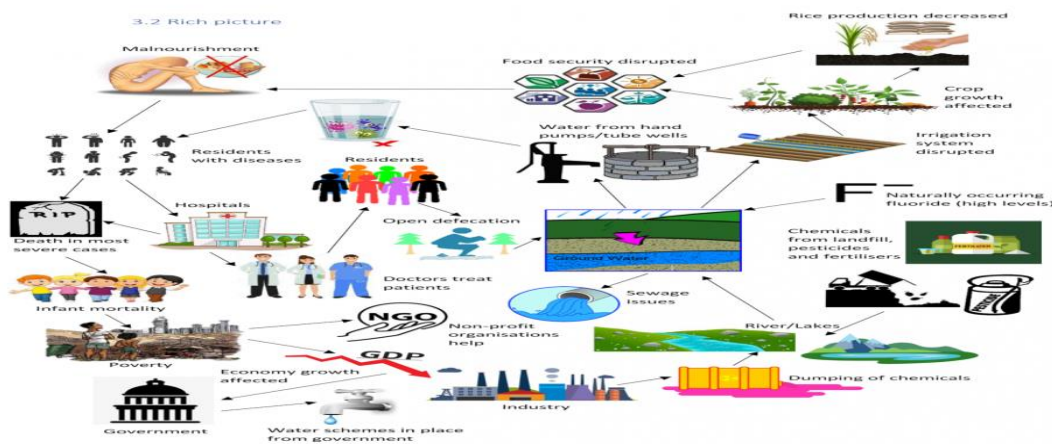


Capacity building workshop on Integrated strategic planning and institutional arrangements for policy coherence, leveraged by systems thinking for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals



23-24 February 2023 (university experts/ lecturers)

Port Louis, venue tbc

Concept Note and Agenda

Background/context

While the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the entire world, it has particularly wrought serious economic hardship on SIDS, including Mauritius which is highly vulnerable to the external environment and the resulting multidimensional impact of the pandemic. Important sectors such as the tourism services sector, the financial and textile sectors have suffered particular hardships resulting in a totally disrupted labour market. Fiscal mitigation measures put in place to keep the economy afloat during the pandemic, including the wage assistance scheme, the self-employed assistance scheme, small businesses support and the food distribution scheme to vulnerable groups resulted in rising debt burdens, making the need for appropriate recovery strategies and access to development finance even more pressing at this time. Long-standing problems are also heightened by climate change, which means escalating costs from the impacts of national disasters. The increase in food and commodity prices seen in 2022, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, has further exposed the vulnerability of those import dependent countries.

While a short-term recovery response following the pandemic has proven to be a necessity, it also presents challenges if only done with short-term lenses. Not only are the scale of financial interventions by Governments in response to the pandemic massive, but interventions aimed at recovery had to be implemented fast, without a possibility for a thorough analysis of the extent to which the immediate crisis response was aligned with a longer-term national development planning for more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development, with a strong emphasis on climate change adaptation. Time-bound national plans are intended to set coherent economic and socio-political objectives for overall national development and are often based on more collaborative approaches involving a wide range of stakeholders rather than top-down rationalist planning of earlier decades. Such planning is not so much a set of decisions as it is an ongoing deliberation among stakeholders that involve negotiation and renegotiation of goals, policies, and actions with the aim to reach decisions that are made technically desirable and politically feasible. Plans have typically a 4 -to 6- year duration and are sometimes related to a longer-term vision document. The long-term perspective in planning is critical to attenuate possible electoral cycle change effects, help build more resilient societies and better anticipate potential risks with the best cumulative impact cross different dimensions of sustainable development.

Many countries, including Mauritius have expressed the desire to become economically more independent, while reducing its import dependency and improving its energy security. The Sustainable Development Goals can be used as an opportunity to rethink the development pathway and direct long-term national sustainable development efforts. The use of system thinking inspired methodologies can be valuable in identifying high-impact policies across goals over different time horizons while enhancing coherent policymaking. This can support governments in defining a pathway towards a more inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Finally, the development of a strategy is not a solution by itself if it is not accompanied by governance mechanisms that enable cross-sector collaboration and more coherent approach to the design and implementation of policies.

The then UN Resident Coordinator Christine Umutoni used the momentum created by the pandemic in 2021 to promote integrated, affordable, and inclusive response planning and link short-term to longer term development. This was done through a series of consultations on green/blue economy, on food systems and on regional collaboration that all emphasized the need to transform the immediate crisis response into a longer-term vision of a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development with a clear emphasis on climate change adaptation.

The Division of Public Institutions and Digital Government of UNDESA and UNITAR and in close collaboration with the Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) from Mauritius and Seychelles have provided initial advisory support through the development of analytical papers on strategic planning, system thinking and policy coherence for sustainable development in Seychelles and Mauritius. The papers illustrate the use of a system thinking approach in policy formulation and decision making and makes the case for integrated policymaking towards a more coherent implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The approach can offer opportunities and leverage points to transform development pathways to increase resilience and a longer-term perspective, visualizes how the crisis can be an opportunity to re-assess socio-economic and environmental performance and how investments can be allocated in areas that provide short -and medium- term resilience, while addressing the most

pressing concerns by the crisis. The reports also highlight the need for institutional reforms and an evolution of the policymaking culture. UNDESA and UNITAR presented the findings during a consultative workshop, called “Joint Initiatives Towards Green Recovery and Long-Term SDG Planning” on 10th February 2022 which was organized by the UN and the government of Mauritius.

The work undertaken by DPIDG and UNITAR since September 2021 has triggered the discussions on the need for better food security and reduced food dependency, the understanding of the urgency to address climate change while using the opportunities of coherent planning and the existence of a Blue Economy framework in Seychelles and green economy work in Mauritius to increase revenue and diversify the economy, all with a view to create sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic growth. The quality of institutions has also been emphasized to support the reform process that is owned by the government.

Following the presentation of the findings, the government of Seychelles and Mauritius requested UN DESA/DPIDG and UNITAR for further support towards a more resilient recovery and development strategy, in alignment with the recommendations as highlighted in their VNR 2020 to progress towards the implementation of the SDGs. This will include institutional reform aspects as well as strengthened policy and institutional coherence and support with the development of a national approach to integrated planning in the context of the national Development strategy preparation.

In support of the new UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Lisa Singh’s interest in strengthening the collaboration with the University of Mauritius, UNITAR and UN DESA/ DPIDG propose to organize a 2-day capacity development workshop with the University of Mauritius which touches upon the potential of the SDG framework for transformation and contributing to the development of sustainable, coherent, and inclusive development pathways. It is expected that this capacity building event would further strengthen the University’s prominent role in addressing the SDGs, its focus on partnership to drive innovation and possibly strengthen the collaboration between the government and the University to better link research with policy planning.

UNITAR and UN DESA/DPIDG would also want to take the opportunity to explore the University’s appetite/ interest in a 3-year collaboration through a Training of Trainers approach in policy coherence, governance, quantitative (modeling) and qualitative methodologies towards “integrated and coherent national recovery strategies promoting social inclusion, macroeconomic stability, effective governance and protection of the environment for Mauritius.” UN DESA, UNITAR and the UN RC Lisa Singh would want to propose to develop an expanded training package for the Universities in Mauritius that would allow the development of qualitative and quantitative (modeling) approaches to system thinking, including with a view to generate forecasts with scenarios of action and inaction and perform integrated cost-benefit analysis. This Training of Trainers approach would allow the University to develop its own competencies in this field while including it in the University curriculum and also supporting the government with its long-term national development planning.

Workshop objectives:

1. Strengthen the **awareness and capacities** of university experts/ lecturers for integrated planning, and policy coherence for the SDGs
2. Provide **space for discussion** on the needs of the university experts/ lecturers in terms of capacities for coherent national development planning

Timeframe 23-24 February 2023 (university experts/ lecturers).

Target group: Lecturers and/or researchers/ experts of different University departments.

Agenda

TIME	ACTIVITY
Day 1	
9 :00 – 9 :15	Opening and Welcome by the University Introduction of trainers from UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), UN Resident Coordinator Organization (UN RCO) Mauritius and participants
9:15 – 9:25	Overview of the workshop objectives Icebreaker on the value of SDGs for participants
9:25 –10:10	SDGs and national development planning The Sustainable Development Goals as a paradigm shift: their development (from MDGs to SDGs), principles and purpose: quiz, presentation, and discussion Mainstreaming of the SDGs and national development planning: common approaches, examples, and discussion (national development planning, budgeting, INFF, M&E, the development of a national indicator set) Specific challenges regarding the implementation of the SDGs in SIDS
10:10– 10:45	SDG Fitness Test and debrief
10:45 – 11:00	Break
11:00 – 12:30	SDGs, data and evidence Governance challenges associated with the implementation of the SDGs: how to improve the effectiveness and legitimacy of policy decisions 11 Principles of Effective Governance with an emphasis on sound policymaking and the science-policy interface in practice

	<p>SDGs and the importance of evidence: relation between university/academic world and the government</p> <p>The importance of data: data disaggregation, global SDG indicators and national SDG indicator frameworks to reflect national priorities</p> <p>Evaluative evidence: quantitative (econometric) and qualitative approaches</p>
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00- 15:30	<p>SDGs and Systems Thinking I</p> <p>Qualitative approach based on Systems Thinking: causal loop diagrams applied for Mauritius – presentation of the paper on “Strategic planning, Systems Thinking and Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development: Mauritius country report” (2022): context and methodology</p> <p>Discussion and Q&A</p>
15:30 – 15:45	Break
15:45- 17:00	<p>Understanding Modelling Tools for Sustainable Development and the relation with national development planning</p> <p>Macro-economic modelling and Assessing Climate, Water, Land and Energy Strategies and Systems (CLEWS) by UN DESA/ Economic Analysis and Policy Division (referring to past experience, mainly in the area of Energy and possible broader application of CLEWS for simultaneous consideration of food, water and energy security)</p> <p>Discussion on CLEWS and its application to date in different countries/regions and its potential in terms of supporting the national development planning process in SIDS.</p>

TIME	ACTIVITY
Day 2	
09:00 – 09:15	Debriefing on Day 1
09:15 –10:15	<p>SDGs and Systems Thinking II</p> <p>Principles of Systems as a Theory of Change</p>

	<p>Breakout session – ST-1</p> <p>Feedback in Plenary and discussion/ Debrief/ Q&A</p>
10:15– 10:45	<p>Presentation on System Dynamics and quantitative modelling with some illustrations</p> <p>Reflection</p>
10:45 – 11 :00	<p>Break</p>
11:00 – 12:30	<p>SDGs and governance</p> <p>Voluntary National Reviews and the High- Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: state of play and challenges ahead</p> <p>Institutional coherence as a precondition for Policy coherence</p> <p>Stakeholders’ engagement: the role of stakeholders, identification, analysis, and mapping of stakeholders</p> <p>Institutional readiness for policy coherence: the state of play at the University</p> <p>Breakout session on institutional arrangements</p> <p>Plenary feedback and Q&A</p>
12:30 – 14:00	<p>Lunch break</p>
14:00- 15:30	<p>Discussion on 3-year cooperation between University, UNDESA, UNITAR in close collaboration with UN RC Mauritius.</p>
15:30-16:00	<p>Wrap up and evaluation questionnaire</p>