

***Policy coherence for COVID-19 response and recovery: What can we learn from sound policy making in Africa?***

**Ivonne Lobos Alva**

**Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)**

# Objective for this presentation

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To present the results of the study and jointly find answers to the following questions:

- 1) Does your country have strategies or mechanisms in place for policy coherence similar to the ones being presented? If so, are there indications of how well they have worked in practice?**
- 2) Out of the policy coherence tools, methods and strategies mentioned in the presentation, which ones do you consider capacity gaps for your country's government or yourself/your organization?**

As you hear the presentation, feel free to share your experiences and answers to these question in the chat and/or during the Q&A section.

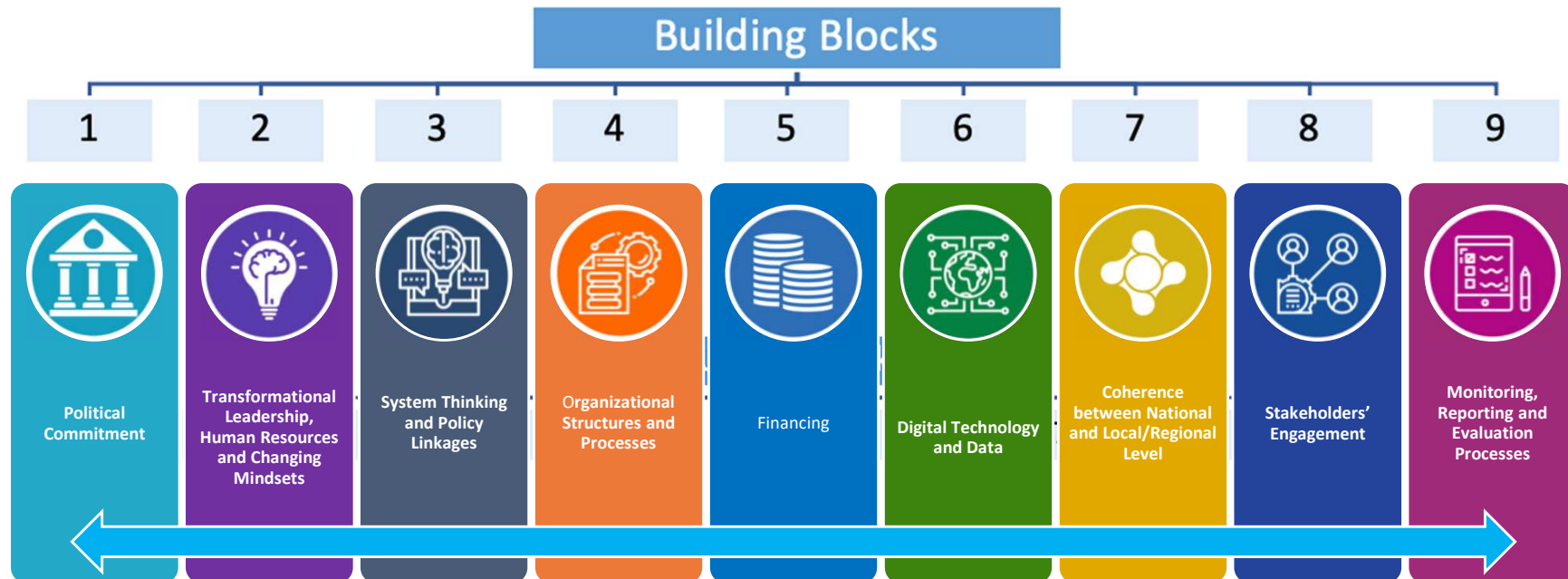
# Re-defining coherence in the times of COVID-19

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- **COVID-19 response and recovery are issues of policy coherence.** The decisions made, and the strategies put in place, can lead to short term recovery or to building back in a more sustainable and equal manner.
- As the situation unfolds and given the immediate priority to ensure a rapid recovery, there is a **risk that plans for a “decade of action” advancing the SDGs are side-tracked.**
- If the SDGs and Agenda 2063 take a back seat to COVID-19 recovery in terms of priority setting and policy design, then it will be crucial to carefully **“re-define” policy coherence in the times of COVID-19: this will mean to promote policy integration and the minimization of potential trade-offs between objectives as much as possible.**

# Framework for this paper: *Good enough coherence*

(CEPA and UNDESA Readiness Assessment)



Source: UNDESA Readiness Assessment on Institutional Arrangements for Policy Coherence to Implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

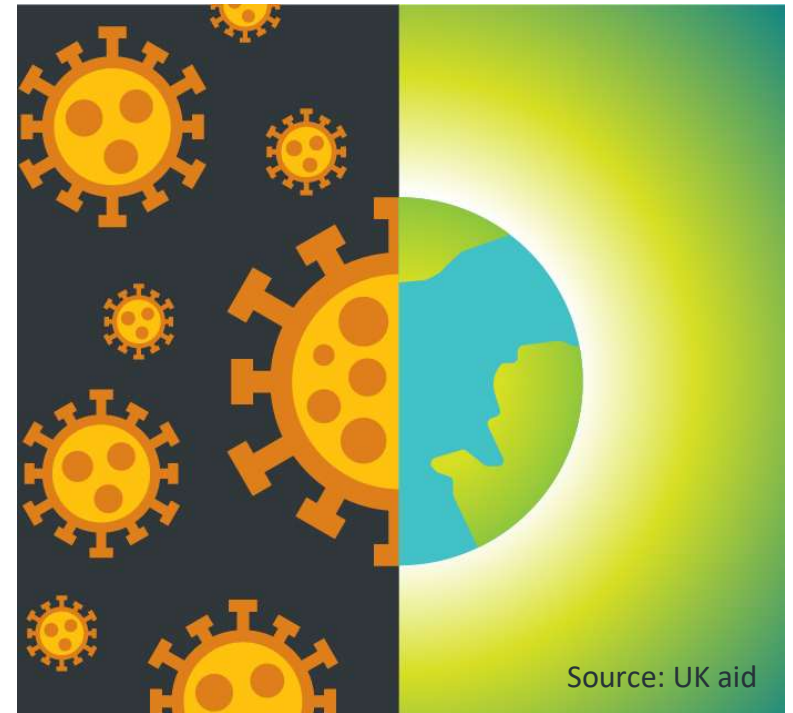
At the core of the report, a sample seven African countries were selected for in-depth research. **Ghana, Madagascar, Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia** are reviewed. In addition, **Uganda and Cote d'Ivoire** were selected as good practice case studies.

# Examining policy (in)coherence in Africa:

## 1) COVID-19 response and recovery plans

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- No single country in Africa has fully recovered from the pandemic but on the bright side, **recovery scenarios from COVID-19 will draw further attention to health, well-being, and sustainability.**
- COVID-19 has amplified existing **issues of institutional fragilities and vulnerabilities, as well as revealed additional ones.**
- Enabling conditions tend to become more important than plans and strategies when it comes to implementation
- There is a need to focus on high priority issues, but potential trade-offs should be analysed
- Immediate response and recovery efforts need to start considering long term impacts and include green investments



Source: UK aid

# Examining policy (in)coherence in Africa:

## 2) High level commitment for policy coherence

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- There is variation in Africa from one country to the other when it comes to **selecting the lead coordinating unit for SDGs implementation** in the central or federal government
  - Countries continue to make significant progress in integrating the SDGs into national development plans and sectoral strategies
  - To make policy coherence operational, it is key to combine high-level commitment with the mobilization of more technical parts of government
  - The importance of ensuring the agility of institutions and bodies arises as a key learning from the COVID-19 pandemic
- **Challenge to policy coherence created by overlaps in sustainable development agendas** which creates reporting fatigue and a disconnect. Hence, UNECA, the AUC, and APRM are being urged to **develop integrated monitoring and evaluation tools** to track Agenda 2063 and the SDGs (APRM, 2021)

# Examining policy (in)coherence in Africa:

## 3) Transformational leadership and changing mindsets

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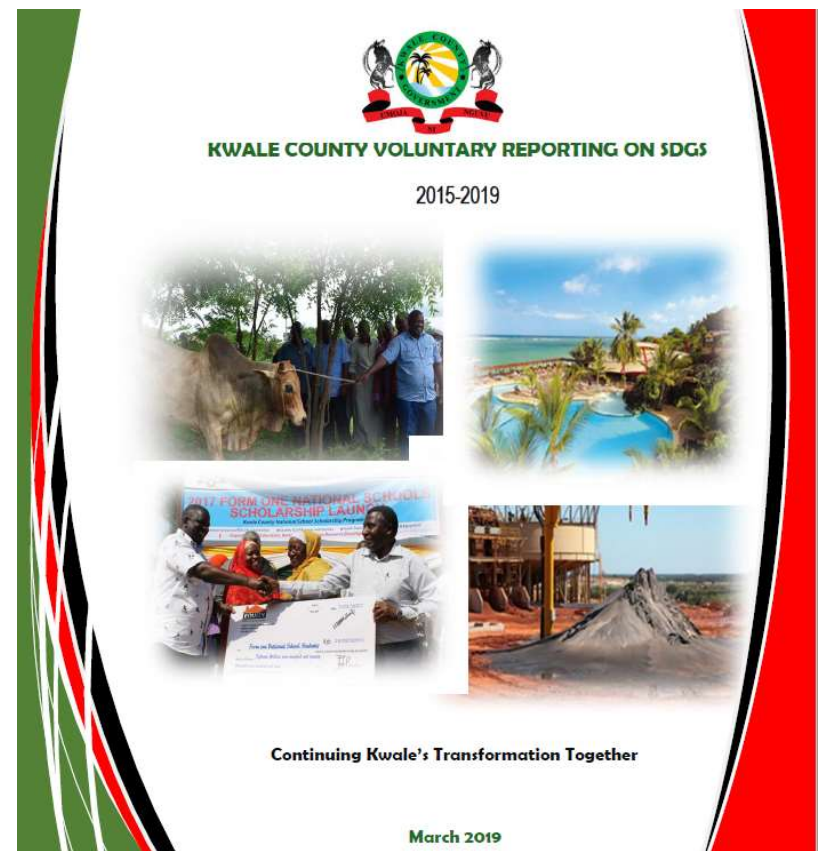
- **Beyond implementing formal changes** to rules and structures, **policy coherence requires new mindsets**, capacities, and competencies to ensure that broader sustainable development values guide public servants' behaviours.
- There are positive examples of multiple actors collaborating and working together in new ways to respond to the pandemic
- When it comes to effective leadership, corruption is a key issue to change in civil servant's mindsets
- Africa enjoys a general mindset of collaboration due to past challenges



# Examining policy (in)coherence in Africa:

## 4) National-regional coherence

- The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the **key role of local actors** in maintaining public services and for the achievement of a coherent policy approach to respond in times of crisis.
- Local governments have experienced an expansion of their roles as a result of the pandemic, but they often lack the capacities to properly perform these roles
- Monitoring and reporting offer a strategic opportunity for more vertical coherence, starting by building links between Local and National Voluntary Reviews





# Examining policy (in)coherence in Africa:

## 5) Systems thinking

- **The prioritization of themes or SDGs should be embedded in a systems approach, in order to avoid undesirable impacts on adjacent policy areas.** Systems thinking offers a more-integrated perspective and a number of proven concepts, tools and methods to improve our understanding of the complex systemic issues which threaten the future.
  - Systems thinking is not mainstreamed in African countries but necessary to avoid unwanted trade-offs
  - These examples are not the rule, but rather the exemption. These analyses also focus exclusively on the national level
  - Local levels, while being the ones where policy issues converge, are often the least equipped to handle integration



# Examining policy (in)coherence in Africa:

## 6) Stakeholder engagement

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- Stakeholder engagement is at the core of policy coherence approaches.  
***Stakeholders should have fair and equitable access to the decision-making process in order to balance policy debates and avoid the capture of public policies by narrow interest groups*** (CEPA)
- There is still some way to go for the meaningful engagement of stakeholders in Africa
- African governments should better utilize the process to develop their VNRs to engage stakeholders
- Positive examples are available to draw lessons for other countries in the region

# Examining policy (in)coherence in Africa:

## 7) Financing policy coherence

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- Policy coherence requires **sufficient funding for the correct functioning of coordination mechanisms, monitoring and reporting, and for stakeholder engagement**. According to UNECA, Africa needs about US\$600 – US\$614 Billion annual incremental expenditure for the implementation of SDGs.
- There is lack of national estimation of the cost of implementing effective policy coherence strategies. Such an exercise would inform the formulation of a resource mobilization strategy
- The limited sources of funding available to implement sustainable development agendas make it imperative to have a well-designed fundraising and spending plan
- Budgets need to be better aligned to the planning process to implement the SDGs

## Way forward: Promising approaches identified and what can be learned and harnessed across the region

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- The ability of a government to consistently design and implement coherent policies for sustainable development post COVID-19 will depend on the **mechanisms, tools and processes** used by the administration to coordinate planning, policy, budgeting, and regulatory development
- African countries need to use **more sophisticated tools** and approaches for policymaking
- Building the **capacity of leadership** cannot be overstated for its importance for policy coherence
- In terms of **stakeholder engagement**, communication and information sharing remain critical
- **Vertical coherence** is another salient issue based on the review conducted for this paper

## Way forward: Promising approaches identified and what can be learned and harnessed across the region (continued)

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- **Long-term vision and planning** horizons are essential for supporting present and future needs in a balanced manner
- **Coordination mechanisms can only be effective if they go beyond information sharing.** A good emerging practice is to provide coordination mechanisms with a clear mandate to anticipate and resolve policy divergences and tensions arising from different sectoral interests
- **High level arrangements** are crucial to institutionalize support for coherence and sustainable development agendas but fail to provide the necessary processes to maintain effective implementation
- **There is no strong institutional basis for coherence decision making, therefore, common reporting mechanisms for SDGs and Agenda 2063 become important**

# Policy coherence capacity gaps in Africa

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Capacity for shadow reporting

Budget alignment

Meaningful stakeholder engagement

Tools for systems thinking

Transparency

Improving vertical coherence

Improved coordination

Integrated monitoring and evaluation tools

Local government capacity

Long-term strategic vision

Training to change mindsets

Long-term COVID-19 recovery plans including green investments

Government-wide capacity-building gap assessments

Selection of accelerator SDGs

Debt management

Closing the digital divide

Guidelines to link VNRs and VLRs

Reducing domestic revenue gap

Leadership skills

Peer to peer learning

Resource mobilization strategy

Anti-corruption strategies

Quality of public spending

# Specific capacity needs per country

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<b>Ghana</b>	Prioritization of catalytic SDGs and application of systems approach to assess potential trade-offs (e.g., trade-offs of strengthening the agri-food system). Improvement of local governments capacities in the framework of Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs). Debt management.
<b>South Africa</b>	Meaningful civil society engagement. Financial management and anticorruption.
<b>Madagascar</b>	Meaningful civil society engagement. Budget alignment. Resource mobilization strategy.
<b>Zambia</b>	Improving vertical coherence and long-term COVID-19 recovery plans.
<b>Kenya</b>	Resource mobilization strategy, tools for systems thinking, bridging the digital divide.
<b>Uganda</b>	Anticorruption, effective public spending, transparency.
<b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>	Improvement of local governments capacities. Meaningful stakeholder engagement.

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The paper can be downloaded [here](#)

For comments and follow-up: [ivonne.lobos@sei.org](mailto:ivonne.lobos@sei.org)