# Collaboration & Innovation Programme
Summary

In response to the UNITAR 2022 employee Survey, the following programme was designed to increase collaboration across Units and generate innovate initiatives to tackle challenges from the Survey. It was held from September 2022 to January 2023. The intention of the programme was to enhance individual skills in collaboration, systems thinking, self-awareness, relating, and action-confidence. The program built skills to take a systems approach to complex, cross-cutting challenges. And, it used an action-learning methodology for problem-solving, development of prototypes and adapting solutions so they could be proposed for implementation.

The theory of change creates conditions for mindset shifts, relationship shifts, and action shifts needed to support the agency's work, which is structured around the Sustainable Development Goals. The capacity framework is based on the Inner Development Goals (IDGs) and the methodology is drawn from four Senior Scientific Advisors of the IDGs[1]. The programme helped teams increase effectiveness by building capacity for cross-unit collaboration and increased team-member engagement. As a consequence, it created conditions for collaborative leadership, stronger relationships, and action confidence - aligned to the overall strategy. This methodology, when used by UNDP, has been shown to increase effectiveness in addressing complex societal and environmental issues [2] [3]. The overall programme intention is depicted in the Theory of Change and summarised in the objectives.

Objectives:
1. Enhance personal leadership and ability to engage in teams
2. Increase collaboration, engagement, and innovation
3. Work toward cross-cutting priorities such as "Getting the SDGs back on track"
4. Support implementation of the UNITAR Strategic Framework

Theory of Change

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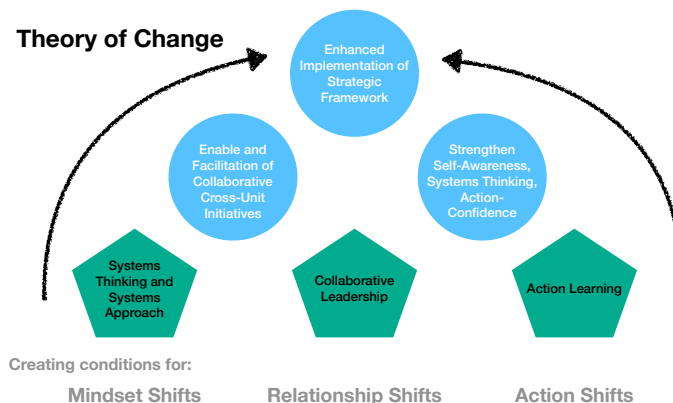
[1] Otto Scharmer, Peter Senge - Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Robert Kegan, Amy Edmondson, Harvard University

[2] Inner Development Goals: Background, Method and the IDG Framework; Growth That Matters AB; Stockholm Sweden; 2021.

[3] https://medium.com/presencing-institute-blog/sdg-leadership-labs-taking-theory-u-into-the-united-nations-60361916b58c

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Overall Programme Design
The programme design is primarily based on the Theory U framework and Systems Thinking from the Presencing Institute, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, successfully used in UN SDG Leadership Labs with 14 UN Country Teams[4]. Competencies in this design are similar, summarised as: building a) inner capacities of self-awareness, sense-making, and ecosystem leadership and b) outer capacities of relational strength, collaboration, and engaged action as shown in the Session Foci and Competency Development Diagram below. The methodology also includes Immunity of Change and Fearless Organizations, detailed below.

The focus of the nine sessions follows the Theory U framework. In Part I, the first five sessions included skill-building in collaboration, emotional intelligence, systems thinking as well as generation of prototypes for initiatives to address issues from the employee Survey. In Part II, the last four sessions support implementation of prototypes, including skill-building in innovation and stakeholder engagement to advance initiatives that support achievement of strategy and resolve challenges.

Collaboration & Innovation Program
Session foci & competency development in the Theory U context
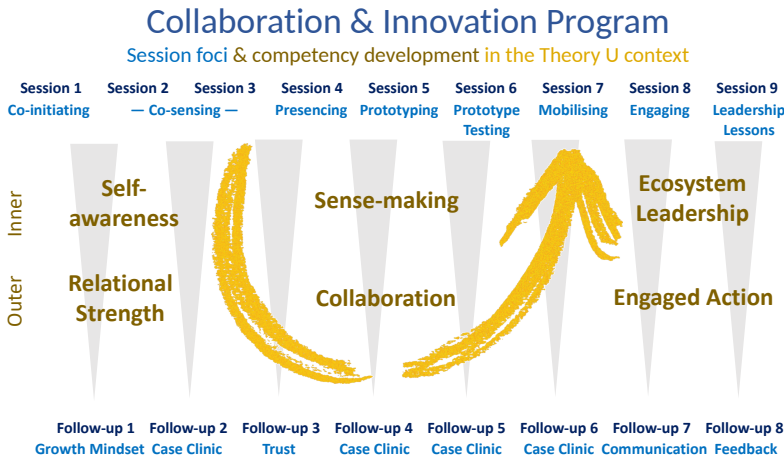
Programme Timing and Participation
The programme was held over a six-month period for 35 colleagues in-person and 45 colleagues online. Each session was six hours in length and spread across two weeks so on-line and in-person participants could share a joint session twice-monthly.

Methodology
When this methodology was used by UNDP, with 400 participants in cross-agency dialogues and SDG Integration labs, 93% of participants said they strengthened their systems thinking, collaboration, and action-learning capacities.[5]

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[4] The UN Country Teams that took part in the 2021 Labs were: Bolivia, Cabo Verde, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Jamaica, Mauritius-Seychelles, Moldova, Mongolia, Serbia, Syria, Tanzania, Uzbekistan. Additionally, 10 countries engaged in 2022 and 3 in an earlier pilot, totalling 27.

[5] https://sdgintegration.undp.org/shifting-mindsets-shift-development-systems-part-1

Other elements of the methodology include 1) the Immunity to Change process (Kegan/Leahy), which help participants delve deeper into releasing patterns blocking them from moving forward; 2) Systems Thinking (Senge) to take a whole-systems approach; and, 3) Fearless Organizations (Edmondson) to help create a culture of innovation and psychological safety. Compassionate Systems Leadership (Senge/Boell) was also introduced. Additional frameworks for innovation include Design Thinking, Making Great Strategy, Designing Organizations for Creativity and Innovation, Learning in Action Technologies, and Adaptive Leadership.

The competency framework is based on the Inner Development Goals, which were designed to help accelerate achievement the Sustainable Development Goals. The IDGs were created in Sweden and globally by many actors, coordinated by the Eskäret Foundation. This comprehensive framework, which was developed in 2021, contains a variety of key methodologies to effectively address complex multi-issue challenges.

Results

An assessment of the programme found an overall increase of 18% in the skills leading to innovation and collaboration, including a:

- 30% increase in the skill of inspiring and mobilising internal and external stakeholders to engage in a project or shared purpose,
- 20% increase in the ability to create and hold spaces for diverse teams to learn and collaborate in a setting of psychological safety and genuine co-creation, and a
- 19% increase in the ability to draw on multiple sources of intelligence (mental, emotional, kinesthetic, sensing) to inform decision making.

Participants reported relevant changes in all areas of the Inner Development Goals, including:

- "**Being** more observant and present." "Leadership, confidence, team work because we are not alone!"
- **Thinking**: "Change takes time but some of the actions we take today can effectively lead to the change we want to see over time."
- **Relating**: "Culture of openness and connection." "Active listening."
- "**Collaborating** with colleagues more meaningfully; we all have similar changes and can only solve them together."
- **Acting**: "Prototyping: we can start with small steps, try things out, and adjust/change. We don't have to plan everything perfectly before taking any action."

The most significant outcome was the culture of openness, trust and collaboration that was built with participants from across divisions and that continues in joint projects that were created in the programme and informal collaboration among colleagues toward shared goals.