## Background

The year 2015 marks the target year of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) targets. The world in 2015, and the world in 2030, will be radically different from the world in 2000, when the MDGs and EFA targets were formulated. There is an increasing consensus today on the need to reorient and repurpose education to meet the challenges of the 21$^{st}$ century. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is generally regarded as a particularly promising approach in this regard. Education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED) are proposed as one of the targets of the education goal in the post-2015 development agenda, both in the Muscat Agreement and the UN Open Working Group Proposal on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is an acknowledgment of their critical importance for a sustainable and peaceful future for all.

> - Target 5: by 2030, all learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to establish sustainable and peaceful societies, including through global citizenship education and education for sustainable development (The Muscat Agreement)

> - Target 4.7: by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development (The UN Open Working Group proposal on SDGs)

In order to scale up ESD work globally, UNESCO, the lead agency for ESD, launched the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP) at the 2014 UNESCO World Conference on ESD in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, as a follow up to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014). The GAP was also acknowledged as the follow up to the DESD by the UN General Assembly in December 2014 (Resolution A/RES/69/211).

The fundamental reorientation of education requires changes in all levels and areas of education – not just in formal education but also in non-formal and informal learning processes so that all citizens, young people and adults alike can learn how to contribute to the goals of a more equitable, environmentally sustainable and secure world. While significant ESD activities are being undertaken in the domain of non-formal education, relatively little academic analysis has been concerned with this ESD domain.

Non-formal ESD encompasses a wide range of learning processes that range from more traditional outdoor learning that provides first-hand experiences of nature to initiatives that aim at helping young people to become change agents for sustainable development and responsible citizenship in their communities. Community learning – the learning processes by which a whole community moves towards sustainable development – is a particularly interesting area of non-formal ESD that merits further attention and analysis.

**Focus of the thematic issue**

The thematic issue on ***Non-formal and Community Learning for Sustainable Development*** will present and analyse a wide range of non-formal ESD activities. A general overview article will be followed by six to eight case studies covering projects from all world regions. These case studies will be either 'critically reflexive' or grounded in empirical research, or both. The guest editors of this issue are cognizant of criticisms which have been levelled against case-study research in the field of ESD and are equally aware of the significance of contextual studies of practice that have transformative value both for local practice and practices elsewhere. Ideally, a case study will be co-written by a representative of the 'project' or 'practice' and an international ESD expert/researcher and guided by a set of critical considerations for conducting case study research in ESD (Walker, Corcoran & Wals, 2004). The case studies aim to provide insights into the practice of non-formal and community learning for sustainable development that will hopefully inspire further theoretical work and practical actions in this field.

**Selection**

The authors for the thematic issue case studies will be selected with a view to ensuring geographical diversity as well as diversity in perspectives on ESD in non-formal and community-based settings. The case studies will have to be written in English or French.

There will be a two-round selection process.

First round - expression of interest: Interested authors express their interest by writing a 300-word abstract for the case study. Abstracts should crystallise the proposed case study, and map out how this will be presented, including key sources of ideas/references/evidence/connection to the thematic issue.

For submitting your 300 word manuscript abstract go to:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SpecialIssueESDIRE
Deadline is *1 November 2015*, midnight Paris time.

Second round – full proposal: Selected authors will by *1 December 2015* be invited to submit a full paper. Final acceptance is conditional upon peer review assessments.

**Timeline**

| 2015 | 2016 |
|---|---|
| ▪ 1 November – deadline for submitting your expression of interest (300 word abstract plus references if available)<br><br>▪ 1 December– selection of expressions of interest, a request for a full submission from the guest editors will go out to selected authors | ▪ 1 March: submission of final drafts in accordance with *International Review of Education* submission guidelines<br>▪ March – July: Review of papers<br>▪ August – October: First round of revisions<br>▪ October – December: Second/third review when needed<br>▪ December: Final revisions when needed<br>▪ July 2017: Publication of fully accepted papers |

**Guest editors**

**Arjen Wals** is a Professor of Social Learning and Sustainable Development. He also is a UNESCO Chair in the same field. Wals has worked at Wageningen University since 1992 in various departments. His research focuses on learning processes that contribute to a more sustainable world. A central question in his work is how to create conditions that support new forms of learning that take full advantage of the diversity, creativity and resourcefulness that is all around us, but so far remains largely untapped in our search for a world that is more sustainable than the one currently in prospect. Wals has been involved in a number of projects in Africa that seek to make curricula more responsive to current societal and labour market needs and challenges posed by (un)sustainability. Popular books include: 'Higher Education and the Challenge of Sustainability (Kluwer Academic, 2004) and Social Learning towards a Sustainable World (Wageningen Academic, 2007). He has repeatedly worked with UNESCO in the context of the UN Decade of ESD.

**Alexander Leicht** is Chief of the Section of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO, Paris. Before joining UNESCO in 2011, he was Head of the German Secretariat for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development at the German Commission for UNESCO in Bonn since 2004. He also worked three years as a university teacher in Hungary and the United Kingdom and was originally trained as a teacher, with a graduate degree in literature, at the University of Marburg, Germany, and at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, USA. He holds a PhD in American Studies from the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. He has published on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), arts education, cultural policy, and other areas of UNESCO's mandate. As Chief of the Section of ESD at UNESCO, his current priority is the coordination of the Glboal Action Programme on ESD, the follow-up framework to the UN Decade of ESD, which was launched at the UNESCO World Conference on ESD in 2014 in Japan.

**Yoko Mochizuki** is Head of Curriculum Team at UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development in New Delhi since June 2015. She was formerly Programme Specialist at the Section of ESD, UNESCO, Paris. Before joining UNESCO in 2011, she was ESD Specialist at the United Nations University (UNU) and conducted policy-oriented and theoretical research on ESD, with a special focus on the UNU's major contributions to the UN Decade of ESD – RCE (Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD) and ProSPER.Net (Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network). She has published articles in the international peer-reviewed journals and written book chapters for the edited volumes on social learning for sustainability, international educational cooperation, community learning centres (CLCs), and higher education for sustainable development. She holds a MA from the University of Chicago, USA and a PhD in Comparative and International Education from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of Columbia University in New York, USA. Prior to joining UNU-IAS, she was Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Department of Human Development, Teachers College, Columbia University.

**References**

Walker, K.E., Corcoran, P.B., Wals, A.E.J. (2004). Case studies, make-your-case studies, and case stories: a critique of case study methodology in sustainability in higher education. Environmental Education Research, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 7-21.