

## **Educating for Sustainability Action**

**International Conference, Centre for Environment Education (CEE),  
Ahmedabad, January 9-11, 2025**

9<sup>th</sup> January 2024

2pm to 3:30 pm

Location: Seminar Hall 9, (Planet Discovery Centre Building Ground Floor)

Session Coordinator: Ms Archana Panicker – [archana.panicker@ceeindia.org](mailto:archana.panicker@ceeindia.org)

### **Parallel Session # 1**

#### **Topic: Nature-based learning pedagogy for Early Childhood Education**

##### **Brief Description**

Early childhood is a crucial period for shaping young minds, fostering resilience, and nurturing a lifelong connection with nature. This session explores innovative nature-based pedagogies that integrate sustainability into early learning practices, aligning with SDG 4.2 (Quality Education) to ensure every child has access to impactful pre-primary education.

The session will spotlight global and Indian case studies, highlighting how green learning spaces foster cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical development in young children. Discussions will emphasize the role of nature-based education in preparing children to adapt to changing climates, develop conservation mindsets, and build competencies for a sustainable future.

Participants will also delve into the alignment of these pedagogies with India's National Education Policy (NEP) and explore how they can inform global education frameworks. Key themes include enhancing teacher capacities, advocating for policy integration, and driving large-scale implementation to make nature-based learning accessible for all.

##### **Key Objectives**

- Showcase global and Indian examples of nature-based learning in action.
- Explore the integration of nature-based pedagogy into national policies and curricula.
- Identify gaps in teacher training and propose solutions for capacity building.
- Develop recommendations for scaling nature-based early learning for a sustainable future.

Join us for this engaging session to reimagine early childhood education and empower the youngest learners to become champions of sustainability!

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### Concept Note

#### Background:

In January 2025, we will be entering the final five years to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Educating for Sustainability Action Conference will discuss what role education has played so far and how it can strengthen the efforts to try and reach the SDG Goals and targets.

**SDG Goal 4 : Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all**

**Goal 4.2: By 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.**

The Conference is organized into plenary sessions, which will provide the overall context and set the tone for discussions, thematic parallel sessions, which focus on specific areas, paper presentations by researchers, and an exhibition area. In addition, there are special sessions to make recommendations to the international conventions and the Greening Education Partnership of UNESCO. The Conference will also discuss and deliberate on the critical role that education plays in Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change adaptation.

In context of the above, this **Parallel Session on 'Nature based learning pedagogy and practices'** will dive deep into the Nature based Education pedagogies to advocate and define how this pedagogy is leading a change from awareness to action. This session will deliberate on Goal 4 and 4.2 specifically to look at innovative strategies and interventions to meet Indicators 31 and 32 of Goal 4.2

Many ECD and ECE frameworks and programmes give more emphasis on building foundational skills in literacy and numeracy to prepare the early learners for further schooling, this Parallel Session will discuss and define the role of nature-based education on building critical developmental domains of cognitive and socio-emotional development and building a responsible citizenship foundation in early years.

This parallel session will also review and make recommendation on

- how nature based early learning pedagogy can meet the Global goals in wholist development of the young learners
- be a model to meet the needs of building adaptive capabilities of young children to become resilient in the changing climate conditions
- prepare them with competencies required for becoming naturalists to take conservation efforts required for Sustainable Future
- Make recommendation to Global Education Partnership on early learning requirements

**Goal 4, 4.2 ECE Indicators**

**Indicator 31 highlights** at least a year of **high- quality pre-primary education**.

Exposure to at least a year of **high- quality pre-primary education** has consistent and positive short-term and long-term effects on children's development. In the short run, **early cognitive skills, including reading and math skills**, are positively affected by pre-primary education.

The impact of innovative ECD programmes is recognized even through small **scale demonstrations and small group size interventions**.

**Indicator 32: Early Child Development Index (ECDI):** Developmental potential in early childhood is measured in four domains: **language/literacy, numeracy, physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive development**.

**Impact:** High-quality preschool can produce lifelong benefits for society, with positive effects observed on years of completed schooling, secondary school completion, reduced crime, reduced

**Objectives:** This Parallel Session will share and review

- Establish how green learning spaces integrates and promotes sustainability into the early years' curriculum and practices
- Global and Indian case studies in nature-based education at early years
- How does Global Education Partnership build on nature-based learning pedagogies and nature-based learning gets integrated in global essential learnings
- Innovative pedagogies on integration of nature-based education in policies, systems and curriculum
- Challenges in building capacities of teachers for early learning through integration of nature-based learning pedagogy and how it can lead to large scale impact and outreach

## Format of the Session: Panel Discussion

### Topic: Nature based early learning pedagogies and practices

#### Key Speakers:

- **Dr. Cheryl Charles**, International Co-Chair, #NatureForAll, IUCN Commission on Education and Communication
- **Ms Mamata Pandya**, Environmental Educator, Instructional Designer, and Author
- **Dr. Pramod Sharma**, Senior Director of Education, Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)
- **Dr Amita Tandon**, Education Specialist, UNICEF Gujarat Office
- **Ms Nina Hamilton**, Director of International and Leadership Programs, NAAEE
- **Dr Pooja Sahni**, Founder and Chief Technology Officer at Quditbrain and Principal Research Scientist at IIT Delhi

#### Key Speakers and their brief profiles



**Dr Cheryl Charles**, International Co-Chair, #NatureForAll, IUCN Commission on Education and Communication. Cheryl is an innovator, entrepreneur, educator, author and organizational executive. Throughout her career, Cheryl has focused on the well-being of children, families, communities and the environment that supports us all. She is the Co-Founder, President and CEO Emerita of the Children & Nature, an international NGO with its mission to connect all children, their families and communities to nature in their everyday lives.



**Ms Mamata Pandya Environmental Educator, Instructional Designer, and Author**

Mamata Pandya has spent several decades as an environmental educator with the Centre for Environment Education in Ahmedabad, where she headed the Children's Media Unit. She has long experience in developing creative teaching-learning resources for children and educators, as well as in teacher training. Mamata's educational work and writing have been greatly inspired by her

grandfather Gijubhai Badheka who was one of Gujarat's foremost educationists and storytellers. She has co-created the biographical archive of the work of Gijubhai Badheka. [www.gijubhaibadheka.in](http://www.gijubhaibadheka.in)  
 Mamata Pandya is now an independent consultant, editor, writer, translator, storyteller and blogger.



**Dr. Pramod Sharma, Senior Director of Education, Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)**

Pramod is an Educator expert and is responsible for the overall programme development, administration, supervision, and evaluation of the three formal educational programmes (Eco-Schools, Learning About Forests, and Young Reporters for Environment). Sharma is an Education for Sustainable Development professional with a broad experience of 20 years. Before joining FEE, he was working with FEE member organization, Centre for Environment Education, in India where he handled a portfolio of school programmes dealing with quality education and education for sustainable development.

**Dr Amita Tandon, Education Specialist, UNICEF Gujarat Office**



Dr Tandon is expert in promoting holistic development of the last mile children and the developer of National ECCE Policy framework for GoI. She holds significant experience in program management, including programme design, workplan development and implementation, monitoring & evaluation, knowledge management, and advocacy in development sector. More than 7 years of experience with UNICEF India Country Office and vast experience of working with government and non-government bodies at national and State level. Promoting holistic development of the last mile children, developer of National ECCE Policy framework for GoI.

**Ms Nina Hamilton, Director of International and Leadership Programs, NAAEE**



Director of International and Leadership Programs, North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE)

Nina Hamilton supports NAAEE's leadership initiatives and supports the Global Environmental Education Partnership's efforts to build capacity for EE across the globe. Nina is particularly passionate about working across cultures to connect people with the resources they need to maximize their impact, while combining her interests in the environment, social equity, and youth engagement.



**Dr. Pooja Sahni, Founder and Chief Technology Officer at Quditbrain and Principal Research Scientist at IIT Delhi.**

Dr. Pooja specializes in research on how nature-based education influence children's cognitive and socio-emotional development, as well as their sense of environmental stewardship. With a Ph.D. in

environmental neuroscience from IIT Delhi and courses from Harvard and the University of Washington, her academic excellence complements her dedication to social causes, including women's empowerment and rural education. After spending a decade with UNDP, Dr. Sahni's work now focuses on transformative effects of nature on children's cognitive and socio-emotional skills and wellbeing, an essential topic for shaping a sustainable future. She has written several books on the topic and has an upcoming guide for educators on how nature based learning can be integrated into curriculum.

### **Participants:**

This parallel session will draw participants from early education and school education fields. This parallel session will have Principals, Pre-Primary Coordinators, Early educators and Teachers, Content developers, Researchers, trainers, Story writers and story tellers among other conference delegates who would attend the session. A few researches, youth delegates, and parents of preschool children is also participating in this session. [www.ceeindia.org/ESA](http://www.ceeindia.org/ESA)

### **ESA Conference Brief**

Education is critical for this transformative change where people make informed decisions and act responsibly for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society for present and future generations. As UN Secretary-General Mr Antonio Guterres mentions in the UN Common Agenda, "The choices we make, or fail to make, today could result in breakdown or a breakthrough to a greener, better, safer future. The choice is ours to make".

CEE has collaborated with some of the best international organizations working in the field and has shared and showcased work done in India with the international communities and, through partnerships, ensured that India gets the benefit of some of the best pedagogies and methods we can adapt. CEE has also worked with UN organizations, particularly UNESCO, with whom CEE prepared the report on climate change education, launched last year by the Secretary of School Education and Literacy, GoI. We are also working closely with UNICEF on preparing a teacher module on climate change.

Global environmental conventions and treaties have all recognized education as a critical driver of change and a way to achieve their targets. The recently concluded COPs on climate change at Baku, biodiversity at Cali in Columbia and UNCCD in Saudi Arabia all made strong commitments to education. The Conference will look at these commitments and prepare the first draft for action for education, which can be taken further at other forums in 2025, leading to a strong experience and research-based strategy for action contributed by the global environmental education community.

In January 2025, we will be entering the final five years to reach the sustainable development goals.

The Conference will discuss what role education has played so far and how it can strengthen the efforts to try and reach the targets. UNESCO has launched the greening education partnership. There are discussions on pillars one and two, while drafts for pillars three and four are under discussion. This will also be discussed.

CEE has collaborated with some of the best international organizations working in the field and has shared and showcased work done in India with the international communities and, through partnerships, ensured that India gets the benefit of some of the best pedagogies and methods we can adapt. CEE has set up a Nature based early learning Centre on CEE Campus as a model to impact policies, train teachers and develop innovative material.

This international conference will bring together some of the finest networks and organizations around the world working in the field of nature based early learning pedagogies and will share rich experiences in environmental education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

### **Conference Plan**

The Conference is organized into plenary sessions, which will provide the overall context and set the tone for discussions, thematic parallel sessions, which focus on specific areas, paper presentations by researchers, and an exhibition area. In addition, there are special sessions to make recommendations to the international conventions and the Greening Education Partnership of UNESCO.

### **Participants**

Approximately 500 participants are expected, of whom about 70 will be from abroad, in addition to people who will join specific sessions online. Participants will include representatives from the Government and UN agencies, Schools and Universities, Youth groups, Corporates, CSR Foundations, and NGOs who are interested in education.