



REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXPERTISE  
ON EDUCATION FOR  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Report on “Working with Vulnerable Communities on Climate Action through Non-formal Higher Education and Peacebuilding”

Presented at the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE) Webinar on July 7th, 2021 at 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm EDT

### Hosts of the Webinar

This webinar is brought to you by RCE Salisbury. RCE Salisbury, housed in the Bosserman Center for Conflict Resolution, is acknowledged by the United Nations University and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Directors of RCE Salisbury are Dr. Brittany Foutz and Dr. Brian Polkinghorn. The Bosserman Center for Conflict Resolution is a nonprofit located in Salisbury, Maryland (USA) and the mission of the organization is to promote a systems-based approach to the effective analysis and practical resolution of social conflict. The Center utilizes a teaching hospital model whereby faculty and staff practitioners mentor and supervise both undergraduate and graduate students who take part in center research projects, training, workshop and service programs locally, nationally and globally. Thank you to the Executive Director of the Bosserman Center, Dr. Brian Polkinghorn, for allowing this opportunity.

RCE Salisbury has also partnered with the United Nations Human Rights Council to exhibit this webinar.

### Benefits of Educational Types

Education formats and structures vary in accessibility for communities, as informal and non-formal may present more obtainable opportunities for vulnerable and less privileged groups. As formal education generally takes place in a structured training institution with regulated learning objectives and international learning experiences, it represents a more rigid form of education than non-formal or informal education (Bulgarelli, 2007). In comparison, non-formal education also targets teaching learners through intentional object acts and support, but this stems from less structure and more practical work skills, such as instruction that aids reentering the workforce (EVOC UNESCO, n.d.). The least fixed education type is informal education, which formulates learning experiences from everyday life activities, including those with family, work, and liaise, and it generally does not resolve around intentional nor specific learning objectives (Valchev et al., 2016). As a result, non-formal education walks a middle line for educational formats, which can benefit vulnerable communities as it builds upon experience and competencies, helps learners to develop concrete communities, improves learners’ self-esteem, offers flexibility to adjust to the learners’ needs, and demonstrates practicality for learner’s to implement and utilize learned skills (N.G.O. CIVIS PLUS et al., 2017).

Combining Non-Formal Education With Community Based Learning (CBL)

The flexibility in institutional type and teaching methods of non-formal education offer the advantageous opportunity to combine teaching efforts with local institutions, using Community Based Learning (CBL). This pedagogical approach creates a community service learning and civic education based educational strategy to attract higher education students and pre-service teachers to participate in an educationally transformative and in-depth learning and teaching experience (What Is Community-Based Learning?, n.d.). By integrating higher education students into community learning institutions, these students can enhance their academic studies by also strengthening their sense of community and civic responsibility as they work to analyze and solve community issues by taking action on everyday real world issues (What Is Community-Based Learning?, n.d.). This in turn allows for a joint learning of higher education students and community members as these groups exchange practical resources and intellectual knowledge (Melaville et al., 2006). The practice of community education can help to foster action around central concerns by gathering a group to engage in a common interest through action and reflection, which extends to “personal, social, economic and political needs” (What Is Community-Based Learning?, n.d.).

#### Limitations of Non-Formal Education

Although non-formal education displays a range of benefits for teachers and learners, the absence of a structured curriculum and framework can also lead to mis-management and lack of lesson cohesion. The minimal expectations from both students and teachers can lead to teachers independently setting their curriculum, but can result in absence of documentation of items covered and repetition of learning topics (Singh, n.d.). Consequently, some changes that can alter these realities in developing a regional curriculum framework and resource network for institutes, accreditation systems for learners, relevant learning materials, and professional development training sessions for educators (Singh, n.d.). Doing so can bolster the educational experience to improve the quality of learning. Focusing on the pedagogical and structural deficits in non-formal education can enhance the relationship between learners and educators, “learning architecture”, format of activities, implementation of lessons, and relevance of learning objectives (Fennes & Otten, 2008). As an example, in the past, non-formal education programs faded from use in India as they were ambiguously administered, contained a lack of framework, lacked continuity and accountability, and contained ad-hoc implementation, but in recent years there has been a revival and renewal in non-formal education initiatives that serve basic literacy, second chance literary, accelerated learning, vocational skills, bridging courses, and after school support (Singh, n.d.). The diverse and effective utilization of non-formal education initiatives demonstrates the possibilities for amplifying community-based education schemes to improve public awareness and knowledge.

#### Educational Communities of Practice

Forming networking opportunities through climate education can result in the public, vulnerable populations, community members, and students gaining a community of practice to learn with and from. This reciprocal learning can branch from Wenger’s (1998) theory that learning is a social act where knowledge is about valued enterprises and competencies that allow individuals to engage in the world to produce meaning and learning (Graven & Lerman, 2003). Connecting learners through practice, meaning, identity, and community thus allows individuals to discuss their experiences in a manner that creates meaningful exchanges where communities can explore shared perspectives, social resources, and mindsets to help them jointly engage in action for change (Graven & Lerman, 2003). Lave and Wenger (1991) also state that learning is a participatory phenomenon that involves an individual’s actions in the

world, which is socially, culturally, and historically bound (Norton, 2000). Other theorists further describe these prospective communities of practice to entail the collection of professionals that share a passion on a topic or concern who wish to further their expertise and knowledge on the issue through educational or non-educational interactions (Nihuka, 2012). Overall, forming communities of practice can supply a sustained social network that develops “an overlapping knowledge base, set of beliefs, values, history and experiences focused on a common practice and / or mutual enterprise” (Barab et al., 2004) and actively works to improve knowledge on an acesteined problem in the community. Thus, learning is a social process of negotiating competence in a domain over time that relies on situated cultural and historical contexts that drive the advancement of learning an enterprise over time (Farnsworth et al., 2016).

### Climate Education

Climate education marks a crucial tool for helping the youth and general population to acquire attitudes and behaviors that develop a culture of caring for the climate and ultimately acquiring environmental literacy through a familizarrionf with the vocabulary and terms that depict climate justice (Iberdrola, n.d.). This education relies upon the eco-social competence of society, which ties in closely with knowledge on human rights, citizenships, global issues, and media education (*What is Climate Education?*, 2018). Beginning to educate citizens on eco-competency from a young age is critical as it then provides individuals the ability to adapt to climate change, understand information, calculate their risks, and prepare for the impacts of any climate crisis and consequences that arise (Iberdrola, n.d.). Finland has led an example of incorporating climate change classes into their core curriculum, and depicts the importance of encouraging students to adopt a lifestyle that utilizes renewability, sustainability competence, and respects human rights and natural diversity (*What is Climate Education?*, 2018). In order to acknowledge how a multidisciplinary approach to understanding how climate change impacts our society, a demonstrative teacher's guide encourages the public to recognize that A. climate change is a scientific fact, B. the problem can be solved, C. climate change is a social problem, D. young people are key to solving climate change, E. the importance of climate change and values, F. how to encourage your colleagues to discuss climate change (*What is Climate Education?*, 2018). In order to work jointly to combat the international climate crisis, it is evident that educational tactics can lead the way in preparing individuals with scientific know-how to understand how climate change impacts their daily life, studies, and work.

Many institutions, companies, and governments have taken action to produce educational materials and training materials to inform the general public, and students, on the impacts of climate change. The organization Earth Day disseminates toolkits and resources that are designed for students, educators, and parents to learn about community civic action and climate change, but the lesson activities are mainly geared towards learners aged eight to eighteen and beyond (*Climate Civics Toolkit 2021*). Additionally, this organization works in conjunction with national governments to try and expand climate and environment education to emphasize civic based education. Another climate resource producer includes the Climate Commission for Higher and Further Education Students and Leaders, which is a partnership between between the Association of Colleges, Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges, The Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education, GuildHE and Universities throughout the UK, which aims to prepare and provide support for universities to support students and staff in the changing world and supply employable skills that assist in climate and social justice (EAUC, n.d.). Some of the subtopics that they cover include lowering greenhouse gas emissions and protecting biodiversity; their resources come in the forms of webinars, quizzes, policy papers, sustainability websites, and more

(EAUC, n.d.). The Climate Commissions is also encouraging universities to “ commit to the Global Climate Letter for Universities and Colleges, which is part of the UN Race to Zero, to show sector leadership in the lead up to COP26” (EAUC, n.d.).

Initiatives and Policies for Climate Change Include:

- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)- 1988
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)- 1992
- The Kyoto Protocol- 1997
- UNFCCC’s Green Climate Fund (GCF)- 2010
- International Carbon Action Partnership (ICAP)- 2011
- Paris Agreement- 2011
- European Climate Adaptation Platform (Climate-ADAPT)- 2012
- Climate Action Summit- 2019
- UNESCO Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development program- 2020

United Nations and Government Climate Change Policies and Education

Collaborations for climate justice between international organizations, governmental parties, and the United Nations increased in 1988 when the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) joined to forge the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and established the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (World Nuclear Association, 2017). This alliance also yielded the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which aimed to limit and stabilize greenhouse gas emissions and ultimately produced the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 (World Nuclear Association, 2017). Since 1997, the Kyoto Protocol brought together international developed countries with the goal to reduce emissions by 5.2 percent by 2012, which extended beyond solely carbon dioxide commitments to also include “methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulfur hexafluoride” (World Nuclear Association, 2017). Global agreements to cut down on emissions continued as the COP21 meeting in Paris declared emissions reduction a main priority alongside reducing the temperature increase to less than two degrees; here, 188 nations pledged to reach their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) through dedicated goal setting and national energy adjustments (World Nuclear Association, 2017).

A main proponent of climate change and environmental education includes the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which spreads public awareness and participation through campaigns and education programs that inform and empower citizens to increase their understanding of climate change issues and to take actions (*Education is key to addressing climate change* n.d.). The UNESCO Climate Change Education for Sustainable Development program also works to improve climate literacy and advance global warming cognizance through educational initiatives, such as the Global Action Programme (GAP), Action for Climate Empowerment and the ZOOM campaign (*Education is key to addressing climate change* n.d.). UNESCO emphasises that education is the key tool to empowering citizens to become agents of change, which is why their Climate Change Education shares knowledge through innovative and non-formal education incentives (*Education for Climate Action*, 2021). The importance of climate education has also been recognized by The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Paris Agreement and the associated Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE),

which advocate for stakeholders and governments to issue policies and actions that support education for sustainable development (*Education for Climate Action, 2021*).

Nations that formed the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992 have also recently developed the Conference of the Parties (COP), also known as COP26, and focuses on the level of greenhouse gas emissions (Broom, 2021). COP26 established four goals, including A. creating a change plan to reduce emissions, B. strengthening climate change efforts, C. increasing financing for climate action, D. increasing international collaboration for clean energy and transport (*COP26 Goals, n.d.*). The UN declared 2021 as the “make or break year” for action against climate change and pushes for a global net zero of emissions by 2030 Broom, 2021 (Broom, 2021).

#### Webinar Layout:

- Trainer Introductions
- Non-formal Higher Education and EJ Efforts with Climate Action Reflection Questions
- Non-formal Community-Based Education Structure
- Non-formal Community-Based Education Benefits
- Earth Day Organization Resource Examples
- Climate Commission: HE Climate Action Toolkit Example
- Example of Higher Education Carbon Literacy Program
- Pedagogical Strategies Reflection Questions
- Problem Based Learning Strategies
- Variety of Learning Methods
- Learning By Doing Approach
- Inquiry-Based Learning
- Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding Initiatives Reflection Questions
- United Nations Policy and Agenda
- Education for Sustainable Development’s Global Framework
- United Nations Actions Going Forward

#### Synopsis:

This webinar seeks to examine the possible benefits for creating climate education opportunities through higher education collaboration and community-based learning networks. The authors seek to explore some of the key elements of non-formal education that present advantageous structural and pedagogical approaches to assist vulnerable communities and the general public in learning. From here, the webinar explores several climate commissions and organizations, such as Earth Day and the Climate Commission for Higher and Further Education Students and Leaders, that regularly disseminate resources and toolkits for teachers, students, and learners to gain knowledge on climate change and critical environmental issues. The presentation then further examines pedagogical techniques and methods, such as inquiry-based and problem-based strategies, that incorporate learner engagement with civic education to produce an experiential learning occasion. The authors conclude by reviewing some of the current UN, UNESCO, and international governmental policies surrounding improving climate action education and frameworks to decrease global emissions outputs.

#### Trainers:

Ms. Brittany Bursa, Mphil

Dr. Brittany Foutz  
Dr. Brian Polkinghorn  
Dr. Arun Gandhi

## **Trainers Biographies**

Ms. Brittany Bursa, Mphil

Brittany Bursa, B.A., Mphil. began her pursuit of educational reform as she graduated from the Salisbury University Honors College with a BA in English Secondary Education, winning the John and Mary-Claire Roth Honors Thesis Prize in Spring of 2017 for her work on limiting educational disparities in the USA. Subsequently, she completed a TOEFL certification course, then worked with pre-service university students in Brazil for two years while on a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Fellowship and volunteered with organizations such as EdUSA, the Regional English Office, the US Embassy, and the Access Program. Determined to gain a broader expanse of global knowledge, she began to intern for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research where she created desk reviews focusing on the African continent and topics ranging from cyber-mercenaries to police insecurities. Additionally, she regularly discussed social activism and current world dilemmas in a think tank manner with an international cohort as an Effective Altruism Fellow. She continued to dig into the issues of knowledge, power, and politics as she completed a Masters of Philosophy in Education at the University of Cambridge. There, she conducted research and consultancy work with the Cambridge Development Initiative and Global Research Consultancy Group to advance educational opportunities for women and less affluent students in five African Countries.

Dr. Brittany Foutz

Brittany Foutz, M.A., Ph.D. is a Visiting Professor of the Department of Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution at Salisbury University and is a Co-Director of Salisbury Regional Centre of Expertise, a location acknowledged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations University. This United Nations location focuses on conflict prevention and creative problem-solving. Dr. Foutz has been elected to be on the United Nations Americas Governance Committee and United Nations Americas Strategic Planning Support Committee, and Leader of the United Nations Americas Task Force on Education. Dr. Foutz has her Ph.D. in International Conflict Management from Kennesaw State University. She has served for two years as the Program Manager for the United Nations International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL).

Dr. Brian Polkinghorn

Brian Polkinghorn, M.S., M.A., Ph.D. is a Distinguished Professor of Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution. He was a founding faculty member in the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Nova Southeastern University (1994-2000). Since 2000 he has been the Program Director and founding faculty member in the Department of Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution and Executive Director of the Bosserman Center for Conflict Resolution, a United Nations Regional Center of Expertise at Salisbury University. He has worked in the conflict intervention field since 1985 as a mediator, arbitrator, facilitator, trainer, researcher, academic program developer, conflict coach, dispute systems designer and ombudsman. His primary research and publications are in the areas of environmental disputes, graduate program design and development, post conflict development projects, ADR court program assessment and the evaluation of major federal and state government ADR programs. He has published 50+ articles, book chapters and books and has been the principal investigator or recipient of more than 70 research and service grants. He has worked in scores of countries primarily in the areas of environmental policy dispute intervention, cross-border cooperative enterprises, support of peace talks and civil society training. He is currently facilitating dialogues between Palestinian, Jordanian and Israeli parties on water

rights/usage, waste to energy and collaborative agricultural in the Jordan River Basin and Negev Desert. He has also worked on the implementation of the peace process in Nepal. Brian is an alum of the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (SCAR), George Mason University and serves on their Board of Advisors and the Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflicts (PARC), Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. He was also a Fellow with the Program on Negotiation, Harvard University Law School (1991-1992), a National Fellow with the US Environmental Protection Agency (1991-1993), a United States Presidential Fellow (1991), the University System of Maryland Wilson Elkins Professor and a Senior American Fulbright Scholar with the Evens Program in International Conflict Resolution and Mediation at Tel Aviv University (2010). Brian is currently a Fulbright Alumni Ambassador with the Institute of International Education and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars.

#### Dr. Arun Gandhi

Arun Gandhi was born in 1934 at the Phoenix Colony outside of Durban, South Africa. He is the fifth grandson of Mohandas (also known as Mahatma) and Kasturba Gandhi. He is a Indian-American socio-political activist whose passion and life work has been to spread the lessons his grandparents taught him about nonviolence. For more than 20 years Arun has been the Senior Practitioner and Spiritual Guide at the Bosserman Center for Conflict Resolution at Salisbury University. He is also the Director of the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence. Arun calls himself a “peace farmer” who has taught students how to plant one seed of peace at a time.

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