change.

³ Refer Annexure G

These pilot projects demonstrated that although participatory approaches can be applied within very different disciplinary and societal contexts, they share common principles centred on collaboration, trust, knowledge co-production and long-term partnership.

Looking forward

The workshop concluded by positioning the Capacity Development Programme as the beginning of an ongoing regional learning journey rather than a standalone event. Participants were introduced to the forthcoming asynchronous five-module online programme, which will enable universities across Southern Africa to deepen their understanding of participatory approaches while earning formal certification. In addition, the establishment of the EngageSDGs Community of Practice will provide an ongoing platform for peer learning, resource sharing and collaborative problem-solving among participating institutions.

The most important outcome of the programme was the shared recognition that universities must redefine their role within society. Across the various presentations, discussions and pilot demonstrations, a consistent message emerged: higher education institutions can no longer regard communities simply as beneficiaries of research or recipients of university expertise. Instead, sustainable development requires universities to recognise communities as equal partners in generating knowledge, identifying priorities and implementing solutions. Participatory approaches provide the practical mechanisms through which this transformation can occur, while the Engaged University offers the institutional model capable of sustaining it over the long term.

Impact of the Capacity Development Programme

The EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme achieved its objective of strengthening institutional understanding of participatory approaches for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation across the SADC higher education sector. Evaluation responses demonstrated consistently high levels of participant satisfaction with the relevance, quality and applicability of the programme. Across the evaluation statements, participants overwhelmingly selected Agree or Strongly Agree, indicating that the workshop successfully increased understanding of participatory approaches, knowledge co-production, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and the role of universities as engaged societal partners.

The workshop also strengthened participants' confidence to apply participatory approaches within their own institutional contexts. Many respondents indicated that they intended to redesign community engagement initiatives, strengthen participatory research, introduce community-based participatory research and Living Labs, utilise the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF), and embed participatory approaches within teaching, research and institutional engagement strategies. These responses demonstrate that the programme moved beyond raising awareness towards enabling practical institutional implementation. An equally important outcome was the development of a regional network of practitioners committed to continuing collaboration. Participants expressed strong interest in joining the EngageSDGs Community of Practice and participating in the forthcoming asynchronous online programme. This confirms that the workshop successfully established the foundations for sustained institutional learning beyond the one-day event and supports the consortium's strategy of creating a long-term regional learning community. The workshop further demonstrated the value of combining conceptual foundations with practical examples. Participants consistently identified the pilot projects presented by consortium partners as particularly

valuable because they illustrated how participatory approaches can be implemented within diverse institutional and disciplinary contexts. The combination of theoretical frameworks, practical methodologies and real-world examples enabled participants to translate abstract concepts into actionable institutional practices.

The Capacity Development Programme represents a significant milestone in the implementation of Work Package 6. It has strengthened regional capacity, increased awareness of participatory approaches, promoted institutional collaboration and reinforced the role of universities as catalysts for knowledge co-production and sustainable development across the SADC region.

Final reflections and conclusion

The 29 June 2026 Capacity Development Programme marked an important transition within the EngageSDGs project. Previous work packages established the evidence base, conceptual frameworks, digital infrastructure and pilot projects necessary for participatory engagement. This programme translated those outputs into institutional capacity by equipping participants with the knowledge, tools and confidence required to implement participatory approaches within their own universities and communities.

Perhaps the most significant achievement of the programme was the shared recognition that universities must evolve from institutions that primarily transfer knowledge towards institutions that co-create knowledge with society. Throughout the workshop, presenters consistently demonstrated that sustainable development depends upon partnerships built on trust, reciprocity, shared ownership and mutual learning. The Engaged University therefore emerged not simply as a new model of higher education, but as a practical response to the complex societal challenges facing Southern Africa.

The workshop demonstrated the strength of collaboration across the EngageSDGs consortium. Contributions from European and SADC partners illustrated how knowledge exchange across regions can generate innovative yet contextually relevant solutions. The pilot projects provided convincing evidence that participatory approaches are applicable across diverse thematic areas, including education, climate resilience, community development, public health and agriculture, while remaining grounded in local priorities and community knowledge.

Looking forward, the establishment of the Community of Practice ⁴ and the planned five-module asynchronous online programme provide mechanisms for sustaining the momentum generated during the workshop. Together they will support continued peer learning, institutional implementation and regional collaboration while contributing to the long-term sustainability of the EngageSDGs project.

Ultimately, the Capacity Development Programme demonstrated that participatory approaches are no longer optional additions to university engagement activities. They represent a fundamental shift in how higher education institutions understand knowledge, partnership and societal responsibility. By embracing these approaches, universities are better positioned to contribute meaningfully to the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals and to strengthen their role as engaged institutions serving the public good.

⁴ See next section

The EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme successfully demonstrated that participatory approaches are no longer peripheral methodologies but essential components of contemporary higher education. By bringing together conceptual frameworks, practical methodologies, institutional case studies and interactive reflection, the programme strengthened participants' capacity to design, implement and evaluate participatory initiatives that contribute directly to the Sustainable Development Goals. More importantly, it fostered a shared regional vision of universities as engaged institutions committed to knowledge co-production, public value and social transformation.

As EngageSDGs moves into its final phase of implementation, the Capacity Development Programme has established a strong foundation for embedding participatory approaches within higher education institutions across the SADC region. Through continued collaboration, institutional learning and the expansion of the Community of Practice, the programme has positioned participating universities to become catalysts for inclusive, evidence-informed and community-driven sustainable development.

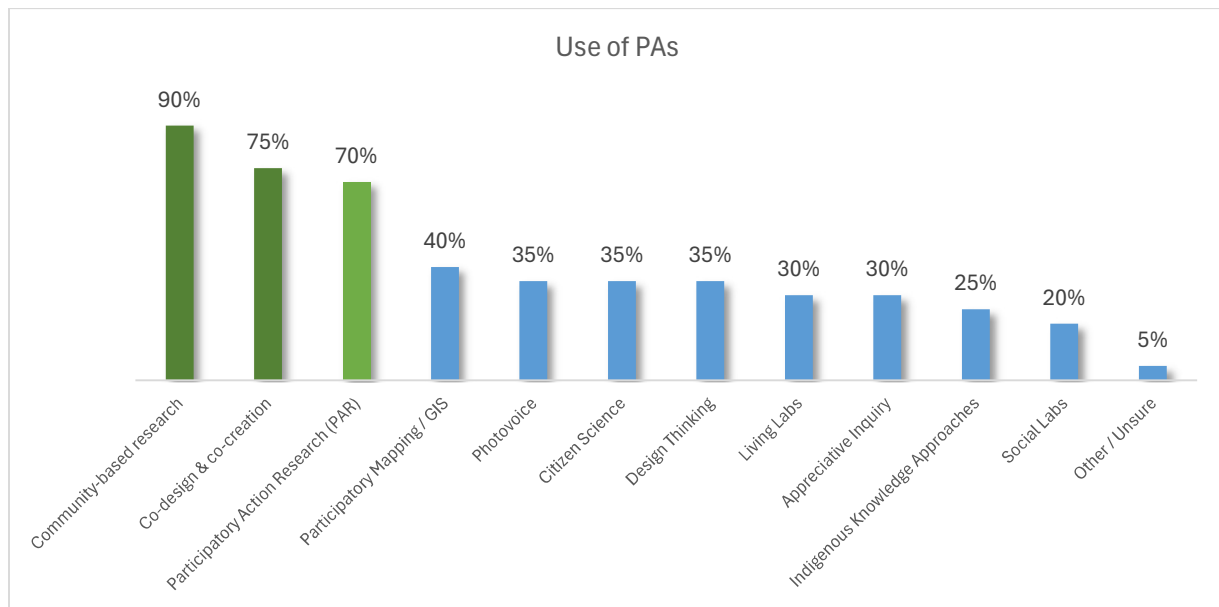
The way forward: The EngageSDGs Community of Practice

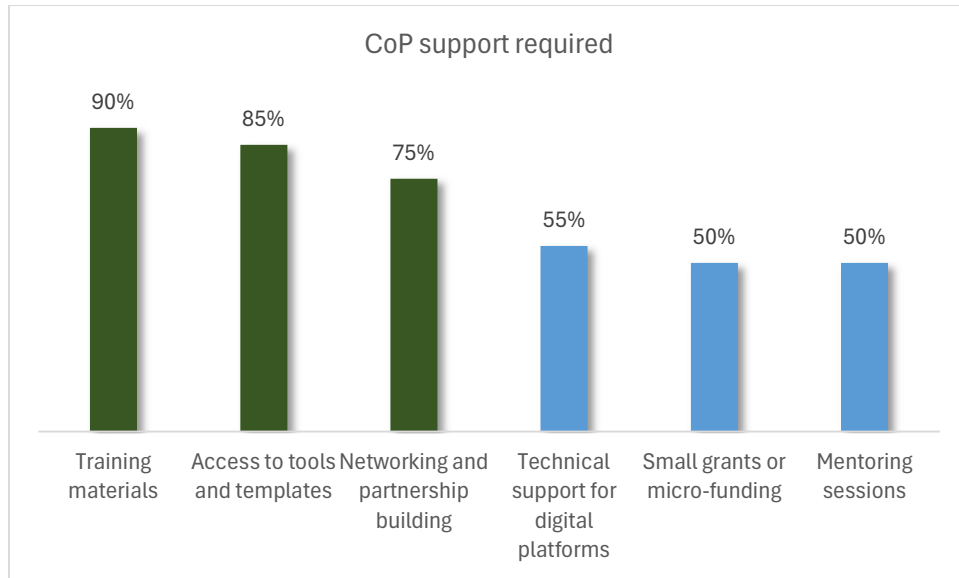
The EngageSDGs Community of Practice (CoP) represents one of the project's most significant sustainability outcomes. Designed to extend the impact of the Erasmus+ project beyond its formal completion, the CoP will serve as a regional platform for collaboration, knowledge exchange and capacity development on the use of participatory approaches (PAs) for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation across Southern African higher education institutions.

The initial survey of prospective members distributed at the event, demonstrates a strong foundation for establishing the Community of Practice. Participants expressed overwhelming interest in ongoing learning opportunities, regional networking, collaborative research and the sharing of practical experiences. The findings indicate that members are seeking an active and practice-oriented network rather than a passive information-sharing forum. They value opportunities to collaborate across institutions, exchange evidence of good practice, develop joint research initiatives and collectively strengthen the societal impact of universities.

Findings from the survey launched on 29 June

The survey findings suggest that the Community of Practice should remain accessible to maximise participation across diverse institutions. Rather than relying on annual membership fees, the CoP will adopt an open and inclusive model supported by project resources, institutional contributions and future partnership opportunities. This approach will encourage participation from universities with varying levels of capacity while ensuring broad regional representation.





Going forward, the Community of Practice will be structured around a programme of regular engagement. regular webinars will provide opportunities for members to explore emerging themes in participatory approaches, while quarterly thematic workshops will facilitate deeper discussion, peer learning and collaborative problem-solving – clearly continued training is most important. The Community of Practice will also establish thematic working groups aligned with the interests expressed by members, including Community Engagement and Partnerships, Participatory Approaches and Methodologies, Research Impact and Evaluation, Education for Sustainable Development, and Policy and Systems Change. These working groups will enable members to collaborate on common challenges and produce practical outputs such as guidelines, case studies, policy briefs and research publications.

The Digital Academic Ecosystem developed through EngageSDGs will become the primary knowledge hub supporting the Community of Practice. Members will be encouraged to contribute teaching resources, case studies, participatory tools, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, recorded webinars and examples of successful SDG initiatives. In this way, the digital platform will evolve into a living repository of regional expertise, supporting continuous learning and reducing duplication of effort across institutions.

The Community of Practice will promote cross-country collaboration by facilitating joint research projects, collaborative grant applications, peer mentoring and institutional partnerships. These activities will strengthen regional capacity while supporting universities to embed participatory approaches within teaching, research, community engagement and institutional strategy. The Community of Practice will also provide an important mechanism for showcasing pilot projects, recognising innovation, and disseminating lessons learned across the SADC region.

The EngageSDGs Community of Practice is intended to become a long-term regional network that continues to build capacity, foster innovation and support knowledge co-production well beyond the lifetime of the project. Connecting practitioners, researchers, community partners and policymakers around a shared commitment to participatory approaches and sustainable development, the Community of Practice will help position Southern African universities as leading contributors to locally relevant, socially responsive and globally significant SDG implementation.

ANNEXURE A. Programme Overview

EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme Participatory Approaches for SDG Action in SADC Higher Education

The Capacity Development Programme consisted of four thematic sessions that progressively introduced participants to the theoretical foundations of participatory approaches, the concept of the Engaged University, practical participatory methodologies and monitoring systems, and examples of implementation through institutional pilot projects. Together, the sessions demonstrated how universities can strengthen their contribution to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through knowledge co-production and community engagement.

ANNEXURE B. Session 1

Title: Introduction to Participatory Approaches and the Sustainable Development Goals

Presenter: Prof René Pellissier (SARUA)

The opening session established the conceptual foundation for the workshop by examining the changing role of universities within society. Participants were challenged to reconsider traditional measures of university excellence, arguing that global rankings predominantly reward research outputs, citations and reputation while often overlooking the societal value created through community engagement. The session therefore positioned the Engaged University as an institution whose success is measured not only through academic excellence but also through its contribution to public value and sustainable development.

The presentation introduced the evolution of knowledge production from Mode 1, characterised by discipline-based academic research, towards Mode 4, where research is increasingly driven by sustainability, societal transformation and environmental responsibility. This progression illustrated the need for universities to move beyond isolated disciplinary research towards collaborative knowledge creation involving multiple stakeholders. Participants explored the progression from mono-disciplinary to multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and ultimately transdisciplinary approaches, recognising that complex societal problems require the integration of both scientific and community knowledge systems.

A further focus of the session was the relationship between disciplinarity and the Triple, Quadruple and Quintuple Helix frameworks. These models demonstrated how universities increasingly operate within broader innovation ecosystems involving government, industry, civil society and the natural environment. Participants were introduced to the concept of knowledge co-production as the foundation for sustainable development and were encouraged to recognise communities as equal partners in generating knowledge rather than passive recipients of research findings.

The session concluded with an introduction to participatory approaches, the Three Horizons Framework and the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF), illustrating how participatory methods provide practical mechanisms for enabling universities to contribute meaningfully to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

ANNEXURE C. Session 2

Title: Foundations of the engaged university

Presenter: Prof Lesley Wood (North-West University)

The second session explored the evolution of the Engaged University within both global and Southern African higher education contexts. Beginning with historical perspectives on university development, the presentation demonstrated how universities have evolved from institutions primarily concerned with nation-building and elite education towards institutions committed to social transformation, civic responsibility and public value.

The presentation argued that engagement should not be regarded as a separate university function but rather as a philosophy that reshapes teaching, research and service. Participants examined how teaching becomes community-engaged learning, research evolves into community-engaged scholarship, and traditional service transforms into engaged citizenship through reciprocal partnerships with external stakeholders. These changes reposition universities as institutions that generate knowledge collaboratively while addressing real societal challenges.

Particular emphasis was placed on the institutional conditions necessary for successful engagement. Leadership commitment, governance systems, incentive structures and institutional culture were identified as critical enablers of transformation. Participants discussed how universities can embed engagement within strategic planning, reward systems and academic promotion processes while strengthening links between teaching, research, innovation and community development.

The session concluded by demonstrating the mutually reinforcing relationship between universities and the Sustainable Development Goals, highlighting how engaged universities simultaneously strengthen academic excellence and contribute directly to regional development.

ANNEXURE D. Session 3

Title: Participatory methods and Monitoring & Evaluation

Presenters: Associate Professor Dr Siobhan O'Sullivan and Dr Elizabeth Folan O'Connor (University College Cork)

The third session provided participants with practical guidance on the implementation of participatory research methodologies and participatory monitoring and evaluation systems. Participatory research was presented as an approach that places communities at the centre of knowledge production through collaboration, shared decision-making and mutual respect. Rather than conducting research on communities, researchers work with communities throughout the entire research process.

Participants were introduced to a range of participatory methodologies, including Participatory Action Research (PAR), Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), Citizen Science, Living Labs and Public and Patient Involvement. The presenters emphasised that no single methodology is appropriate for every

context and that successful participatory research requires flexibility in selecting approaches suited to local circumstances and community needs.

Considerable attention was given to participatory monitoring and evaluation, demonstrating how stakeholders can be actively involved in designing evaluation frameworks, collecting data, analysing findings and interpreting outcomes. Qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method and creative approaches were discussed, together with Theory of Change and Logic Models as useful planning and evaluation tools. The presenters further highlighted the importance of ethical practice, particularly in relation to trust-building, power dynamics, inclusion, transparency and the remuneration of community co-researchers.

Interactive Vevox polling undertaken during the session revealed that participants strongly associated participatory research with inclusivity, empowerment, innovation, co-creation and sustainable solutions. The results further demonstrated that while many participants were already experienced in Participatory Action Research and Community-Based Participatory Research, relatively few had worked with Living Labs or Citizen Science, highlighting future areas for capacity development.

ANNEXURE E. Session 4

Pilot projects demonstrating Participatory Approaches

This session showcased six pilot projects undertaken by consortium partners, illustrating how participatory approaches can be implemented across diverse institutional and disciplinary contexts. The full pilot report is available as Deliverable 5.1

Theme	Pilot Project	Lead Institution
Theme 1: Inclusive Education, Youth Empowerment and Community Agency	Re-imagining Community Education Post COVID-19	North-West University (NWU)
	Community-Driven SDG Awareness and Empowerment Workshops	University of the Western Cape (UWC)
Theme 2: Climate Resilience, Environmental Sustainability and Safe Communities	Community Carbon Footprint Initiative	University Technology Mauritius (UTM)
	Creating Safe Urban Schools through Community-Led Nature-Based Solutions	University of Zambia (UNZA)
Theme 3: Climate, Food, Health and Community Well-being	Climate Adaptation to Elevated Temperatures in Dwellings	University of Mauritius (UoM)
	Climate-Resilient Agricultural Practices through Participatory Knowledge Exchange	University of Lusaka (UNILUS)

Theme 1: Inclusive Education, Youth Empowerment and Community Agency

- 1) The **North-West University** Science Shop project demonstrated how Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR) was used to mobilise unemployed youth as community assets while addressing educational inequalities within South African townships. The project illustrated the importance of long-term trust-building, community ownership and creative participatory methods including photovoice, digital storytelling and community mapping.
- 2) The **University of the Western Cape** presented a community engagement initiative aimed at strengthening SDG literacy among community organisations. Using the Integrated Participatory

Framework, participants engaged in values clarification, capability mapping and SDG alignment exercises that enabled community organisations to recognise their existing contribution to sustainable development while identifying opportunities for strengthening partnerships with higher education institutions.

Theme 2: Climate Resilience, Environmental Sustainability and Safe Communities

- 3) The **University of Zambia** implemented a participatory pilot project to assess the impact of flooding on school learners in the flood-prone communities of Kanyama and Kalikiliki, Lusaka. Working closely with schools, parents and community members, the project strengthened student community engagement while identifying flood risks, mapping vulnerable areas, and developing practical school flood preparedness guidelines. Findings revealed that flooding significantly disrupts education, with 80% of learners affected, low levels of community preparedness, and major infrastructure challenges such as poor drainage and roads. The project demonstrated how universities can work alongside communities to co-create locally relevant, nature-based solutions that strengthen resilience and contribute to SDGs 6, 11 and 13.
- 4) The **University of Technology, Mauritius** developed a participatory Community Carbon Footprint Initiative to promote climate action by engaging students and staff in understanding and reducing their environmental impact. Using community-based participatory action research and crowdsourcing, the project established the university's first baseline carbon footprint assessment and identified transport as the largest contributor to emissions. The initiative highlighted the gap between environmental awareness and behavioural change while demonstrating the value of trust-building, carbon literacy and participatory monitoring in encouraging sustainable practices. The project now serves as a scalable model for behavioural change and climate action that can be replicated across higher education institutions within the EngageSDGs network, contributing to SDGs 11, 12, 13 and 17.

Theme 3: Climate, Food, Health and Community Well-being

- 5) The **University of Lusaka** demonstrated how participatory agricultural extension methods supported climate-resilient farming among smallholder farmers in Zambia. Through Farmer Field Schools, participatory action research, community workshops and practical demonstrations, the project strengthened climate adaptation while facilitating knowledge exchange between researchers and farming communities.
- 6) The **University of Mauritius** presented an innovative project addressing thermal comfort, public health and climate resilience. The project combined community surveys, co-creation workshops, passive building design and nature-based solutions to improve household resilience to increasing temperatures associated with climate change. The initiative demonstrated how participatory approaches can simultaneously contribute to community empowerment, policy development and evidence-based climate adaptation.

The six pilot projects illustrated the versatility of participatory approaches across education, community development, climate resilience, agriculture and public health. They provided practical evidence that the principles introduced during the earlier sessions can be successfully translated into sustainable interventions that generate measurable public value while strengthening partnerships between universities and communities.

Annexure F: Session 5

Title: Developing an Integrated Participatory Framework for Achieving SDGs in the SADC Region

Presenters: Dr Franz-Ferdinand Rothe (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) and David Nyaloke

Session 5 introduced participants to the rationale, development and practical application of the **Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF)**, a key output of the EngageSDGs project. The session demonstrated that the successful implementation of participatory approaches is not determined by the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) being addressed, but rather by selecting the most appropriate participatory approach based on the project's objectives, context, resources, participants and desired outcomes. Participants explored why participatory approaches are essential for achieving the SDGs by enabling localisation, inclusion, community empowerment, improved needs assessment and knowledge co-production. The facilitators highlighted the risks associated with selecting inappropriate approaches, including methodological exclusion, power imbalances, literacy and digital barriers, and the use of methods that are poorly suited to local contexts. Particular emphasis was placed on the need to move beyond generic Global North toolkits towards approaches that respond to the realities of the SADC region.

The session unpacked the methodology used to develop the IPF, drawing on an extensive review of more than **30 participatory toolkits, 120 research studies**, and expert interviews to create a structured decision-support framework. Participants were introduced to the four primary decision criteria that underpin the framework: **project objectives, available resources, participant characteristics and local constraints**, and **project scope**. These criteria assist practitioners in selecting the most appropriate participatory approach and associated methods for specific development challenges rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all solution.

A significant component of the session focused on demonstrating the prototype **Integrated Participatory Framework**, an online decision-support and knowledge platform that enables users to filter participatory approaches according to their needs and context. The framework provides detailed guidance on each participatory approach, recommended methods, practical examples, advantages, limitations, supporting resources and case studies, while also linking approaches to local SADC realities and the Leave No One Behind principle. Participants explored how the framework functions as both a **knowledge hub** and a **dynamic decision-making tool**, supporting higher education institutions in designing more effective community-engaged research and SDG interventions. Session 5 demonstrated that the Integrated Participatory Framework provides a practical mechanism for strengthening the quality, relevance and impact of participatory research and community engagement across the SADC region. By enabling practitioners to make evidence-informed decisions about which participatory approaches and methods are most appropriate for their specific contexts, the framework represents a major contribution to building institutional capacity for knowledge co-production and sustainable development.

Annexure G: Interactive poll results

Benefits of participatory approaches

- Inclusivity emerged as the dominant concept.
- Other recurring themes included empowerment, innovation, co-creation, trust, sustainability, partnerships, community voice and social justice.

- Interpretation: participants clearly associate participatory approaches with collaborative knowledge production and community empowerment rather than consultation alone.

Previous experience with participatory approaches⁵

- Participatory Action Research (68%)
- Community-Based Participatory Research (61%)
- Citizen Science (16%)
- Living Labs (11%)
- Public and Patient Involvement (3%)

There is already considerable regional experience with PAR and CBPR, while newer participatory approaches remain opportunities for future capacity development.

Preferred evaluation methods

- Interviews
- Mixed methods
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Creative methods

Participants favour qualitative and mixed-method approaches capable of capturing lived experience and contextual understanding.

Annexure H. Participant evaluation

Participant satisfaction

The evaluation demonstrates extremely positive participant perceptions across almost every aspect of the programme. Most respondents selected Agree or Strongly Agree for statements relating to:

- clarity of workshop objectives;
- relevance of the content;
- strengthening understanding of participatory approaches;
- understanding the Engaged University;
- knowledge co-production;
- participatory monitoring and evaluation;
- facilitator expertise;
- peer learning opportunities; and
- usefulness of the IPF, SDG Toolkit and Open Educational Resources.

⁵ Also see results from CoP survey

Only isolated responses indicated disagreement, suggesting consistently high levels of satisfaction across participants.

Learning outcomes

Participants consistently reported that they had developed:

- a better understanding of participatory approaches;
- increased appreciation of knowledge co-production;
- greater confidence to design participatory initiatives;
- improved understanding of participatory monitoring and evaluation;
- clearer understanding of universities as societal partners.

Several respondents specifically commented that they had previously practised participatory approaches without fully understanding the underlying theory and frameworks.

Most valuable sessions

Although all sessions received positive feedback, participants repeatedly highlighted:

- Session 1 because it introduced the conceptual foundations.
- Session 3 because it explained practical methodologies and monitoring.
- Session 4 because the pilot projects demonstrated real implementation.

Many respondents indicated that seeing practical examples made the theoretical concepts much easier to understand.

Intended application

Participants indicated that they intend to:

- redesign community engagement projects;
- strengthen participatory research;
- implement CBPR;
- introduce Living Labs;
- use the IPF;
- apply the SDG Toolkit;
- strengthen teaching;
- redesign research projects;
- develop institutional community engagement strategies.

Many specifically referred to moving from outreach towards genuine partnerships.

Barriers identified

Participants identified remarkably similar institutional barriers. The most common were:

- limited funding;
- insufficient institutional support;
- lack of staff capacity;
- resistance to change;
- limited understanding of participatory approaches;
- inadequate reward systems;
- time constraints;
- weak stakeholder buy-in.

These align closely with the barriers discussed during the workshop itself.

Future capacity development needs

Respondents requested:

- further practical training;
- monitoring and evaluation;
- institutional implementation guidance;
- Communities of Practice;
- mentoring;
- additional case studies;
- regular online workshops;
- continued networking opportunities.

This provides strong evidence supporting the planned asynchronous five-module programme.

Community of Practice (see annexure H)

One of the strongest findings is participant willingness to remain engaged. Nearly every respondent indicated that they wish to:

- join the Community of Practice;
- participate in the extended virtual programme;
- continue collaborating with consortium partners.

This demonstrates that the workshop generated sustained momentum beyond the one-day event.

Representative participant reflections - Voices from the Workshop

"Universities are not stand-alone institutions; we need each other together with our communities to change and build a better world."

"Moving from a transactional outreach model to a collaborative, power-sharing ecosystem."

"Community engagement can be creative and so much fun."

"Universities should become embedded in communities."

"The workshop helped me understand how to co-create knowledge with communities."

"Participatory approaches provide practical tools for addressing societal problems."

"moving from a transactional outreach model to a collaborative, power-sharing ecosystem"

"universities are not stand-alone; we need each other together with our communities to change and build a better world"

Annexure I. Analysis of Participant Reflections from evaluation survey

Quantitative responses

The post-workshop evaluation survey, providing quantitative feedback on the relevance, quality and impact of the EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme. The Likert-scale responses demonstrate **very high levels of participant satisfaction**, with almost all statements receiving average scores above **4.0 out of 5**, indicating broad agreement that the programme achieved its intended learning outcomes. The findings suggest that participants regarded the workshop as highly relevant to their professional contexts and believed that it significantly strengthened their understanding of participatory approaches, engaged universities and the practical application of participatory methodologies for SDG implementation.

Relevance and quality of the programme

Participants responded positively to the design and delivery of the workshop. The highest levels of agreement related to the clarity of the workshop objectives (mean = **4.30/5**) and the relevance of the workshop to participants' institutional or professional contexts (mean = **4.04/5**). Similarly, respondents agreed that the programme addressed key SDG engagement challenges facing the SADC region (mean = **4.00/5**). These findings indicate that participants recognised the workshop as addressing contemporary challenges facing higher education institutions and considered the content to be directly applicable to their own institutional environments.

Knowledge and understanding

One of the strongest outcomes of the evaluation was the reported increase in participants' knowledge of participatory approaches and the Engaged University. Participants agreed that the programme:

- strengthened their understanding of participatory approaches in higher education (mean = **4.09/5**);
- improved their understanding of universities as engaged and responsive societal partners (mean = **3.96/5**);
- enhanced their understanding of participatory approaches more broadly (mean = **4.23/5**);

- improved their understanding of the shift from knowledge transfer towards knowledge co-production (mean = **4.23/5**);
- increased their understanding of how participatory approaches support SDG localisation (mean = **4.41/5**); and
- strengthened their understanding of participatory monitoring and evaluation (mean = **4.32/5**).

The consistently high scores across these statements demonstrate that the programme successfully achieved its principal educational objective of developing participants' conceptual understanding of participatory engagement within higher education.

Practical skills development

Beyond conceptual understanding, participants also reported gaining practical competencies that they could apply within their own institutions. Respondents agreed that they had:

- gained practical knowledge of participatory tools and methods (mean = **4.45/5**); and
- become more confident in designing participatory SDG initiatives following the workshop (mean = **4.23/5**).

These findings are particularly significant because they indicate that the programme moved beyond awareness-raising and contributed to participants' confidence in implementing participatory approaches within teaching, research and community engagement activities.

Facilitator effectiveness and learning experience

Participants evaluated the quality of facilitation extremely positively. The facilitators were regarded as:

- highly knowledgeable (mean = **4.73/5**),
- successful in encouraging participation and interaction (mean = **4.62/5**), and
- effective in creating opportunities for peer learning and knowledge exchange (mean = **4.48/5**).

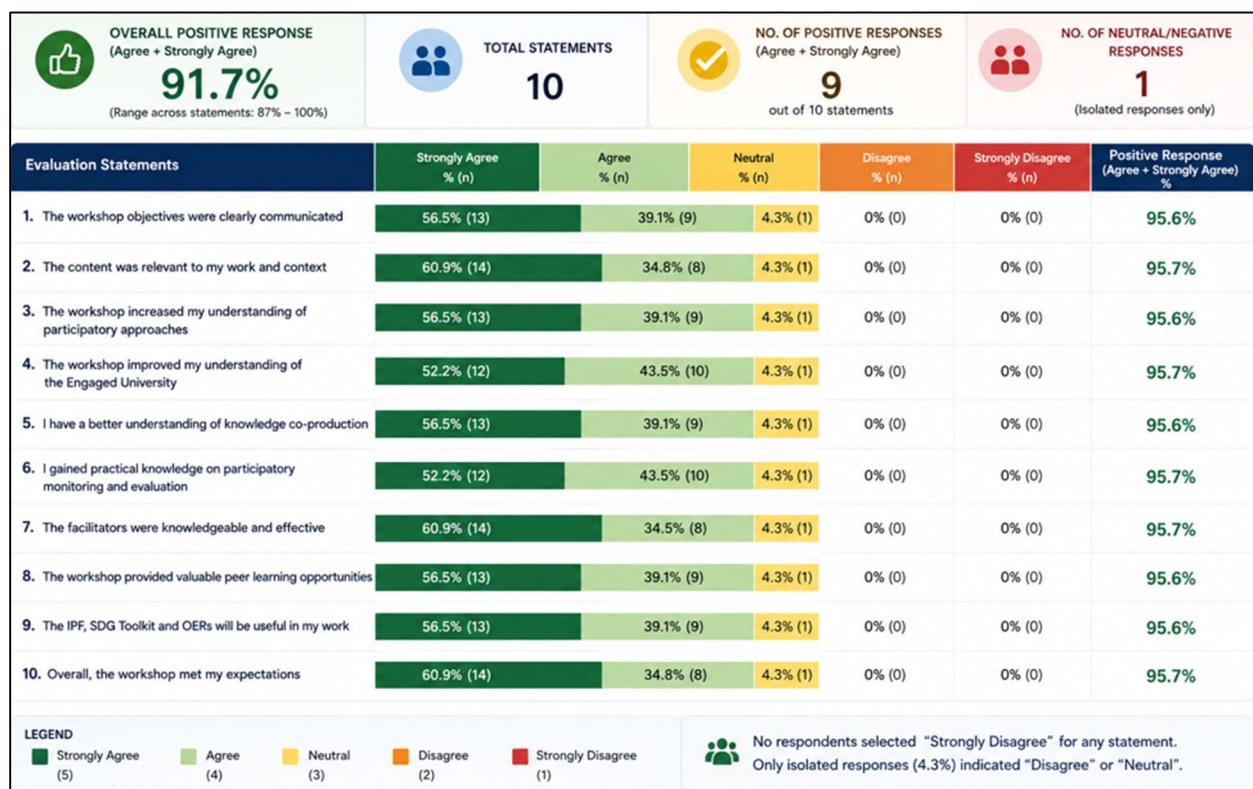
Respondents agreed that the pacing and organisation of the workshop were appropriate (mean = **4.36/5**) and that the virtual delivery format successfully supported meaningful participant engagement (mean = **4.32/5**). Notably, the facilitators' knowledge received the highest rating of any statement within the survey, reflecting participants' confidence in the expertise of the consortium presenters.

Value of the EngageSDGs resources

Participants expressed strong confidence in the practical value of the resources introduced during the workshop. The thematic pilot case studies were viewed as useful and transferable to participants' own institutional contexts (mean = **4.23/5**). Similarly, participants believed that the Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF), the SDG Mapping Toolkit and the Open Educational Resources would be valuable resources for their future work (mean = **4.23/5**). These findings suggest that the EngageSDGs project outputs are likely to continue influencing institutional practice beyond the workshop itself and provide evidence of the sustainability of the project's capacity development activities.

Conclusion

The Likert-scale evaluation demonstrates that the Capacity Development Programme achieved a high level of participant satisfaction across all dimensions of the workshop. The consistently high mean scores indicate that participants regarded the programme as relevant, well organised and directly applicable to their professional practice. The strongest ratings were associated with facilitator expertise, practical knowledge acquisition, understanding of participatory approaches, and confidence in implementing participatory SDG initiatives. These findings suggest that the workshop successfully balanced conceptual learning with practical application, enabling participants to move beyond theoretical understanding towards institutional implementation. The quantitative findings provide strong evidence that the EngageSDGs Capacity Development Programme successfully strengthened participants' knowledge, skills and readiness to implement participatory approaches within higher education institutions and communities across the SADC region.



Qualitative responses

Applying learning within institutions and communities

Participants consistently indicated that the workshop had equipped them with knowledge that they intended to apply immediately within their own professional contexts. Responses demonstrated a strong shift from conceptual understanding towards practical implementation, with participants identifying teaching,

research, community engagement, institutional planning and doctoral research as primary areas for application.

Many respondents indicated that they would redesign existing community engagement projects by involving stakeholders from the outset and strengthening collaboration between universities and communities. Others highlighted the intention to embed participatory approaches within curriculum development, postgraduate research and institutional research projects, while several participants specifically referred to using the workshop knowledge to develop new pilot projects modelled on those presented during the programme. One participant noted that the workshop had inspired the development of a similar participatory tourism project, while another explained that the knowledge gained would directly strengthen a PhD involving community interaction.

Participants demonstrated a clear intention to move beyond traditional outreach activities towards collaborative knowledge co-production, confirming that the workshop successfully shifted thinking from theory to implementation.

Participatory Approaches most likely to be implemented

The responses indicate that participants intend to adopt a diverse range of participatory approaches depending on their institutional contexts and project objectives.

The most frequently mentioned approaches included:

- Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)
- Participatory Action Research (PAR)
- Living Labs
- Mixed-method participatory approaches
- Community engagement methodologies
- Focus groups and stakeholder workshops
- Community mapping
- Participatory monitoring and evaluation
- Creative methodologies such as Photovoice
- Public and Patient Involvement (PPI)
- The Integrated Participatory Framework (IPF)
- The SDG Mapping Toolkit

Importantly, several participants indicated that rather than selecting a single methodology, they intended to combine multiple approaches according to community needs and project objectives. This reflects one of the key messages of the workshop—that participatory research is not prescriptive but requires context-sensitive selection of appropriate methods.

The strong interest in both the Integrated Participatory Framework and the SDG Mapping Toolkit also demonstrates that participants viewed the practical tools introduced during the workshop as immediately applicable resources rather than purely theoretical frameworks.

Institutional barriers to implementation

Although participants expressed considerable enthusiasm for applying participatory approaches, they also identified several recurring institutional barriers that could limit implementation.

The most frequently cited challenge was limited financial resources, with funding constraints mentioned repeatedly. Participants recognised that participatory approaches require sustained engagement with communities, which often exceeds available institutional budgets. The second major theme concerned institutional culture and organisational support. Participants referred to resistance to change, lack of management support, siloed institutional structures, limited institutional buy-in and insufficient alignment with institutional priorities. Several respondents noted that universities continue to prioritise traditional academic activities over community-engaged scholarship, making it difficult to institutionalise participatory approaches. Capacity constraints also emerged strongly. Respondents highlighted shortages of committed personnel, limited staff capacity, heavy workloads and time constraints as significant obstacles to sustained community engagement. Others pointed to administrative barriers, including lengthy ethics approval processes, bureaucratic procedures and slow project registration systems. A smaller number of participants recognised that successful implementation also depends upon external stakeholder acceptance. One respondent specifically identified the need to secure support from the Department of Basic Education before implementing a proposed pilot project, while another emphasised the importance of ensuring genuine community participation rather than token consultation.

Collectively, these responses reinforce discussions held during the workshop, confirming that the principal barriers to participatory engagement are institutional rather than methodological.

Future capacity development needs

Participants demonstrated strong interest in continuing their professional development beyond the workshop. Rather than requesting additional theoretical input, most respondents emphasised the need for ongoing implementation support.

The most frequently requested forms of support included:

- Continued professional development programmes.
- Practical implementation training.
- Mentoring and coaching.
- Communities of Practice.
- Regular webinars and workshops.
- Access to additional case studies and implementation examples.
- Technical support for using the Integrated Participatory Framework.
- Monitoring and evaluation training.
- Greater dissemination of workshop resources, including presentation slides.
- Financial and institutional support for participatory projects.

Many respondents highlighted the importance of maintaining momentum through regular interaction with other practitioners. Mentorship, project check-in sessions and participation in the EngageSDGs Community of Practice were repeatedly identified as valuable mechanisms for supporting implementation within institutions.

Several participants also recognised that successful institutional transformation requires broader awareness among university leadership, staff and community partners. Consequently, respondents recommended expanding future capacity development activities to include additional universities, management structures and community organisations.

Conclusion

The qualitative responses provide compelling evidence that the Capacity Development Programme achieved far more than increasing participants' knowledge of participatory approaches. Participants demonstrated a clear commitment to applying the concepts within teaching, research, curriculum development, doctoral studies and community engagement initiatives. The diversity of intended applications illustrates that the workshop was relevant across a wide range of institutional contexts and disciplinary backgrounds.

Equally important, participants displayed a sophisticated understanding of the institutional conditions required for successful implementation. Rather than focusing solely on research methods, respondents recognised that participatory approaches require organisational change, supportive leadership, appropriate incentive systems, adequate resources and sustained collaboration with communities.

Finally, the strong demand for mentoring, Communities of Practice and continued professional development confirms that participants view the workshop as the beginning of an ongoing learning journey. This provides strong justification for the EngageSDGs consortium's strategy of establishing a regional Community of Practice and launching the planned asynchronous five-module capacity development programme, both of which will help sustain the momentum generated during the workshop and support the long-term institutionalisation of participatory approaches across the SADC higher education sector.