Unisa Annual Interdisciplinary Academy Research Stream 4

Sustainable Development Goals for Society (SDGs4S)

Stream Leader: Prof Godwell Nhamo (PhD) - Institute for Corporate Citizenship, Unisa

The year 2015 was significant in many respects. It marked the conclusion of a critical global development agenda of all times – the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (AfSD). The 2030 AfSD enshrines 17 indivisible Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets from which research opportunities arise. The central motto from the 2030 AfSD is ‘Let no one be left behind’.

Across the globe, the challenge of domesticating and localising the SDGs in terms of national and local development priorities requires a combination of technical, scientific as well as administrative and political input. It is clear that a collaborative research approach is needed in order to stay true to the SDGs’ inclusive and bottom-up approach. Of particular interest, is the notion that the SDGs represent a development agenda that should be realised by both the developed and developing countries? This provides researchers across and within disciplines with endless novel opportunities to engage with the SDGs. Hence, through the SDGs, the world hopes to conclude by 2030 the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The abridged version of the SDGs is shown in Box 1.

Box 1: Abridged version of the SDGs

- Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development


This research stream provides the lenses upon which inter, trans and multidisciplinary research can take place to address challenges focusing on the people and the planet. To this end, the following twin main

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Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.
research questions are stipulated: (1) How best can key stakeholders (government, civil society, business, etc.) engage, domesticate, localize and implement the SDGs in the context of Industry 4.0, Africa Agenda 2063 and other global landmark decisions and agreements? (2) What innovative ways should be considered to scale up SDGs implementation, especially at the local government level and within the context of national development plans and visions? To address the set research questions, a number of Project Streams (PS) will be established linked to the SDGs. In the 2019 programme, the resource persons and their esteemed participants, will co-create a curriculum that include appropriate research methods focusing on the following and other key issues:

1. Understanding the historical timelines leading to the ratification of the SDGs, including the unfinished business of the MDGs.
2. Intimate with the SDGs, with the view to identify possible research areas drawing from the already set targets and United Nations indicator framework.
3. Understanding SDGs domestication and localisation, with a focus on youth and how ICT, social media and other modern platforms can be harnessed to take SDGs to the lowest levels of society.
4. Understanding the need to draw-up SDGs monitoring and reporting baselines
5. Draw-up the research agenda, including big and quick wins leading to world class innovations and the development of prototypes that can be deployed and provide solutions for the world’s poverty eradication challenges.
6. Dealing with, and researching thought leadership for effective climate change adaptation
7. Understanding Industry 4.0 in the context of SDGs

Stream Programming:

- April 08–10: Opening of the Annual Interdisciplinary Academy (Unisa Florida Campus)
- June 10: Proposal Writing Workshop (Unisa Florida Campus)
- July 22: GIS and Remote Applications Workshop (Unisa Florida Campus)
- August 26: Writing for Publication Workshop (Unisa Florida Campus)
- November 04-08: Week-long Interdisciplinary Summer School (Venue to be confirmed)

Faculty/Resource Persons:

1. Prof Godwell Nhamo (PhD): Institute for Corporate Citizenship, Unisa
2. Prof Daniel Tevera: Professor, Department of Geography, Environmental Studies and Tourism, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
3. Prof Eliana Villa: Eliana Villa, Professor and an Engineer with a PhD in Industry and Organizations from the National University of Colombia, Colombia
4. Prof Kevin Mearns: Full Professor, Department of Environmental Sciences, University of South Africa, South Africa
5. Prof Willem Fourie: Associate Professor and Coordinator of the South African SDG Hub (www.SASDGHub.org), University of Pretoria, South Africa
6. Prof Mulala D Simatele: Professor of Environmental Management & Sustainability Science, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa
7. Prof Chukwumerije (Chuks) Okereke: Professor in Environment and Development, University of Reading, United Kingdom.
8. Dr Bongani Chavalala: Independent Researcher, Exxaro Chair in Business & Climate Change, University of South Africa, South Africa
9. Dr Charles Nhemachena: Environmental/Agricultural Economist, International Water Management Institute, Southern Africa Office, South Africa
10. Dr Alexio Mbereko: Lecturer, Child Sensitive Social Policy Programme, Women’s University in Africa, Zimbabwe

11. Dr Dube Kaitano: Lecturer, Ecotourism Management, Vaal University of Technology, South Africa

12. Ms Mapulana Tshangele: Director, Climate Change Mitigation, Department of Environmental Affairs, South Africa

13. Ms Roseanna Avento: Coordinator for Global and Transnational Education Services at the University of Eastern Finland (UEF), Finland

14. Mr Joseph Olanyo: Journalist, communications specialist, media trainer, and advisor from Uganda, East Africa, Uganda

15. Ms Julia Lopes: United Nations University, Japan and Rede Clima (Brazilian Global Climate Change Research Network), Japan

16. Mr David Chikodzi: Lecturer and Researcher, Great Zimbabwe University, Zimbabwe

17. Prof Edson Gandiwa: Dean, Chinhoyi University of Technology, Zimbabwe.

Minimum requirements for participants:

Honours, Master’s, or Doctoral degree in the areas addressed by the Sustainable Development Goals or postgraduates (including postdoctoral fellows) interested in extending their knowledge and embark on research related to the SDGs4S research stream.