

Global Leadership Training Programme for Sustainable Development in Africa

14 October – 13 November 2026

Course Overview

The Global Leadership Training Programme for Sustainable Development in Africa is conducted by UNU-IAS in collaboration with New York University and the University of Johannesburg. It is designed for postgraduate students working in international development with an interest in Africa. This certificate course will provide an opportunity for participants to learn from African leaders about innovative leadership, democracy, civic engagement and public policy. Conducted online, the course includes lectures, workshops, resources and activities prepared by scholars and practitioners in a range of fields (e.g., health, education, technology, engineering, environmental studies, governance, law/human rights) who work in the public and private sectors across Africa. A variety of online teaching modalities and resources will enable participants to consider a variety of leadership approaches undertaken across disciplines, and strategies to strengthen community and civil society engagement, build and enhance human rights, and contribute to sustainable development on the continent.

Objectives

- Create opportunities to engage with African leaders across fields and disciplines (health, education, environment, governance, technology, human rights, etc.) to learn from their leadership skills and understand the strategies they employ to promote sustainable development initiatives, particularly the SDGs.
- Build a network of Asian and African development practitioners (faculty, researchers, staff and graduate students) and facilitate collaboration between organizations on both continents to advance progress on the SDGs and key research priorities.
- Create learning opportunities for all participants to discuss best practices in governance, community mobilization, public management and social innovation, assess their relevance to a range of African contexts and apply as appropriate.

- Build agenda-setting, strategic planning and community engagement skills to foster ethical, relevant and context-specific development practices, while advancing each participant's professional learning objectives and addressing key development planning needs.

Course Schedule at a Glance

The course consists of nine online modules with content provided in an online portal (Moodle). Each module will include a variety of materials (e.g., topical videos, PowerPoint presentations with audio lectures and relevant readings) that will be available online and downloadable. Participants will also meet online approximately three times per week for a 2-hour online engagement in a synchronous face-to-face format led by the co-instructors and with guest presenters from various countries and industries.

17:00–19:00 in Tokyo (JST)

10:00–12:00 in South Africa (UCT/GMT+2)

All classes meet on Zoom

Tentative Program Overview

Subject to change

Week 1: 14 October	Innovative Leadership and Sustainable Development: SDGs for Africa
Week 2: 19, 21, 23 October	Sustainable Development: Research and New Technologies for Sustainability
Week 3: 26 October	Leadership, Human Rights and Participatory Governance
Week 4: 2, 4, 6 November	Building Strong, Inclusive and Participatory Communities: Proposals for the SDGs
13 November	Group Presentations

The course content draws from the expertise of a range of professionals and interdisciplinary development practitioners, combining insights from education, health, environmental studies and government. In addition, the sessions will inform participants about the realities that African leaders face in leading their organizations across various contexts, cultures and countries. While the course is online, synchronous Zoom sessions will be highly interactive and draw on the participants' and presenters' experiences, strengths, challenges and successes in each area in their sector and country. The goal is for participants to learn from each other as well as from faculty and guest presenters. In addition to team building, we will introduce concrete skills for development practitioners to support initiatives that promote civil societies, engaged communities and flourishing locally sustainable economies.

Program Requirements and Grading

Regular attendance, participation and reading of the materials are required. Engagement in discussions during the lectures and on the Moodle discussion board is also expected. Participants are asked to write a five-page interdisciplinary research concept note or project proposal drawn from information in the lectures and readings, and with input from at least two professionals in their area of work. They are encouraged to collaborate with other participants on the concept note or project proposal.

The Certificate of Completion will be based primarily on the following criteria and activities:

1. Participation in all lectures (a minimum of seven out of nine sessions are required)
2. Submission of weekly videos or written contributions to the discussion board
3. Obtaining information and/or solicit advice on the concept note or project proposal from at least two professionals in the field or scholars in the programme
4. Write a five-page concept note or project proposal with team members
5. Presentation of group proposal at the end of the course

Weekly Themes and Topics

Speakers TBC

Week 1: Introduction to Innovative Leadership and Innovative Development

- 14 October *Leadership for Sustainable Development: SDG Agenda for the Continent* (Prof. Carol Ann Spreen, USA and Prof. Salim Vally, South Africa)

Week 2: Sustainable Development: Research and New Technologies for Sustainability

- 19 October *4IR: Technology and Higher Education Transformation in Africa — Lessons and Challenges* (UNU Rector, Prof. Tshilidzi Marwala, South Africa)
- 21 October: *African Leadership for Environmental Sustainability* (Prof. Philip Osano, Kenya)
- 23 October *Intellectual History and Political Economy of Africa: Land and Peoples* (Prof. Natasha Shivji, Tanzania, TBD)

Week 3: Leadership, Human Rights and Participatory Governance

- 26 October *Human Rights Based Approaches to Development* (Hon. Hanif Vally, South Africa)
- 2 November *Social Change and Development: Gender, Migration and Sustainable Livelihoods in the Informal/Formal Sectors* (Prof. Faisal Garba, Ghana)
- 4 November *Rural Development, Environmental Policy and Gender Equality: A Feminist Political Economy Approach* (Prof. Hibist Kasa, Ethiopia, TBD)

Week 4: Building Strong, Inclusive and Participatory Communities: Proposals for the SDGs

- 6 November *Promoting Change in the Urban Ecology: Architecture, Space and Cities* (Prof. Amira Osman, Sudan, TBD)
- 14 November Group Presentations, Feedback and Closing, Certificate Celebration