



CLIMATE AND SDG SYNERGIES



Virtual Learning Series

Summary of Webinar 1:

Making the Case for Integrated Climate and SDGs Action

15 December 2020

“Making the Case for Integrated Climate and SDG Action” was the first webinar in a Learning Series aimed at providing practitioners from the Global South with tools they can use to apply climate and SDG synergies. In keeping with the recommendations of the 2020 [Climate & SDG Synergies Consultations](#), the Learning Series has been organized jointly by UNDESA, UNFCCC and UNITAR to facilitate practitioner learning and inform the development of training modules to be rolled out in 2021.

Webinar 1 focused on the "Why" question, with the aim of helping participants make the case for integrated action. Speakers presented the logic participants can use to advocate for applying climate & SDG synergies to raise ambition and advance their NDC, SDG and recovery objectives in synch. Evidence was shared tying climate action to faster job growth and poverty reduction, improvements human health, food security, and resilience. Many of the speakers spoke to their personal experiences as advocates for integrated sustainable development policies, suggesting ways to bring climate & SDG synergies into local agendas, whilst policymakers are focused on managing the crises generated by the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Key take-away:

- The SDGs, economic recovery and climate ambition go hand in hand. One cannot be achieved without the other.
- Rather than territorial, professional communities and experts should see our challenges as different side of the same goal. Make the case with arguments such as:
The single most important global agreement for human health is not a health agreement but the Paris agreement. We cannot guarantee health outcomes without more ambitious climate action.
- Go beyond models to apply a systems approach or framework that adequately captures climate, environment, social and economic dynamics
- Scenario-building and modelling are not technical exercises but opportunities to enable and encourage ambitious plans and implementation. Participation and engagement is a core part of the work – both to build support and strengthen local capacities.
- Energy efficiency and renewables [among other objectives] can be most effectively achieved where they are linked or integrated to existing initiatives. For example, Working with ministries, organizations and community initiatives to include energy efficient construction in support for poultry farmers
- **Cultivate champions** inside of sector Ministries, communities, businesses and organizations. Empower them with arguments, evidence and recommendations tailored specifically to their bottom line, enabling them to make the case for integrated climate & SDG action.

- **Change mindsets** to get away from a fixation with trade-offs. Leadership is critical. National leaders as well as organizational leaders need to champion climate & SDG integration; and have the vision and stamina to see it through. Where leadership is lacking, peer discussions can open minds. Bring leaders and practitioners together to learn from another country or organization.
- **Avoid “crisis mode”**: Decision-makers in crisis mode [given the Pandemic] tend to revert to what they know and understand (i.e., investing in fossil fuels). Explain WHY it is important to not be crisis mode, but rather achieve short term impacts, while advancing medium- and long-term objectives.
- **Get the facts straight**: Tools such as modelling, and scenario building are essential to make the case. Modelling enabled South Africa’s power utility, for example to demonstrate that the path to renewables is cheaper than coal. Unbiased computer-generated facts must underpin the business case.
- **Build a narrative that bring facts to life by going beyond silos**: Explain how the “factual case” would work in practice to advance environmental, socio-economic objectives. For example, renewables are a cheaper pathway than coal, but the transition would have huge impacts on mining communities. Elaborate how the transition will realistically benefit them and advances socio-economic objectives. Given that moving from coal to renewables was not a one-to-one job replacement. Eskom included plans to stimulate local manufacturing; repurpose resources to expand livelihoods in agriculture etc.
- **Collaboration**: No one organization can solve big interlinked and complex problems. Government leadership is necessary to bring all sectors and parts of society on board. Co-create strategies with stakeholders (for example, labour groups, private sector). Focus on enabling professional communities to talk to other communities
- **Speak to your audience and start where they are**: If speaking to finance people and private sector, for example, critical to frame intervention around growth, profits, business risks.
- Positive health arguments for mitigation can take pressure off decision makers, enabling them to make the case for saving people’s lives and improving the health of their communities [rather than climate action]. For example, air pollution kills about 7million people worldwide – and is caused by emission that largely overlaps with those driving climate change. The cost of climate mitigation is more than repaid in direct health benefits.
- Food security in the face of climate change demands nothing short of a transformation in our food systems. “Transforming food systems under a changing climate” is a good example of multisectoral collaboration to advance pathways that tap climate and SDG synergies.

Speaker by Speaker

Moderator: Paul T. Yillia, Director of Operations, The Energy Nexus Network (TENN)

The year 2020 was meant to be a turning point for action on the climate and SDGs. Instead, the world is grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic while climate Change, injustice and poverty continue apace. The Pandemic steepens our challenge by pushing the most vulnerable into poverty and aggravating inequalities within and between countries. The World Bank estimates that by end of 2020, the Pandemic's impacts will cause an additional 88 to 100 million people to live in extreme poverty.

At the same time, we find mounting evidence that low carbon and climate resilient growth can deliver long-lasting social and economic co-benefits. This webinar series aims to help enable practitioners to tap the growing body of know-how to apply climate and SDG synergies in practice.

Leonardo Garrido, Lead Economist, New Climate Economy

[Slide Presentation]

The New Climate Economy (NCE) seeks to overcome the fallacy that climate action is inconsistent with economic objectives. The [New Climate Economy Reports](#) (2014- 2018), draw on evidence to show that, far from than inconsistent, climate and economic objectives are, in fact, mutually reinforcing and co-dependent. Without climate action, countries are increasingly unable to realize their economic objectives. Without economic and social progress, climate action will fall short. The work joins a growing body of empirical evidence demonstrating that climate action can deliver tangible social, environmental, and economic benefits.

At the heart of NCE's work is a conceptual framework that integrates the socio-economy, well-being, natural capital and climate. NCE works with countries to apply the framework, using models/scenario-building to demonstrate the potential to achieve co-benefits. The sources of climate, economic and SDG co-benefits include:

- **Value addition, Income**, driven by: *Higher efficiency in the use of resources; technological progress associated to low carbon technologies*
- **Higher, better quality, better paid jobs**: *Associated with applying low carbon technologies and more, better quality environmental goods and services*
- **Augmented gross national savings** [including via carbon pricing]: *Can pay for (at least a fraction of) the required Investments; Operation and Maintenance costs*
- **Value of externalities**: *Reduction in the Social Cost of Carbon, improves the socio economy through human capital and productivity*
- **Opportunities for vulnerable cohorts/populations**: *work that depends on the availability and quality of primary resources; Increased resilience to shocks affecting disadvantaged groups disproportionately [model distributional]*

The NCE modelling framework was updated to reflect Covid-19 impacts and policy responses. NCE has worked with select and diverse government agencies to do this demonstration work, including in Ethiopia, Brazil, India, Viet Nam, China, Viet Nam, St Lucia etc. Example: NCE contributed to Indonesia's Low Carbon Development Initiative; developing scenarios to illustrate the potential to lower costs/externalities, generate jobs, boost livelihoods.

Lessons learned:

- Go beyond models to apply a systems approach or framework that can adequately capture climate, environment, social and economic dynamics
- Modelling is not a technical exercise but an opportunity to enable and encourage action. Participation and engagement are thus a core part of the work – both to build support and strengthen local capacities.

Mandy Rambharos, Head of Just Energy Transition, Eskom

Eskom is a South African state-owned power utility. The Just Energy Transition office is tasked with setting out a transition to low-carbon utility, international and national climate, energy and socio-economic development objectives.

The challenges facing Eskom and South Africa are steep: Eskom has 54GW of energy 88% is from coal, many older plants that need to be decommissioned. At the same time the country faces a financial crisis, high proportion of population without access to energy; need for poverty reduction and economic growth. Covid-19 has made all the challenges worse.

How to make the case for pursuing climate and the SDGs objectives at the same time?

- 1) Change mindsets:** Need to get away from fixation with trade-offs and “crisis mentality”. Tackling objectives in an integrated fashion helps organizations and stakeholders to understand how they are complementary and reinforcing. Due to Covid-19, decision-makers are in crisis mode and have the tendency to revert to what they know and understand (i.e., investing in fossil fuels).

Recommendations from Eskom’s experience:

- Leadership is critical to bypass crisis mentality and pursue interlinked objectives. National leaders as well as organizational leaders need to champion climate & SDG integration; and have the vision and stamina to see it through.
 - Where leadership is lacking, peer discussions can open minds to what is possible, bringing practitioners together from one country to another.
 - Important to speak to your audience: If speaking to finance people and private sector, for example, critical to frame intervention around growth, profits, business risks.
- 2) Get the facts straight:** Eskom energy modelling [demand, technology curves etc] for example, demonstrated that the path to renewables is cheaper than reinvesting in coal. Unbiased computer-generated facts critical to underpin the business case. Facts are necessary but not sufficient.
 - 3) Go beyond silos:** Explain how to bring the “factual case” into reality, in a way that advances environmental, socio-economic objectives. For example, renewables are the cheaper path, but transition would have huge impacts on communities dependent on mining coal. Critical to elaborate how people and communities can transition in a way that benefits them and advances socio-economic objectives [poverty reduction and growth]. Not a one-to-one job replacement from coal to renewables; so added plans to stimulate local manufacturing; repurpose existing resources to agriculture etc.
 - 4) Collaboration:** Important to accept that no one organization will be to solve big interlinked and complex problems. Requires national government leadership to coordinate and bring all sectors and parts of society on board. Co-create strategies with stakeholders (for example, labour groups, private sector). Explain WHY it is important to not be crisis mode, but to link short term responses to medium- and long-term objectives.

A carbon tax was put into place this year in South Africa - after 10 years of preparation and push back from those who feared the economic impacts, given need for growth. Industry said we can't afford the tax, while the environmental community complained the price was not high enough. The government's extensive stakeholder engagement was critical to

Huda Jaffer, Director, SELCO-Foundation

SELCO works to overcome silos, with energy (SDG7) as its entry point. It understands that SDG7 requires action that goes well beyond supply. A nexus approach is needed to facilitate a transition to renewables and energy efficiency, while reducing poverty and achieving the SDGs.

Why a nexus or integrated approach? In India for example:

34 million full time jobs will be lost to heat stress

2 million people are estimated to die due to the lack of vaccine cooling chains in rural areas

SELCO seeks to advance renewables and energy efficiency as a subset of health, agriculture and other sectors and community initiatives. It works through a broad range of community initiatives, for example to link advances in energy efficiency and green building to support poultry farming.

Given the reality of increasing heat stress and heat stroke in India, SELCO has framed its interventions and evidence around the need for cooling. In drought-stricken areas of India, farmers are struggling. They need heat stroke centers, milking machines etc. The only option for a timely response is decentralized renewable energy.

On the mitigation side: Cities in India have started to mandate solar powered water heating. Cost/benefit analyses help to make the case to city officials.

SELCO works to create champions inside of Ministries, communities, businesses and organizations. This is important for action because health people, for example, may not listen to people from the energy community. For example, the dairy industry has great scope to benefit from decentralized, off-grid energy solutions. Working with health and livelihoods ministry officials, helped them to understand and make the business case from a crisis prevention, development and climate perspective.

SELCO also works with stakeholders in communities so that they have the language and evidence to speak for themselves. For example, poultry workers speaking about how they benefit from energy efficient construction.

Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, Coordinator climate change and health program, WHO

[Slide Presentation]

Tasks for the public health community:

- Understand concretely how health objectives will not be achieved without addressing climate change [and build the fact case/evidence therein]
- Make the case for protecting health from the full range of rising climate costs
- Health care is about 10% of the global economy and 5% of climate emissions, need to make health systems themselves climate resilient and low-carbon.

Start with their core functions, make it simple and speak in concrete terms about how to advance their bottom line.

Example of mapping climate resilience action directly onto core health functions

Example - Air pollution kills about 7 million people around the world, as large as any health challenge. The overlap between emissions driving climate change and air pollution is very large. The cost of global climate mitigation is more than repaid in direct health benefits

Such positive arguments for mitigation. Can take the pressure off decision makers to make the case for climate action, as it enables them to make the case for saving people's lives and improving the health of their communities. Such evidence can be applied the case for carbon pricing, for example, in Pakistan where they want to look at the health implications of carbon pricing.

Single most important global agreement for human health is not a health agreement but the Paris agreement. Cannot guarantee health without more ambitious climate resilience and mitigation. Need to not be territorial but see our challenges as different side of the same goal.

Most NDCs recognize health impact of health and many have health strategies, but connection breaks down in terms of financing health outcomes. Important to stress the need to carry this connection through, to fund climate initiatives that protect and promote health.

COP26 campaign goals are underpinned by health arguments, recognizing the synergies that can advance health and climate objectives. WHO published a manifesto for a healthy recovery from COVID-19 with six prescriptions for a healthy and green recovery. Rather than the usual health priorities, the prescriptions include nature-based solutions, ensuring a quick healthy energy transition, stop using taxpayer's money on pollution etc. Members of the health community can be powerful advocates for climate action, as trusted members and contributors to communities around the world. They have day-jobs however, and thus need the climate & SDG communities to provide clear and simple evidence and directly relevant advocacy messages and recommendations.

Deissy Martinez Baron, Regional Program Leader for Latin America of the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security

[Slide [Presentation](#)]

[Transforming food systems under a changing climate Initiative](#) brought together over 100 partners to identify pathways for food system transformations. The resulting report and work is an example of multisectoral collaboration to advance pathways that tap climate and SDG synergies.

Food security in the face of climate change demands nothing short of a transformation in our food systems. The initiative recommends four key action areas:

- 1) Reroute farming and rural livelihoods to new trajectories
- 2) DeRisk livelihoods, farms and value chains
- 3) Reduce emissions through diets and in value chains
- 4) Realign policies, finance, innovation, and support to social movements.

Two action areas were elaborated in more depth:

Ensure zero agricultural land expansion on high-carbon landscapes [tropical forests and peatlands]

Recommendations:

Improve transparency and accountability of finance and commodity supply chains driving conversion of high-carbon landscapes. [Most such expansion is driven by a few agricultural commodity]

Transform procurement and supply chain policies

Use national policy regulation and enforcement with real-time remote sensing, to secure landscapes.

Use consumer advocacy and media to build awareness of the impacts of purchasing decisions.

Intensify and relocate commodity agriculture

Help farmers make better choices- Take climate services to scale by connecting 200 million farmers and agribusinesses to ICT-enabled bundled advisory services.

Recommendations:

Strengthen capacity to provide actionable climate-informed advisory services to rural communities in climate risk hotspots.

Develop enabling agricultural insurance solutions for farmers and value chains.

Connect the unconnected to ICTs.

Bundle services to reduce costs and enhance value.

Enable de-risking services through public-private business cases and regulatory environment

Develop innovative public-private models to target and reach women, youth and other underserved groups with information and services that address their needs and interests.

The regional CIGAR programme generates evidence to underpin and advocate for climate smart agricultural, food security and related policies. To illustrate synergistic approaches, CIGAR also works directly with Climate smart villages to advance rural development, agriculture, climate and food security objectives

Webinar 1 Speakers:

Moderator: Paul T. Yillia, Director of Operations, The Energy Nexus Network (TENN)

Jobs, Poverty Reduction and Finance:

- Leonardo Garrido, Lead Economist, New Climate Economy [Presentation](#)
- Mandy Rambharos, Head of Just Energy Transition, Eskom

Human Health, Food Security and Resilience:

- Huda Jaffer, Director, SELCO-Foundation
- Diarmid Campbell-Lendrum, Coordinator climate change and health program, World Health Organization (WHO) [Presentation](#)
- Deissy Martinez Baron, Regional Program Leader for Latin America of the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security [Presentation](#)

For speaker bios and a video recording of the webinar visit : <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/climate-sdgs-synergies2020>