



World Environment Day 2020 Webinar; Principal's Conclave on Sustainability Education in COVID Era

June 4 & 5, 2020, 17:30 to 19:30 hrs IST (GMT + 5:30)

The two day International Webinar jointly organized by Mobius Foundation, The Climate Reality Project India and other partners, deliberated on the inter-linkages between COVID-19 pandemic, biodiversity and how sustainability education can be a strategic asset to address both the environment and pandemic challenge. The objective was to sensitize teachers, principals and educators about sustainability concerns and provide an opportunity for partnership between schools and research networks in ESD. The webinar was conducted over two days so as to accommodate the wider views from stakeholders and represent them holistically.

- **DAY I: Principals' Conclave in 10 concurrent sessions**
- **DAY II: Voice of principals followed by expert's speeches**

ICSE Forum was created as a follow up from the recommendation of the 4th Technical Advisory Committee, held on 31st October 2019 under the stewardship of International Conference on Sustainability Education. The objective of the Forum is to provide a platform for continuing exchange of ideas and networking within the partners and participants of the Conference and for providing strategic direction and leadership to strengthen sustainability education within national, regional and international professionals and development of future activities in this domain.

Day 1: 4th June 2020

The webinar was chaired by **Dr. Ram Boojh, CEO Mobius Foundation** and was attended by 160+ participants. The online broadcast was further viewed by 6000+ viewers from all across the globe. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Boojh emphasized on the awareness of environmental actions on biodiversity, COVID 19 and education which are interlinked. He stated that COVID-19 is the greatest disruption which is reshaping education as some 1.3 billion learners are not able to attend schools/colleges or universities (UNESCO Report). The COVID era is also bringing up new trends such as Online meetings, informal learning, sustainability values, Namaste, Yoga, social distancing, work from home, virtual offices and teaching learning spaces. Though technology is great equalizer & multiplier but at the same time, online teaching for many has become nightmare due to low internet connectivity and lack of devices and new challenges of evaluation/examinations.



The webinar was inaugurated by **Mr. Atul Bagai, Director, UNEP India office**. He gave a comparison that Sustainability Education has grown at an arithmetic rate; however owing to climate changes, species extinction is increasing at a geometric rate. If we are making the communities aware about environment degradation, how is it that this education instead of living more sustainably has leading us to do more degradation instead. Talking about biodiversity, he declared that 1st Jan 2021 will mark the starting of “**Decade of Ecosystem Restoration**”. In the same context he added that no other incident has brought this whole focus on biodiversity and ecosystem, as the COVID 19 did. Human beings have done more or similar kind of disruptions to the planet as the COVID did. He added that we forgot about the balance between the environment and people. In the context of education COVID 19 taught and helped us to take the sustainability education in this new paradigm.

Mr. Kartikeya V Sarabhai, Founder and Director, Centre for Environment Education (CEE) gave key note address saying that sustainability education should take into consideration the social, economic and environment pillars. The implications of COVID 19 can be seen in change in pollution levels, carbon levels which indicates that human activities contribute huge amount to carbon footprint, and we also see how resilient the nature is. COVID 19 has taught us that we seldom looked upon the threats and their scale. We tend to see what could be happening of 9 million of species but we don't talk about the trillion of microbes. He informed audience that “**Mighty Microbes**” program is being launched by CEE and UNEP to make people understand the concept of microbes and its impact on immunity and human body. He concluded by adding that the way forward for sustainability education is to involve people of diverse functions like civil society, NGOs and educational institutions.

To involve people and students, Denmark based **Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE)** has a program called Eco Schools that engage youth of today to protect the planet of tomorrow. **Mr. Pamod Sharma**, Senior Director of Education, Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) talked about how FEE responded to COVID 19 challenge and is trying to bridge the digital divide. COVID 19 has shifted the school to home which allowed the students to enjoy the nature and have initiated different programs “Look out of window” and “Learning about forests (LEAF)” to name a few. He also threw light on the concept of inter-generational education; the younger are getting the time with their family. “Care and Share” programs initiate talks with grandparents and bring out the solutions from home environment itself. FEE is supporting organizations which are focused on education. He said education has shifted from content to skill and suggested that a lot of these skills can be developed at home. On e-learning, he shared that FEE published free articles and resources for the schools that can be done at home for eg: energy conservation, water, biodiversity, litter, transport and health management through Handprint initiative.

To inculcate the sense of conservation of energy, water and other aspects of environment it is required that the campus in which students learn should be green and sustainable. **Ms. Seema Bali, Vice Principal, St. Mary's School, Dwarka, New Delhi** focused on the importance on how green campus helps in sustainability education. She mentioned that the impact of COVID 19 in education as serious as the impact on economy of the country. The problems in post COVID 19 would be right from sanitizing the pencil to the bus in schools. The IGBC GOLD rated building of his school focused on green campus activities which have turned sustainable, healthy and happy. School can be turned



into live green labs by taking care of the air, water, energy & biodiversity and integrating them into curriculum consciously. The schools have to reorient their SOPs post lockdown era, she concluded.

The challenges and solutions are different in different regions. After the Indian perspective of education, the webinar moved to international perspective of sustainability education. **Mr. Ben Green, Geography Teacher and Head of Outdoor Education Whitgift School, London** talked on introducing Global Citizenship into the curriculum. He shared that students have a lot of responsibility; we have offloaded them with, till this time. They will be tackling with the problems like carbon levels, marine and air pollution and will be asked for solutions. It is our responsibility to prepare them for this challenge and work towards offering them a better future. By introducing Global Citizen Stewardship into the curriculum and strategies like traditional knowledge from each location, we can teach them to more prepared and have a broader outlook for global environment protection. This can be taught from practical actions that too from a very young age/class. He gave insight on another important aspect, i.e. to identify what the students like to do, and observe when they turn rebellious. He quoted that this very observation made Greta, the voice of millions as she has elevated by her rebellious nature though for a larger good. The way forward, according to him is that students be allocated focus domain of sustainable education as per his/her liking.

Ms. Sumedha Jayaweera, Principal, St. Paul's Girls' School, Colombo, Sri Lanka shared her thoughts from our neighboring country Sri Lanka. There, the general education system initiated first curriculum report of new millennium to prepare the young minds of the nation to for an emerging complex and dynamic future while resolving a host of other problems. The new learning and teaching environment is coming together to allow them move in a new role altogether. She added, as one is adapting through new conditions, it is essential to have the technology integrated knowledge and skills among the students. She shared the challenges teachers are facing, their reluctance to use the technology in the teaching process (due to lack of experience), inadequate computer integration etc. In E-learning, one of the challenges with weak students is that they cannot cope up with online teaching; they need personal guidance and real classroom environment to generate interest to learn. The possible solution she suggested was to have more exchange among the students, so they learn from each other. The web based online lectures should be more used in the learning process which are freely available.

To start the Principals' Conclave and breaking out in the smaller groups, **Mr. Aditya Pundir, Country Manager, Climate Reality India**, gave a whole new perspective of the impact of COVID 19. The three main challenges as he put forward were :

- 1) COVID
- 2) Global recession and
- 3) Climate change.

He threw light on threats greater than COVID 19, as we might have vaccine for the COVID 19 but not for climate change. He suggested that use of technology to create a solution for any kind of change is the one and common solution at any level and it can be done only through education. We have to focus to educate the young minds to use technology with minimum damage caused to nature.



After this, the participants were divided into 10 groups of 7 members each to discuss the challenges, solutions of education in the COVID era and why inculcation of sustainability education is important. These groups had an open, free-flowing discussion taking views from principals and stakeholders from the education sector with a moderator and volunteer to cover their views. Key points on thematic areas were shared by each principal, which shall help the wider audience to have an insight of the education system in the COVID-19 era.

Day 2 : 5th June 2020

World Environment Day 2020 Webinar, Principal's Conclave on sustainability Education in the COVID Era began with the formal invitation. All the participants joined through Zoom and simultaneous broadcast on Facebook of Mobius Foundation at 17.30 hrs IST (GMT + 5:30) by Mr. Bhavesh of Climate Reality Project, India. Dr. Ram Boojh, CEO, Mobius Foundation and Convener ICSE 2019 started the evening by mentioning insights and learnings from the International Conference on Sustainability Education 2019 held on 9th & 10th September at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi, India.

Mr. Ashok Pandey, Chairperson Council for Global Citizenship Education presented the proceedings of breakout sessions held on the 4th June 2020, the previous evening. He talked about the themes discussed during breakout sessions and how COVID and post-COVID will impact education in times to come and what should be the way forward? He shared the collective wisdom given by all the breakout group participants. Teachers from across the world, especially developing countries, had serious concerns about internet and electricity availability to have the new normal of 'online education'. 1.7 billion people all over the world have been sitting at home for more than 70 days, and reaching out to each one of them has been a challenge. 90% of students have not gone to campuses since the COVID breakdown, and they are missing social and emotional learning. Further, he added that the shift is towards hybrid education, and infrastructure has to be built up to support blended learning, which is a challenge for policy makers and people responsible.

A very important point put forward by him was on talks about 17 SDGs, that has been happening for a long time now, 6 of them are for people, 5 of them are for planet, 4 of them for prosperity and 1 each for peace and partnership. Then why SDG 4, which aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" has not been transplanted into collective wisdom encompassing environment. There ought to be more case studies on Green Schools, how blending between human beings and nature can be reinvented? Skill building will be a new initiative once social distancing is over and students can be empowered with the theme of one person, one planet, that encompasses 'Vasudheva Kutumbakam', the underlying philosophy of Indian Vedas.

He concluded with emphasis on collective action so as to produce a new design of learning, commitment to SDGs, fostering a beautiful relationship between human and nature. Lastly, came the words of wisdom that this period will also pass and there will be a rainbow after the rain.



Dr Huma Masood National Programme Officer Gender and Education, UNESCO New Delhi formally opened the technical session of the programme that we should address collectively the implications of COVID 19 on education for sustainable development. “We are literally consuming the mother earth that sustains us and the only positive thing of this pandemic is its effect on the environment improved drastically” she added. Further, she posed question that lower human activities has had such large and immediate impact on planet and how to continue this? However such a transformation of the education system during and after COVID 19 to include environment sustainability requires a pedagogical revolution. Quality teaching is a perquisite for quality education and pivotal roles of teacher in bridging gaps need to be highlighted. Online teaching brings prominent, excellent visuals like documentaries; 3D artifices can enhance the understanding of the students. Apart from this, taking the ground reality of India and socio economic factor should be taken into consideration, alternate method to online learning to be identified for the students that may include broadcasting method on television and on radio, align school to operate in these areas for social distancing, pre-recorded lessons through ICT with full consideration for children marked with disability as internet penetration is still an issue. Lifestyle adopted during the lockdown should be continued after the lockdown to lower the impact on the environment. She concluded by saying that on the brighter side, the pandemic has forced many changes and this crisis must be viewed as an opportunity to save our mother earth.

Ms. Donna Goodman Founder and ED Earth Child Institute (ECI) talked on how to learn and live in a more sustainable way thus fulfilling the vision of a new, brighter future. She emphasized on the need to have changes in the curriculum around the world aided by effective tools like zoom and Google classrooms, compounded with Values based education that aids in self-learning. She spoke about various domains such as reading, writing, physical fitness, human values and respect for all forms of life. She gave a new perspective on technical subjects like math and science and how they can be taught in a more fun and stimulating way. Green Jobs should be a part of mid-senior curriculum encompassing future trends like disaster risk management, renewable energy that may be aided by global collaborations in the curriculum. She mentioned about her upcoming book *ECOMASTERS: A Planet in Peril* which has superheroes adventure stories and training centres for students and parent at different locations.

Ms. Gayatri Raghwa Environment Education Consultant, UNEP shared her views on Education: Building back better. She added that one should take whatever topic is trending in his/her mind as a student and have a more holistic approach for it with environment theme added to it. We need to deliver concrete deliverables on ground in terms of sustainability is concerned. While the COVID gives the golden opportunity to talk about the clean environment but we have to connect all the dots. She spoke about Tide turner’s plastic challenge which has three levels of engagement with the lower ones having a lot of on ground practical learning. Owing to lockdown, whole approach has been changed and still they are received good response. They have developed largest online programme Earth School adventure and 70 environmental professionals shared their resources designed for children who are under lockdown at home. Indian Children has showed great response to the programme and are the second largest in number after USA. There is one disadvantage that



online learning is making divide between haves and have not's. There ought to be public private model devised out so this gap can be bridged as soon as possible. In conclusion, she mentioned on how one can balance between online and on ground efforts once the lockdown is over.

Mr.Pradip Burman Chairman, Mobius Foundation, chair of the webinar talked about his views reflecting insights from the two days that one should not forget what COVID 19 has taught us and take forward the learning, once the situation is normal. One should have the concept of global citizenship that actually propagates good practices on sustainability amongst other schools beyond boundaries of nations. Natural immunity is important and should be emphasized, teachers are the best medium to pass on the information, were his views. Population explosion is also one of the domains to be looked at and he shared how his team is working on the subject of population stabilization. He concluded by saying that change has to be adapted and we have to bring change in the way teachers have to teach after COVID 19.

The session concluded with a vote of thanks from **Mr. Aditya Pundir, Country Manager, Climate Reality Project India**. He mentioned about efforts of their organization in this domain and promised to take forward these learning's through future ICSE Forums.