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Sustainable Development Goals training and education

Sustainable Development Goals training for public officials

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit to the Committee of Experts on Public Administration the paper prepared by Committee member Abdelhak Saihi, with contributions from Linus Toussaint Mendjana.

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Sustainable Development Goals training for public officials

Summary

The present paper, prepared for the Committee's nineteenth session, is devoted to the training of public officials on the Sustainable Development Goals. At the eighteenth session of the Committee, many participants had expressed the wish to focus on the training of public officials as an essential component for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the present paper, emphasis is placed on the importance of both the initial and the ongoing training of public officials for the achievement of the Goals. The Goals that should be the subject of such training, the target audiences, the potential content of the training and its structure and appropriate teaching methods are also presented, with a focus on the processes of the training programmes. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations for policymakers.

I. Introduction

1. The Sustainable Development Goals constitute an ambitious and comprehensive framework for addressing development needs at the global, regional and national levels. For the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals to be able to be achieved, the various stakeholders must have the necessary technical, institutional and organizational capacity. This will also ensure the implementation of a wide range of initiatives covered by the Goals.

2. At the eighteenth session of the Committee, many participants had expressed the wish to focus on the training of public officials and to consider it an essential component of the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. Countries have adopted a variety of policies for the achievement of the Goals. Those that have achieved high growth rates had experienced a substantial accumulation of physical capital. However, subsequent studies have shown that the contribution of human capital was underestimated. Such growth should not depend solely on material resources, but also on human resources through their development and evaluation with a view to reaching the desired level of development and human welfare. The need for a training plan in administration, as well as different programmes and tools for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals are examined in the present paper.

4. The present paper, prepared for the Committee's nineteenth session, is devoted to the training of public officials on the Sustainable Development Goals. The importance of initial and ongoing training of public officials for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is highlighted in the paper, which also covers the objectives that should be set for Sustainable Development Goals training; the target audiences, the possible content of the training; as well as its structure and appropriate teaching methods. The paper concludes with a series of recommendations for policymakers.

II. Need for Sustainable Development Goals training in public administration

5. Developing countries aiming to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals before the 2030 deadline could benefit exponentially from an improvement in the performance of public sector employees as well as the enhancement of the resources and strategies used by public institutions for the achievement of these Goals. The importance of the development of human resources must be recognized, and the latter must be trained to ensure that public officials are able to acquire knowledge and expertise commensurate with the Sustainable Development Goals. The development of training programmes is necessary and even indispensable for the achievement of the Goals.

6. The need to develop training programmes for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals appears at several levels, the most important being how these programmes help to improve the performance level of staff by providing them with the skills needed for the achievement of the Goals.

7. These programmes are an effective means of addressing the challenges of all institutions, particularly with regard to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, since they enable organizations to study their strengths and weaknesses as well as the opportunities and risks with regard to the effectiveness of human resources.

8. The training programmes play an important role in the training of employees to adapt to changes in economic and social systems, and to improve their knowledge of scientific and technological development.

9. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals calls for adaptation to changes in the world in a variety of areas. It gives employees self-confidence and experience. By helping to reveal past errors, it also helps to reduce the likelihood of future errors.

III. Definition of Sustainable Development Goals-related training

10. Sustainable Development Goals-related training is an investment. It enables countries to enhance the skills and productivity of their workforce, while improving their quality of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a value-added activity that facilitates the adaptation and flexibility of the people in the face of challenges.

11. Among the many definitions of the term “training”, we have selected the following two:

(a) “Training is a set of planned learning activities. It is designed for the acquisition of knowledge that can enable individuals and groups to adapt to their socioprofessional environment. That contributes to the achievement of the organization’s effectiveness objectives. Training arises from an organizational and professional need and is normally aimed at achieving specific objectives for a given group of employees”.

(b) “Training is a set of planned actions, means, techniques and support through which employees are encouraged to improve their knowledge, behaviours, attitudes, skills and mental abilities, which are needed both to achieve personal or social objectives, and to adapt to their environment and adequately perform their current and future tasks”.

12. There is agreement in these two definitions that training is the tool that enables individuals to acquire new knowledge in order to improve their know-how or to master new technologies, so that they can be more competent in their present and even future positions.

13. For its part, capacity-building is defined as the means by which skills, experience and technical and managerial capacities are developed within an organizational structure. Training does not necessarily and directly result in capacity-building. For capacity-building to be implemented in the public sector, Sustainable Development Goals-related training must explicitly focus on the public sector. Capacity-building must also be addressed not only at the individual level, but also at the level of the organization and, more globally, of society as a whole.

IV. General aims of Sustainable Development Goals training

14. The Sustainable Development Goals training cycle is an integral part of human resources management and is closely linked to the orientations of public administration. It should allow stakeholders to achieve the following objectives:

(a) Acquire the tools and instruments for promoting and facilitating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

(b) Identify the most appropriate practices;

(c) Strengthen their skills at all levels of implementation;

(d) Strengthen their potential with regard to adaptation at work, technological changes and career development;

(e) Select competent people and use them according to their profile in Sustainable Development Goals-related programmes.

15. The fundamental objective of capacity-building is the acquisition of the tools for assessing and addressing critical issues related to policy choices and methods of implementation among development options, based on an understanding of the environmental potential and limitations and perceived needs of the people of the country concerned.

16. Sustainable Development Goals training is provided in key areas related to sustainable development and provides a platform for the exchange of knowledge among government officials, non-governmental and international organizations, the private sector, civil society, academic institutions and the United Nations system.

17. The substantial increase in training services is more far-reaching, reflecting both the expansion of the network and the ongoing demand for capacity-building at the local and national levels.

18. The training programmes must focus on capacity-building in order to create an environment with appropriate policies, legal frameworks and institutions conducive to the development of the appropriate human resources. The programmes must include a series of actions designed to help participants to enhance their knowledge, skills and understanding, and to develop the attitudes needed to initiate the desired developmental change.

19. Any training programme designed should include the following actions:

- (a) Identifying the target groups;
- (b) Determining the specific objectives of the training programme;
- (c) Determining the content and duration of the training programme (which depend inter alia on the country context and the public administration system);
- (d) Determining the training methods and the time frame for each method.

V. Target audience

20. The training aims to develop the policy and technical capacities of individuals and associations, as well as those of other actors who will replicate the training with representatives of States, international organizations and civil society.

21. Participants in the training will need support, pedagogical materials, technical know-how and capacities, in order to be able to play their essential role in the assemblage and monitoring of actions to be taken, and hence in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The focus will have to be on the elements that are essential for the achievement of the Goals, and on the transparency and accountability of all relevant actors for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda).

22. While it is crucial to educate the public (not only citizens, but also universities, the private sector and other stakeholders), it is important, above all, to educate local and regional governments, which will have to incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals into their daily work, and, in turn, educate the public. The goal is not only to enhance the capacities of officials and institutions, but also to change mindsets, with the ultimate goal of triggering strategic, policy, regulatory and legal changes.

23. The role of public officials is very important in that regard. Participants must play a major role in the adoption of national plans for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, mainly during the planning phase, but also during implementation, follow-up and assessment of plans. They must advocate the consideration of the interest in and even the need for their skills.

24. Elected representatives and appointed officials will also have to be prepared to develop their own policies, plans, programmes and projects in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. As indicated in the road map, this involves a large number of actors and actions.

25. The actors concerned are not only public officials and public sector employees, but also parliamentarians, key policymakers such as ministers and permanent secretaries, political leaders and managers of local authorities, and the general public.

26. The various actions may include conducting a needs assessment, working with others sharing similar needs and outlook, aligning existing plans with the Sustainable Development Goals, mobilizing resources and building capacity through various actions, including through development cooperation and peer learning, with a view to maximising these actions.

27. The administration comprises many categories of employees, from top to bottom, who are subject to hierarchy and oversight. It is important to distinguish between these categories, and between the objectives of Sustainable Development Goals training plans for each of them.

28. By way of illustration, six groups are proposed below based on positions occupied in different public administrations. The participation of associations (sixth group) in the training would be highly beneficial for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

(a) Group 1: public officials responsible for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals sectoral programme;

(b) Group 2: leaders and managers involved in the management of Sustainable Development Goals-related programmes;

(c) Group 3: regional or departmental administrative officials;

(d) Group 4: central directors of different sectors (health, education, justice, etc.);

(e) Group 5: managers and executives on first assignment;

(f) Group 6: civil society actors, who are directly concerned and must be involved in the training.

29. An example of a Sustainable Development Goals training programme at the local level has been proposed by students of the Ecole nationale d'administration d'Alger as part of a dissertation. An important step in that work was to group ministries and public institutions by community of interest for certain Sustainable Development Goals. The group created in the example below comprises elected representatives in the departments and other regional organizations, directors, delegated administrative staff, and civil society representatives in a province, also called *wilaya* in Algeria (young people, women, entrepreneurs, etc.).

Target audience	Sustainable Development Goals	Programme		Activities		Training objectives
		Content	Duration	Content	Duration	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Director – Chiefs of Service – Civil society representatives 	Goal 17	Presentation and initiation programme for the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda	1 day per week over a period of one month, renewable every three years until 2030	Conference of experts on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, and on the need to achieve them for a better life for all	1 day/month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Raise awareness of the problems and transform the members of the target audience into actors working to implement the 2030 Agenda. – Ensure that the department integrates the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals into the planning paper
				Seminar to present the details of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the 169 targets	3 days/month	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Director – Chiefs of Service – Civil society representatives 	Goal 8	Entrepreneurship support and job creation programme	10 days	Conferences with speeches by several entrepreneurship and job creation experts, and their impact for a better life	1 day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Promote strategies that foster entrepreneurship and job creation – Facilitate business start-up and highlight niches to be exploited based on the department specified
				Seminar on measures to be taken to facilitate entrepreneurship and job creation	1 day/week for 3 weeks	
				Seminar on the identification of niches in the area to be prioritized based on specified needs (<i>wilaya</i>)	1 day/week for 3 weeks	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Director – Chiefs of Service – Civil society representative 	Goal 7	Programme for the rationalization of electricity use	1 day per week for one month	Conference of experts on renewable energies and methods for reducing the use of electrical energy	1 day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Encourage alternative energies – Educate the public about these energies

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>Programme</i>		<i>Activities</i>		<i>Training objectives</i>
		<i>Content</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Duration</i>	
				Seminar on how to present renewable energies in the <i>wilayas</i> , in particular in public lighting	1 day	– Ensure that the various administrations targeted introduce the use of these energies in their future projects and accomplishments
				Seminar on the introduction of renewable energies in urban areas	1 day	
				Workshop for reflection and exchange of views and experiences on the introduction of renewable energies in daily life	1 day	

VI. Content of the training

30. The training workshops must include activities to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, its 17 Goals and 169 targets, as well as practical ways of achieving them.

31. Each training workshop is devoted to thematic areas, defined according to the needs and priorities of the regions served. The training programmes provide access to knowledge, resources and best practices, while encouraging multi-stakeholder collaboration for sustainable development.

32. One of the lessons learned from public sector training experiences is that subnational data are essential for determining the achievement of objectives across the country. This is why, in the Sustainable Development Goals road map, emphasis is placed on the need to develop specific indicators for each territory, in order to ensure that the data collected are used, that stakeholders are included in the follow-up and evaluation stages at the local and national levels, and that national reports on progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals also reflect local accomplishments.

33. With regard to ongoing training, when selecting candidates, it is important to take into consideration several criteria: (a) position occupied; (b) tasks and nature of activities; (c) level of responsibility; (d) university degree; and (e) involvement in Sustainable Development Goals-related programmes. The consideration of a wide range of selection criteria will ensure that the training objectives, such as educating the candidates about Sustainable Development Goals programmes, assimilating the objectives of these programmes, and acquiring tools and instruments for the management and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, are met.

34. In general, the training must first address the concept of sustainable development, the Sustainable Development Goals and their application, and the choice of methods of application and communication associated with the Sustainable Development Goals. In any case, the training programme will be diversified and oriented towards a homogeneous group of participants. For example, the model below shows a national training programme in the environmental sector, in Algeria. It brought together the Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Energies; the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, including the Forestry Directorate; the Ministry of Industry and Mining; the Ministry of Energy, including the Agency for the Promotion of the Rationalization and Use of Energy; the Ministry of Housing, Urban Planning and Urban Development; the Ministry of Water Resources, including the National Water Resources Agency; the Ministry of the Interior and Local Authorities, including the Civil Protection Directorate; and the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, including the Centre for the Development of Renewable Energies. The following Sustainable Development Goals were addressed: clean water and sanitation (Goal 6); responsible production and consumption (Goal 12), measures on combating climate change (Goal 13), aquatic life (Goal 14), terrestrial life (Goal 15) and partnerships for the achievement of the Goals (Goal 17).

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>Programme</i>		<i>Activities</i>		<i>Training objectives</i>
		<i>Content</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Duration</i>	
–Ministry –Central and Executive Directors	Goal 6	Governance programme for water and wastewater management: to enable the measurement and monitoring of water quality and wastewater contamination across the country.	3 years (renewable) in order to meet national needs even to go further (catalytic effect)	Awareness seminar	2–5 days	–Awareness-raising, training and identification of national legislative and budgetary measures in 2020
	Goal 12			Action plan	8–12 months	
	Goal 13					
	Goal 14					
	Goal 15					
Administrator	Goal 17					–Exchange of best practices between different countries, for example under the auspices of the World Health Organization; the conference programmes should include topics such as water recovery, desalination, rational use of water, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies
		Programme for building capacities for water quality measurement and wastewater monitoring: (standards, guidelines, data collection criteria (where and when), key performance indicators)	2–4 years	Conferences	2 or 3 days	
				Bilateral exchange of programmes	5–10 days	
Engineers				Participation in global standardization Groups		– Participation in international exchange programmes with 3 or 4 countries
		Exchange programme on water use: expand support for international cooperation and strengthen the	3 years	Pilot projects	12–18 months	

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Sustainable Development Goals</i>	<i>Programme</i>		<i>Activities</i>		<i>Training objectives</i>
		<i>Content</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Content</i>	<i>Duration</i>	
		capacities of the World Health Organization and its member countries concerning water- and sanitation-related activities and programmes		Workshops	10 days	– Dispatching of delegations to observe best practices in other countries
		Build partnerships with other countries		Technical study tour	8–15 days	– Invitation of delegations from other countries to Algeria

VII. Choice of teaching structures and methods

35. The Sustainable Development Goals training has two components. The first concerns, as mentioned earlier, current and incumbent staff; the second is aimed at pupils and students destined for work in the civil service following their initial training.

36. Active methods (role play, case studies, simulations) in the form of workshops or group work with the presence of a facilitator will be prioritized in ongoing training.

37. Initial and diplomatic training requires conventional teaching methods, associated of course with exercises, practices and professional meetings. As it is important that the participants acquire mainly practical knowledge, active methods such as seminars, conferences and field training, need to be used.

38. Strategic human resources management remains a priority in the acquisition of skills and competencies related to the Sustainable Development Goals. Workshops, conferences, memorandums, briefings and online platforms are necessary for participants to take ownership of the Sustainable Development Goals in general, and to become familiar with human resources tools. It is also important to keep the skills of civil servants up to date and to ensure that they are aligned with technological advances ([E/C.16/2018/4](#)).

39. In that respect, the training infrastructure available for civil servants must be adequate. Some examples of infrastructure are the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration, comprising institutes and schools of public administration and faculties of public administration and management in universities worldwide; the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, which is the global scientific body in the field of public administration and management; the African Association for Public Administration and Management, which organizes annual round tables, and the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network.

40. Other more specific examples at the national level include the Addis Centre for Sustainable Development at Kotebe Metropolitan University, in Ethiopia; the institute that offers Sustainable Development Goals training to parliamentarians in Ghana; the African Local Governance Academy, which develops training programmes for municipal managers focusing on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals; and the Commonwealth Secretariat, which devotes some of its capacity-building sessions to issues related to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

41. A specific example of collaboration between the United Nations system, the Government of Kenya (through the Kenya School of Government) and the African Union Development Agency on the training of public officials on the Sustainable Development Goals is the symposium on building the capacities of public institutions for transformation, innovation and ethical governance with a view to implementing the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 in East Africa, held in Nairobi from 16 to 18 October 2019. The principal outcomes of the symposium included the importance of providing public officials with new capacities to implement both agendas in the region, and the urgency of implementing the 11 principles of effective governance of the Economic and Social Council, to fight corruption and improve transparency. The symposium focused on the common interest of initiating programmes for young people, women and persons with disabilities in order to harness their potential for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda worldwide and Agenda 2063 in Africa.

VIII. Conclusion and recommendations

42. The initial and ongoing training of public officials is an essential element for the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is paramount in any action aimed at achieving the 17 Goals.

43. The choice of target audience, teaching methods and resource persons remains a priority that national and local governments must take into consideration.

44. The training programmes should focus on practical cases, inspired by the daily reality of each country. This entails strong mobilization of resource persons who have traditionally been found among public officials in particular. The resource persons will then train the others, as some of them will attend train-the-trainer sessions.

45. The cost of training has not been addressed in the present paper, since it depends on the countries involved and the manner in which they calculate the delivery of training in all its aspects and activities.

46. Based on the foregoing, the following specific recommendations may be considered priorities:

- (a) Define the categories of staff involved in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals programmes;
- (b) Draw up a training programme agenda covering at least three years;
- (c) Define the training priorities;
- (d) Centralize the Sustainable Development Goals training for trainers and decentralize it for all other public officials;
- (e) Generalize the initial Sustainable Development Goals training for future managers and executives;
- (f) Minimize the cost of initial and ongoing training;
- (g) Develop a network for all Sustainable Development Goals training programmes in the different countries;
- (h) Involve civil society associations in the different training cycles;
- (i) Design training programmes taking into account the reality on the ground;
- (j) Ensure that the United Nations system supports the various Sustainable Development Goals training courses;
- (k) Give the Committee's experts the opportunity to support the training courses through regional points (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, etc.).