

# **CONSCIOUS FOOD SYSTEMS ALLIANCE**

## **COLLECTION OF CASE STUDIES**



Convened by:



## **CoFSA Mission**

The Conscious Food Systems Alliance (CoFSA) is a movement of food, agriculture, and consciousness practitioners, convened by UNDP, and united around a common goal: to support people from across food and agriculture systems to cultivate the inner capacities that activate systemic change and regeneration.

## **Collection of Case Studies**

This compilation of case studies showcases the application of consciousness practices and approaches that have the potential to unlock food systems' transformation.

It serves as a tool to advance the exchange of knowledge and learning on conscious food systems and to build the evidence basis for this pioneering field of practice. It also seeks to promote the work of CoFSA members and inspire others to engage and collaborate on this agenda.

## **Criteria for Inclusion**

The case studies presented are initiatives, projects, or interventions that show the ongoing work on the application of consciousness practices and approaches to unlock transformation towards regenerative food systems.

The compilation includes both case studies that focus on the agri-food sector and those focused on other sectors with the potential for replication or adaptation within the CoFSA.

## **Criteria for Classification**

The classification of case studies reflects the CoFSA Agenda for Action. CoFSA members collaborate to develop and implement prototype interventions and pilot activities, through which CoFSA pioneers the application of consciousness approaches and practices in food systems. Interventions address the following core areas:

- Conscious Policy
- Conscious Farming and Community Development
- Conscious Consumption
- Conscious Collaboration

To find out more about the Conscious Food Systems Alliance and how to be involved, see our website: [www.consciousfoodsystems.org](http://www.consciousfoodsystems.org)

**Please contact us if you would like to share a case study with the CoFSA Community.**

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**Conscious Policy**

# CASE STUDY 1

**BEYOND, a Climate & Environmental Leadership Programme by the Inner Green Deal**

**European Leaders Exploring How to Tackle the Climate Crisis Inside Out**

*Author: Jeroen Janss, Co-Founder and Co-Managing Director of the Inner Green Deal*

In March 2021, the [Inner Green Deal \(IGD\)](#), an independent non-profit organization, launched BEYOND, a Climate & Environmental Leadership Programme, which aims to drive sustainability from within by supporting decision-makers to cultivate mindfulness and compassion, develop new habits, and collaborate with a common purpose.

100 leaders from the European Union (EU) - including 40 from the European Parliament, Council and Commission - took part in a pilot programme, where they explored both the inner dimension of sustainability in terms of mindfulness, compassion, systems thinking, values and [beliefs](#), and the outer aspects such as behaviour change, collaboration, and workplace initiatives.

### Programme Overview

- Modules: 5 online modules of 2,5 hrs plus one online intro session (in total 14 hrs)
- Practice: daily meditations, weekly nature walks, and practicing habit shifts
- Delivery: blended learning with social learning platform, app, and peer learning
- Collaboration: participants collaborate around real organizational and societal challenges for which they develop initiatives and working prototypes (e.g. initiatives for EU policymakers to volunteer their expertise to environmental community projects)
- Time frame: 6-8 week.

**Table 1. Methodology**

Method	Relevant for Which Qualities	Sources Include
Mindfulness practice	Inner and outer awareness, emotional regulation, integrity, agency, resilience,...	Goleman & Davidson 2018, Hanson 2009 Bristow, Bell & Wamsler 2022
Compassion practice	Care, perspective taking, purpose, agency, moving into action, gratitude	Singer 2018, Wamsler 2021, Bristow 2020
Habit change	Environmental action, reducing carbon footprint, collaboration	Clear 2018, Wamsler 2021, Kang 2013, Fog 2007
Systems thinking, complexity thinking and sense-making	Perspective taking, defining collective action, understanding biases	Scharmer 2009, Meadows 2008, Leichenko & O'Brien 2019, Senge 1990
Participatory leadership	Collaboration, confidence, courage, trust in humanity and what emerges	Scharmer 2009, Edmondson 1999, Laloux 2014
Indigenous inspired practices such as medicine wheel, nature walks	Interdependency, perspective taking, nature connection	Macy 2014, Kumar 2013, Milton 2006 and others building on indigenous wisdom

## Evaluation<sup>1</sup>

Professor Christine Wamsler of Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS) attended all sessions and reviewed both quantitative data (pre- and post-surveys) and qualitative data (what people shared during the programme verbally or in written form). According to preliminary findings, participants demonstrated:

- Significant increase in nature connectedness;
- Significant increase in climate agency (e.g. voting for environmental parties, signing petitions) and adaptation behaviour (taking measures to prepare for climate impacts);
- Clear links between compassion and pro-environmental behaviour;
- Increased integration of sustainability concerns into work, such as budget allocations, human resource allocation, internal working structures, and stakeholder relationships;
- Significant increase in well-being; and
- Significant reduction in climate anxiety.

## EU Recognition

The programme has received widespread recognition. The EU's training Institute EUSA funded the development and launch of a new series of programmes for management across EU Institutions including a Climate Leadership retreat for Senior Leaders.

## Next steps and scaling-up

Based on market research and responses from participants, it is felt that there is a large demand for sustainability and mindset training. The Inner Green Deal (IGD) specifically seeks to scale its programmes through:

- Teacher training programme and clear standards, allowing the upskilling of mindfulness trainers, facilitators, and coaches based on collaboration with Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies with whom IGD signed a 4-year research agreement in 2020.
- Offer free programmes: in places where funding is not available, IGD will offer programmes for free to support the overall aim of promoting sustainable and compassionate leadership and positive social and environmental change.
- Online tools: the current IGD programmes are supported by an app and social learning platforms to support large global communities. It will continue to partner with Awaris and other providers to develop such tools.
- Translating offering: IGD will seek to translate its offerings in any language as required.
- Inspiration: to reach and support its community, IGD will continue to offer the Inner Green Deal podcast (now in its second season) as well as other content such as keynote speeches, videos, and other content.

## More information

For more information contact Jeroen Janss, Co-Founder and Co-Managing Director of the Inner Green Deal via [Jeroen.Janss@awaris.com](mailto:Jeroen.Janss@awaris.com)

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<sup>1</sup> Lena Ramstetter; Silke Rupperecht; Luis Mundaca; Walter Osika; Cecilia Stenfors; Johannes Klackl; Christine Wamsler (2022) **Fostering collective climate action and leadership Insights from a pilot experiment with a behavioral intervention involving mindfulness and compassion, forthcoming**





**Conscious Policy**

# CASE STUDY 2

**Building More Collaborative Political  
Cultures in the U.K. and Beyond  
through Mindfulness**

**The success of mindfulness training in  
the British Parliament**

*Author: Jamie Bristow, Director of the  
Mindfulness Initiative*

## Training for political leaders

In 2013, inspired by the benefits they had experienced in their own lives, a small group of British Members of Parliament and the House of Lords invited the University of [Oxford Mindfulness Centre](#) (OMC) to start providing eight-week mindfulness courses adapted from Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT, a health intervention with an extensive evidence base) to cross-party groups of politicians. As of December 2021, over 300 MPs and Lords have received training, which is now delivered by [Awaris](#). A core group attends a weekly drop-in class that provides continued instruction and fosters a community of practice within the British Parliament. More recently, silent practice days have been offered twice a year.

Although early courses were held under a promise of strict anonymity, many participants have since spoken out publicly about the profound effects that their training has had, both personally and professionally. Former Government minister, and current Member of the House of Lords, Lord Alan Howarth (Lab), said of the teaching: *"this is an oasis of trust and friendship – something very important in our adversarial politics. It is a very great help for my focus, energy, perspective, and sense of proportion and balance."*

In a Westminster Hall debate, Member of Parliament (MP) Nic Dakin described the course as "transformative" and a "gift of the body and mind", whilst Baroness Lorely Burt said the following during a debate in the House of Lords: *"My life changed about seven or eight years ago, when [I went on a mindfulness course]... I found that being able to calm my mind and see things more objectively from a distance had an incredible, transformational effect on me... I became more open, aware and effective in my work life, my social life and my family life."*

Tracey Crouch MP has spoken widely in the media about how mindfulness helped her to tackle depression. She is also one of many politicians who have reported benefits to public speaking, recounting how she kicks her shoes off in the chamber so that she can bring awareness into her feet and feel grounded.

## Formation of the UK Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group

Shortly after mindfulness courses were established, graduates started to become interested in the science behind what they'd learned. The [Mindfulness Initiative](#) policy institute was formed to begin presenting the research evidence on mindfulness to ministers, MPs and senior policy advisors. In early 2014, The Mindfulness Initiative supported parliamentarians to set up a [Mindfulness All-Party Parliamentary Group](#) (MAPPG) and helped them to carry out a 12-month inquiry into how mindfulness could be incorporated into UK services and institutions. The resulting report, [Mindful Nation UK report](#), was the first policy document of its kind and made evidence-based policy recommendations in the areas of education, health, criminal justice and the workplace. The Mindfulness Initiative continues to clerk the MAPPG and has helped the cross-party group to host events that both go deeper into existing areas of inquiry like '[Mindfulness and Primary Education](#)' and have opened up new fields such as '[Mindfulness, Defence and Emergency Services](#)' and '[Mindfulness, Ageing Well and Older People](#)'.

## Towards a more mindful and compassionate political culture

Over time, the British MPs and Members of the House of Lords who took part in these inquiries started to observe that their mindfulness practice was not just impacting what they were considering in their policymaking, but also how they were doing it. At a Mindfulness Initiative event in 2017 Baroness Ruth Lister (Lab) asked, *"We talk about mindfulness being helpful 'out there', but what about how mindfulness could help 'in here', in Parliament? What about mindful politics more generally?"*. Since that time, politicians have become increasingly confident and even visionary about the potential for



mindfulness to improve the quality of discourse and debate. Lord Howarth has suggested that *"the mutual respect, the willingness to listen, the kindness, the open-minded seeking after better understanding that mindfulness helps to inculcate are the crucial cultural underpinnings for a better politics."* At a conference on 'mindful leadership', Mindfulness All-Party Group Co-chair Tim Loughton MP reported that *"There is an affinity amongst those who have been through this mindfulness course and a rather more considered approach to exchanges of differing views."* In a TV interview, Tim suggested that mindfulness practice helps politicians to *"disagree better"*.

By far the most outspoken proponent of mindfulness in politics has been Chris Ruane. Chris was an MP for over 20 years and had a reputation in the early days for being loud and disruptive in the chamber. In 2011, Quentin Letts likened him to a *"knuckle-dragging torturer's assistant"*, describing him as a *"professional heckler"*, greeting *"every comment from the Government benches with a derogatory witticism"*. By 2019, however, when Chris asked a question about mindfulness during PMQs, the Speaker of the House of Commons noted that *"the gentleman is obviously a beneficiary of mindfulness himself, he seems a very calm and phlegmatic fellow these days, which wasn't always the case in the past!"*

Politicians have also reported that mindfulness helps them keep *"clarity of views... rather than ending up doing stuff just because there is pressure"*. At the international gathering of politicians in 2017, Dutch MP and party leader Esther Ouwehand said, *"Mindfulness really enables me to stay in touch with what is most important to me, my own values."*

### **Spreading to other Parliaments**

Following the success of the UK programme, British politicians have been invited to parliaments around the world to discuss mindfulness training. This has influenced a further ten national legislatures to introduce mindfulness courses. The Mindfulness Initiative now supports politicians and advocates across the world and supports an *'International Mindfulness in Politics Network'*. As part of these efforts, the Mindfulness Initiative and MAPPG hosted a first ['Global Mindfulness Congress'](#) of legislators in the UK Parliament in October 2017. At this historic international meeting, 40 politicians from 14 countries practised mindfulness together and engaged in insight-based policy inquiry with Prof Jon Kabat-Zinn.

**Conscious Policy**

# CASE STUDY 3

**Civil Service Cultural Transformation in  
Wales**

**The Welsh Government Sustainable  
Development**

*Author: Diana Reynolds, the Sustainable Development  
Change Manager at Llywodraeth Cymru / Welsh  
Government*



In 2015, the Government of Wales enacted the [Well-being of Future Generations Act](#) to encourage public bodies to think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more systemic approach. In conjunction, The Welsh Government Sustainable Development Behaviour Change Programme was launched to support behavioral and cultural change of civil servants (approx. 5000) in the Welsh Government. As an enabling change programme, it supports all civil servants who wish to understand or explore the implications of behavioural science and sustainable development for their work in government, in policy, process and personal terms.

### **Competency Framework**

The programme aims at changing the civil service way of working with people towards equal, reciprocal, and caring relations. To do this it sets out a new narrative for public services in terms of leadership to address power dynamics.

The underpinning competency framework for leadership includes four key transformation skills for development:

- Pause (long, short, with others, alone, meditative, in movement, outdoors, just waiting for things to emerge...)
- Listen (to myself, to others, to nature, to understand, to help someone else understand, in generative conversations...)
- Ask a good question! ... Then listen again, ask again, pause again ...
- Learn to act collectively (coproduce, learn by doing; experiment, prototype, have a go...)

The programme encourages each civil servant to find their own balance in pausing, listening, and questioning with taking action.

### **Approach**

The approach has been developed through a collaborative programme of action research based on repeated application of Theory U and on-demand service.

By supplying advice, conversations, coaching, appreciative enquiries, and space to think, the programme encourages civil servants to work with others to find creative solutions to policy and delivery challenges.

The programme is on a voluntary basis: staff ask for coaching sessions and trainings are tailored per person; their main focus is on how to apply behavior science in practice during the meetings.

Over nine years of implementation, around 2000 people have been trained and coached.

The programme has championed co-production and made use of co-production techniques and their links with good governance since its inception. Projects in mindfulness and behavioral insights have helped to inform the deeper understanding of co-production practices.

Diana Reynolds, the Sustainable Development Change Manager at Llywodraeth Cymru / Welsh Government says: *"Co-production is a way of achieving better outcomes by sharing power and responsibility. In this method people are seen as assets and in charge of their own situation. By working with others, they are enabled to change themselves from within."*

### **Research & Evaluation**



The programme is supported by relationships with universities (and others) based on reciprocity. The Welsh Government provides access to civil servants and/or work programmes, academics provide robust research, they both get to analyse the impact and the programme is continuously evaluated through this collaboration.

Evidence highlights an improvement in relationships with managers, quality of information and communication, empathy, openness to change, increased understanding of work processes and the links between well-being and successful delivery.

A comprehensive evaluation report measuring 10 years impact will be ready over the summer in 2022.



**Conscious Farming &  
Community Development**

# CASE STUDY 4

**Sustainable Yogic Agriculture and the  
Cultivation of Farmers' Wellbeing**

**Use of meditative practices to support  
farmers' wellbeing and facilitate the transition  
towards organic farming in India**

*Authors: Julia Wright and Janus Bojesen Jensen, Centre for  
Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University, UK*

## Context and Objective

This case study is compiled by researchers at Coventry University, UK, who gained permission from the Rural Development Wing of the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University to study their system of Sustainable Yogic Agriculture (SYA). The Brahma Kumaris spiritual movement itself was founded in 1937 and is based on the Vedic cosmological worldview that all human beings are pure souls inhabiting physical bodies, with soul consciousness being one's true nature. The movement has a global presence of 8,500 centers across 110 countries. SYA came into being as a result of observations by Indian farmers who were practicing meditation in their fields to improve crop health. Their methods were brought to the attention of the Brahma Kumaris' Rural Development Wing which subsequently launched SYA in 2008 as an initiative to improve the lives and livelihoods of farmers. SYA is based on the premise that 'as the food so the mind and as the mind, so the body'.

## Intervention

SYA combines thought-based meditative practices with standard organic principles that prohibit the use of non-organic fertilizers and biocides. According to the staff at the SYA Demonstration Farm, the aim of teaching the meditation is to cultivate in farmers a feeling of connection to God, Self, the Motherland and cows – the holy animal of India, with this inner transformation of the farmer, in turn, transforming the farm through right thinking and action. See Photo 1 for the 'before' and 'after' effects of the Raja Yoga meditation.



**Photo 1:** Information poster on 'before' and 'after' effects of meditation, Brahma Kumaris HQ, Mount Abu, Rajasthan, 2017

The meditation taught is an open-eyed practice, and farmers are encouraged to do this on a daily basis between 4 and 5 am, either remotely or in the field. They may also transmit positive intentions outside this time period during specific farming practices, and affirmations are taught to support each phase of the cropping cycle. The mechanism by which this meditation is thought to work is described in the Technical Manual of SYA as follows:



*"The first step of Raja Yoga Meditation is to attain the soul-consciousness stage. Pure thoughts are the source of pure vibrations, and pure vibrations create a pure atmosphere. After having entered into such a state, if you think positively about any person, animal or vegetation irrespective of where they are, very far or very close, our vibrations reach them and activate every gene." (RDW, 2009: 21-22).*

In addition, farmers are encouraged to play music and sing spiritual songs whilst working in the fields, both for their own meditation and happiness and with the expectation that this will aid crop growth. The ringing of the bells that hang around the oxen necks is felt to have a similar effect. Another distinctive feature is the hoisting of a red and yellow 'Flag of Shiva' about 5 feet high, at regular intervals across the fields. This serves as a constant reminder to the farmer that s/he is tending God's land and that the land is under divine care even when the farmer is not present. The flag also services as a reflector of sunlight onto the crops and a pest deterrent (See Photo 2). Farmers report applying a meditative focus to resist crop damage by pests, including communicating with bird species to encourage them to leave most of the crop undamaged.

**Photo 2:** *Tapovan's SYA demonstration field with organic cropping and Flag of Shiva*



In addition to the above, SYA also advocates a specific code of conduct that includes adherence to a vegetarian diet, abstinence, and goodwill toward others.

### **Actors**

The first SYA field trials were launched in India in 2009 and involved 400 smallholder farmers in the central and northern regions. Since then, training has taken place in hundreds of villages annually across several regions.

These have been supported by scientists from two of the country's agricultural universities: Govind Ballabh Pant University of Agriculture and Technology (CGPUAT) and Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada University of Agriculture and Technology (SDUAT).

### **Outcomes & Impact**

A small number of research trials provide indications of measurable differences between SYA and other farming approaches (organic and conventional) for specific productivity indicators including

biomass, grain yield and weight, and protein content. However, the results were not consistent across trials and more independent, longer-term research is required.

Almost 40 anecdotal reports from farmers have been collected on the benefits of adopting SYA. These benefits are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Key Quantitative and Qualitative Benefits of SYA, as Described by SYA Farmers

Quantitative Benefits	Qualitative Benefits
Increased crop yield	Improved family relations
Increased crop nutritional content	Increased feeling of connection with livelihood
Decreased costs of production	Increased sense of wellbeing and purpose
Increase in the price per kilo of product sold	Increased sense of pride as a farmer
Increased plant resilience	Improved relationships among farming communities
Decreased crop vulnerability to pests	Reduction in emotions such as anger and frustration among farmers
Faster seed germination	Increase in emotions such as patience and forgiveness among farmers
Easy incorporation with other methods of sustainable agriculture such as Sustainable Rice Intensification	Brings together disparate social sectors into a common purpose with wide-ranging benefits
	Incorporates cultural and spiritual meaning into work life

Farmers interviewed identified that livestock were more peaceful following the meditation practice. The farm environment was also reported to be more pleasant, joyful and refreshing, and these changes had been noted by visitors. Farmers felt their villages had become cleaner, more peaceful and unified politically, especially during elections. They perceived their families as happier because the heads of the household (themselves) were more peaceful. They also noted fewer problems associated with addictions to smoking, alcohol, opium and other substances, since they had abandoned these practices. Fewer doctors' visits were reported, as was improved inner strength and higher self-esteem.

SYA has received substantial national and international media attention, and its programmes are regularly supported at government level.

### Lessons learnt

The challenges to adoption of SYA are similar to those of adopting more sustainable farming approaches per se. Most farmers interviewed planned to expand the SYA techniques to a larger area of their holdings, however, sufficient labour was a limitation. Some farmers felt that the SYA farming was harder work since organic inputs were not always easily available whereas agrochemicals were. Hence, farmers felt they had to be seriously committed to the practices. The SYA farmers reported that 3 years was the transition period required to restore biodiversity to the land and soil.

The staff members at the Demonstration Farm noted that many farmers did not believe it possible to farm without agrochemicals and were afraid to try alternative methods as they expected lower yields. The staff overcame this by explaining that the higher quality produce led to higher market prices, and this combined with lower production costs (owing to the savings on agrochemical purchases) made

SYA farming more profitable than non-organic farming. To help farmers adopt SYA, the Rural Development Wing is facilitating a system of farmer-to-farmer networks.

SYA has achieved positive results at local and regional levels in a relatively short (12 years) time period, and interest could spread further afield with the increased recognition and adoption of meditation practices. There is a clear alignment of values between Raja Yoga meditation and the organic approach to farming, and this is enhanced at the level of practice by the intentional focus on the farm during the meditation. In particular, this study highlights the psycho-social benefits of the meditation practice, which are incurred first by the farmer who then positively impacts the entire farming family and community. This increased peace of mind cannot be overestimated in the context of the plight of small farmers in India and other regions of the world.

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A photograph of a woman in a blue and white patterned dress standing at a public water tap. She is smiling and looking to her right. Several yellow plastic jerrycans are lined up on a concrete ledge in front of the tap. The background shows a blue wall and a window. A large orange circular graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing text.

**Conscious Farming &  
Community Development**

# CASE STUDY 5

**Catalyzing Female Social Entrepreneurs in  
rural Rwanda to Lead from Within**

**Conscious Social Change, a holistic  
approach that uses inner work, as a  
vehicle and design tool for sustainably  
solving complex social issues**

*Author: Gretchen Ki Steidle, Founder and President of  
Global Grassroots*

Global Grassroots is a mindfulness-based social venture incubator for women in East Africa, which believes that for sustainable development to occur, transformation is most effectively driven from within. This means, from the start, honoring the wisdom and nurturing the holistic growth of local leaders - women in particular - so they can mindfully lead and systemically influence change from within their own communities.

To achieve its mission, Global Grassroots utilizes a methodology called **Conscious Social Change**. This approach uses inner work (e.g., mindfulness, social-emotional learning, trauma healing, resilience, and agency-building) as a vehicle and design tool for sustainably solving complex social issues.

### **Context**

Global Grassroots works in post-conflict East Africa, where water access is limited, they invest in local women-led teams who have ideas for improving their communities by equipping them with a holistic array of personal transformation and social entrepreneurship.

Over the course of 18 months, they put these skills to work in designing, constructing, and implementing social-purpose water enterprises for the benefit of their communities. Each non-profit venture brings clean water access - and subsequent improvements in health, nutrition, education, gender equity, and poverty - to thousands of community members each year.

### **Curriculum**

Global Grassroots prioritizes working alongside existing, women-led teams who have ideas for improving their communities.

- In Phase One: teams participate in an intensive, experiential 40-hour training that focuses on the principles of Conscious Social Change, including core skills of mindfulness-based leadership, and mind-body trauma healing. Inner work activities are introduced alongside project management, budgeting, and creative resourcing to prepare teams for venture leadership.
- In Phase Two: teams enter 3-6 months of hands-on coaching as they design comprehensive plans for their ventures.
- In Phase Three: they receive seed funding and 1-4 months of implementation support during the construction of their water access point.
- In Phase Four: water ventures are operational and begin reinvesting profits into community projects.

### **Impact**

Between 2008 and 2021, 26 women's water ventures have reached more than 82,000 individuals in underserved communities in Rwanda and Uganda. Among those ventures, 96% are still operational. Using its holistic model of inner work for social change, Global Grassroots aims to impact three areas: (1) personal transformation of team members; (2) venture sustainability; and (3) community development.

(1) Staff and women's teams collaboratively monitor numerous indicators of success. Over the course of the venture incubator and accelerator, staff look for **personal transformation** within individual team members in:

- Mindfulness and self-management
- Confidence and agency

- Wellbeing and resilience
- Venture leadership skills
- Sense of belonging

Data is collected using a Team Member Survey (TMS) administered in the local language on the first day of the incubator training. Using 12 years of data collected by Global Grassroots, team members reported increases in all areas, with significant improvements in confidence and agency.

When problems arise, rather than solving for the women, staff leverage their own mindful leadership skills to facilitate discussion. This includes honoring women’s wisdom and leadership instincts and using “inquiry without imposition” to help teams generate solutions of their own. When a situation persists, staff may provide additional training, co-facilitate problem-solving sessions, or support team leaders as they work with key stakeholders.

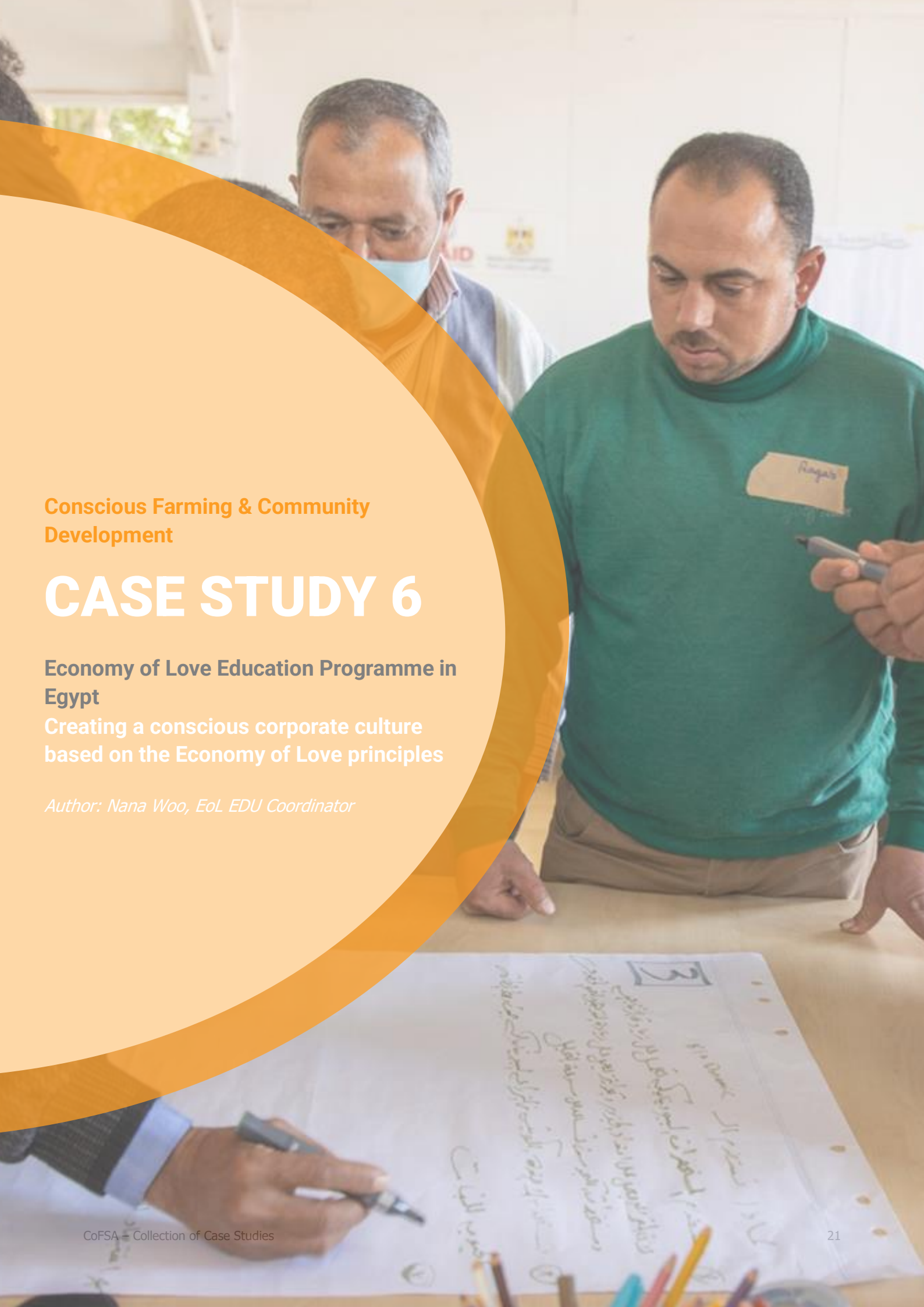
(2) According to assessments of teams’ data, the **average water venture** will produce the following impacts after one year of operation:

- 3000 individuals have access to fresh clean water
- 50% decrease in distance to water source (from 2.1km to 1.0km)
- 86% decrease in cost of 1 jerry can (in Rwanda)
- 94% of households boil water for drinking
- 95% wash hands before eating
- 96% have soap in the household
- 30% fewer parents report children getting sick once per month or more
- 5x increase in men fetching water for their household
- 50% fewer households report daughters missing school due to water collection
- Consistently reported decrease in sexual violence related to water collection

(3) Throughout implementation, Global Grassroots’s staff work with teams to document **community-level outcomes**. Prior to launching their water access point, teams work with staff to collect baseline data using a Community Impact Survey (CIS) that has both standard and customizable questions. These include items about the household; income level and sources; gender roles; access to water; time and money spent on water; school attendance; children’s health and more. The survey is repeated after 12 months of venture operations. The sample for the CIS is small and purposive but provides a helpful snapshot of how the team’s efforts are impacting their community.

Through this multi-leveled and mixed method approach to monitoring and evaluation, Global Grassroots is building a base of data and insights to help illuminate the linkages between inner work, personal transformation, and sustainable community development.





**Conscious Farming & Community  
Development**

# CASE STUDY 6

**Economy of Love Education Programme in  
Egypt**

**Creating a conscious corporate culture  
based on the Economy of Love principles**

*Author: Nana Woo, EoL EDU Coordinator*

Economy of Love (EoL) Educational Programme (EDU) is an educational curriculum that accompanies the [EoL Certification Standard](#) for sustainable and ethical producers, farms and processors, implemented by [SEKEM](#). The EoL EDU Program is applied to all the organizations that wish to be certified to adhere to the principles of holistic and sustainable development.

Getting the EoL Certification takes 3 years, in which the company makes a deep commitment, both to its employees, offering them the EoL EDU curriculum, and to consumers, fulfilling the promises of ethical and transparent production throughout the value chain.

### **How does the transformation of corporate culture work with the EoL EDU Curriculum?**

The EoL EDU curriculum is tailored to empower producers and processors to initiate the transformation of corporate culture and its current state of operation toward a working culture that supports the EoL principles and fosters the **four dimensions of sustainability: ecology, economy, society, culture**.

Joining the Program for companies means taking care of their employees' personal development through various cultural activities offered to their staff in different forms, ranging from the arts to Islamic spiritual practices.

Companies commit to ensuring that 10% of employees' working time is devoted to their individual development: which includes weekly meetings (of about 1 to 2 hours at a time) to discuss critical issues concerning their daily and working lives, led by SEKEM Initiative founder Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish, who illustrates, explains and conveys the basic vision of holistic development. In addition, employees are involved in ongoing development and specific trainings directly related to their work tasks and challenges.

### **EoL EDU Curriculum: 4 Modules and 7 Sessions**

So far, around 1300 employees have been trained through the EoL EDU curriculum. The course is structured in 4 modules that aim to shift the paradigm both at individual and collective level. The introductory part (first and second sessions) of the course aims at getting to know each other in the group through the narration of personal stories, then the modules begin:

- **[Module 1] ECOLOGY basic awareness training**

The module begins with observation and immersion in nature to foster interconnectedness with the whole system. Later sessions cover learning about our current food production systems and observing their influence on climate change, while also reflecting on traditional and indigenous ways of farming and exploring how these alternative practices might inspire us to transform our food production methods.

- **[Module 2] ECONOMY basic awareness training**

The module aims to explore an economic system based on collaboration, solidarity and care for people and nature.

- **[Module 3] CULTURE basic awareness training**

This module seeks to balance the emphasis on productivity and efficiency, while also nurturing employees' individual development through the arts, creativity, spiritual practices and well-being. In this way, EoL EDU focuses on providing space for individual empowerment and cultural diversity, in

order to foster a healthy, respectful work environment and hence lead to a sustainable and balanced society.

- **[Module 4] SOCIETY basic awareness training**

The module aims to create a community of trust and mutual understanding where the well-being of all people is considered. Communication skills, conflict resolution skills, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence are all essential for building a strong community and are practiced throughout this module.

### **Impact & results**

Over the implementation of the curriculum, SEKEM Project Team conducted interviews to capture some of the lessons related to changes in behaviors, attitudes, needs and constraints of participants. Through interviews and focus groups the following emerged:

- **Increased empathy and communication skills:** participants had the opportunity to connect with their colleagues on a more personal level, listening to each other's problems and being able to talk about things they do not normally talk about, thus developing empathy and communication skills.
- **Increased self-connection:** participants reported that the active learning approach of the EoL sessions allowed them to reconnect with themselves and prompted them to reflect and think deeply in order to express their opinions and ideas in the group.
- **Increased energy and inspiration:** a recurring theme in the interviews were that participants looked forward to the sessions as a way to free their minds from the stresses of work and that they left feeling energized, refreshed and inspired.

By exploring the four dimensions of the economy of love criteria in-depth, EoL EDU program will support companies to become part of a movement built on the principles of sustainability, solidarity, and respect towards each other and nature. Additionally, the curriculum focusing on adult education, drives them to reflect on life's goals and purposes, raising working-class consciousness.





**Conscious Farming &  
Community Development**

# CASE STUDY 7

**An Indigenous Youth Leadership Initiation  
Ritual to support Regeneration in Cameroon**

**Reviving the spirit of Ndanifor in young leaders  
of permaculture ecovillages**

*Author: Joshua Konkankoh, Director of Better World  
Cameroon*



Since 2013, a rehabilitation programme designed by Better World Cameroon has been implemented in the [Bafut](#) area of Cameroon to transform around 54 traditional villages into resilient ecovillages, where connection with nature is restored, high value agricultural products ([HVAP](#)) are grown, sustainable food forests are preserved, and biodiversity is protected.

Designing an integral ecovillage project, while safeguarding biodiversity and ensuring sustainable food production in Cameroon is one of the main goals of Joshua Konkankoh's mission, the man behind Bafut ecovillage and [Better World Cameroon](#).

Joshua Konkankoh said: "To build ecovillages in Africa" - or what he defines - "peace villages"... "we need to understand what peace is and reconnect with ourself, nature and indigenous wisdom in order to learn the rules of trust, solidarity and love".

### **Ndanifor Permaculture Ecovillage**

Ndanifor Permaculture Ecovillage is the first demonstration site in Bafut that has been converted into a resilient ecovillage, through a combination of indigenous initiation rituals for leaders and permaculture training for the community; a combination that has supported the village's systemic transformation towards sustainability at both the individual and community levels.

The indigenous Ndanifor ritual is a leadership initiation practice for a group of local young people that enables them to flourish as leaders of the Ecovillage and peace workers. During a seven-day spiritual retreat in the forest, young people are guided by village elders on ancestral mindful breathing, deep listening to Mother Earth and prayer; the ritual involves a strict discipline of fasting and mindful eating, along with community healing activities such as bathing and water soaking together. On the journey, participants are encouraged to connect their souls to Mother Earth and dive deeply into themselves. The ritual evokes, through sacred chanting and the pouring of libations, the presence of the ancestors to spiritually instruct those undertaking the transformation.

The Ndanifor ritual is linked to the belief that if young people are constantly connected to Mother Earth for seven days, they develop their consciousness by receiving the wisdom and knowledge of their ancestors. At the end of the journey, a celebration of leadership initiation is held for those who have participated in the retreat and who aspire to become the new village leaders of the Bafut communities. This initiation supports young leaders' involvement in outer ecovillage activities such as regenerative agriculture, medicinal gardens, from a mindset grounded in interconnection with nature.





Conscious Consumption

# CASE STUDY 8

Tapiokit, a Conscious Food Education Program

Enhancing cultural identity to promote sustainable and healthy eating habits in the schools of Rio de Janeiro

*Author: Teresa Corção, Founder of the Instituto Maniva*

The Tapioca Workshops, later called Tapiokit, is a workshop run by Brazilian NGO, [Instituto Maniva](#), for thousands of kids in public schools across Rio de Janeiro, aiming at promoting sustainable eating habits through revival of the rich native gastronomy.

The workshop focused on reviving the Amazonian cultural identity through the use of Cassava, or Manioc, a root vegetable formerly a staple food of the country, now widely replaced by wheat and viewed as a "food for the poor".

The objective is to raise awareness and decolonize eating habits, reclaiming one's culinary and cultural identity and promoting a healthy and sustainable diet through the use of cassava as a native and locally grown food.

Teresa Corção, Founder of Instituto Maniva, says: *"Not eating indigenous fruit and vegetables causes both an economic and an emotional problem: on one hand it means loss of income for local farmers while on the other hand it has a great cultural impact and causes an emotional detachment from indigenous origins"*.

### **Programme structure**

The workshop involved extracurricular activities for children aged 7 to 12, such as: lessons on the history of cassava and the influence of Portuguese colonization; cooking classes to learn cassava recipes; storytelling activities on indigenous tales about the origin of cassava; and finally, learning Brazilian folk songs and dances celebrating cassava.

### **Impact**

During 10 years of implementation, more than 3,000 kids had been trained in Rio. The Tapioka Workshop offered a new perspective on native food by stimulating children's creativity and autonomy through easy cooking techniques; it changed eating habits by valuing the origins of socio-biodiversity products; it provided cultural and historical knowledge of Brazilian culture and established a connection with ancestries; finally, it reinforced the Brazilian cultural identity.

### **Scale-up**

By replacing the 'identity food' with other basic products, the "kit" has been used in several states in Brazil and also in Uruguay.

In the Tapiokit, "food" has been a powerful tool to teach sustainability and to shape the habits and mindset of the youngest children towards an awareness of their native culture.



**Conscious Consumption**

# CASE STUDY 9

**Mondelēz: Global consumer engagement on Mindful Snacking**

**How Mondelez International educates and encourages consumers to snack mindfully**

*Author: Susanne Alig-Mathis, Global Lead for Mindful Snacking at Mondelez International*



Mondelēz International is one of the world's largest snack companies, whose mission is to empower people to snack right in over 150 countries around the world by providing the right snack, for the right moment, made the right way. Indeed, snacks in the right portion, consumed mindfully, are part of a balanced diet.

### **The Mindful Snacking Approach**

Consumers are increasingly concerned with their well-being and leading a balanced lifestyle. Mindful Snacking is a behavioral approach that focuses on eating with intention and attention, and it encourages consumers to be more present when snacking, paying attention to what they want, how much they need and being aware of fullness and level of satisfaction. For this purpose, since 2014 Mondelēz International has worked with Mindful Eating experts and behavioral scientists to develop educational material and promote Mindful Snacking among consumers and health professionals.

The Mindful Snacking approach encourages six simple behaviors:

1. Know what you want (emotional & functional needs)
2. Be aware of portion & moderate it
3. Be present at the moment
4. Enjoy & appreciate the snacks with all your senses
5. Be aware of your hunger, fullness & satisfaction level
6. Reflect on your whole eating experience

### **The Mondelēz's Mindful Snacking Platform**

Through the Mindful Snacking platform, Mondelēz also will provide visual portion information with a Mindful Snacking icon on the front of all participating packages by 2025 supporting the company's mission of empowering people to snack right. This icon helps consumers be aware of portions with a visual depiction of the serving size, in combination with required nutrition information based on local regulation. Indeed, portion information is recognized as one effective way to help people manage their calorie intake. This helps to get information into the hands of the consumers, at the moment of consumption, to make informed choices and encourage mindful eating. Through the mindful snacking platform, Mondelēz International strives to help consumers make informed and deliberate snacking choices, manage their snacking portions, and enjoy snacks as part of a balanced diet.

### **Emerging Science**

Emerging science tells us that mindful eating leads to a positive relationship with food by making deliberate and conscious food choices, more pleasure and satisfaction by savoring with all the senses, better management of food portions and less likely to overeat by paying attention to hunger and fullness. Mondelēz International continues to track consumer behavior, attitudes and needs around snacking through the [Global State of Snacking Study](#) report. While mindfulness is a universal concept, Mondelēz recognizes that Mindful Snacking means something different to consumers in different countries. For this reason, the company makes sure to work closely with local teams to tailor mindful snacking programs to the local context ensuring appropriate translations and uses of different media to get information to the consumer. The company also works to tailor mindful snacking tips for the brand's consumer, in line with the brand purpose, so that the messages truly resonate. While Mondelēz relies heavily on an internal team of nutrition experts across the global business, the company actively engages with external health, nutrition experts, organizations, NGOs, and governments to stay up to date on the latest science and policies to ensure they can provide credible and relevant information to the consumer.



**Conscious Collaboration**

# CASE STUDY 10

**For Tomorrow's Harvest, an Awareness-based Journey for Change Agents in the Dutch Food Systems**

**A Theory U Leadership Programme to support the Transition towards sustainability**

*Author: Maaïke Boumans, Programme Coordinator, Commonland*

In 2018, Commonland, together with the OFL, an independent platform funded by the Dutch government, launched "For Tomorrow's Harvest": an awareness-based journey for change agents supporting the transition of the Dutch food and agricultural system towards sustainability. The participants represented largely the agri-food system, having members from the business community, governments, banks, farms, and social organizations.

In a proven leadership trajectory, based on Theory U, eighty participants immersed themselves over a 1,5 - year course in the agricultural and food system. They learned to look through different perspectives and to understand and integrate other perspectives into their own thinking and acting. Participants reflected on their own role in the transition. They were given systemic and process-based tools to develop individual and collective leadership and thus the capacity to contribute more effectively to the desired transition. From there, participants developed transition experiments, or prototypes, focused on addressing systems barriers that were identified during the process.

### The journey

"For Tomorrow's Harvest" followed the U curve and started with a three-day immersive process in September 2018 in which participants began building relationships with each other and started sensing into the agricultural and food system in the Netherlands and its challenges. This three-day co-initiation workshop was followed by a full day in January 2019 of further 'co-sensing' of the agricultural system through dialogue interviews, shadowing (spending half a day with someone from a different perspective in the system) and learning more about Theory U. Participants then undertook six different 'learning journeys' in March 2019, in order to visit various places and initiatives that hold potential for change. They witnessed, observed and engaged with people from those initiatives, and took their learning back to the rest of the group on day 6 of the journey, in April 2019. This day was spent at the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and included a presentation on 'Value creation and new organizational and business models in a circular economy' by the head economist at the Triodos Investment Group. The Lab finished with a two-day workshop on crystallizing visions for the future and developing system prototypes.

### Impact

A total of eight concrete initiatives were born out of For Tomorrow's Harvest.

- One such example is ['Aardpeer'](#), a collaboration between a bank, a farming community, and a foundation of regenerative agriculture. They established a foundation that allows citizens and investors to purchase bonds for land for regenerative farmers. In 2021, they were able to realize the purchase of land for five farmers through the sale of a total of 7.2 million euros in bonds. In a total of 3 weeks, they received 74 applications from farmers with a total volume of approximately 100 million euros, demonstrating the high need for access to land by regenerative farmers.
- Another prototype, "**Biodiversity is achieved together**", focuses on a specific piece of land, where they aim to increase biodiversity by placing it at the center of business development and involving consumers and residents of the area by offering locally produced goods and services.
- "**JOIN Dialogue-dinners**" (DOE MEE - dialoog diners) offers space for an agricultural entrepreneur to share their story in a small group of people, who bring their curiosity, questions and inspiration. New connections are made, stories are shared, and potential for collaboration is enhanced.
- "**Future-oriented business acquisition**" is a prototype to develop a two-hour game that supports financiers, licensing authorities, chain parties and landowners to think about what



they can do differently to support young future farmers to develop sustainable agriculture. For more information on these and other prototypes, see the [website](#) in Dutch.

### **Lessons learned**

Participants have experienced the Lab as valuable by gaining deeper insights, growing their network, developing new tools they could integrate in their own work and leaving with a clearer sense of direction. The researchers found there were two 'archetypes' in the participants: people who enjoy the left side of the U (sensing the system, reflection, slowing down, deepening insights), and those who enjoy the right side of the U (stepping into action, developing new prototypes, searching for means, knowledge, and people to further support their current work). They indicated a need for 'connectors' between these two.

### **Future potential**

For Tomorrow's Harvest is continuing in various smaller regional Labs throughout the Netherlands, as well as a Lab focused on youth: 'for the harvest of the day after tomorrow'.

Watch this [3,5 minute video](#) that explains For Tomorrow's Harvest. Here is a video of the [2-day summit](#) in June 2019 and a video of the [summit in September 2020](#).

For more information see [the website](#) in Dutch.

Commonland is currently developing a partnership together with Presencing Institute and Ashoka to further this approach in Europe, under the title of "[Bioregional Weaving Labs](#)" and is exploring potential for this approach with partners in other regions across the world.



**Conscious Collaboration**

# CASE STUDY 11

**REGEN-Nations**

Whole system co-learning journey and  
regenerative design lab hosted by Global  
Ecovillage Network Oceania & Asia (GENOA)

*Author: Thao Kin Ngo, Networking Coordinator at Global  
Ecovillage Network Oceania & Asia*

The Asia - Pacific region holds many of the world's climate vulnerable nations. With dense populations and great social and political divides, many countries who are already facing challenges prior to the Covid-19 pandemic face more vulnerabilities and challenges ahead.

REGEN-Nations offers a learning program and incubation for solutions that emerge from the grassroots people of the region Oceania & Asia addressing the systemic problem they are facing with a holistic approach. Weaving together the wisdom of our rich cultural heritage with locally appropriate social and scientific methods and technologies, we aim to explore ways that heal and restore ourselves, our communities, and our natural environments together.

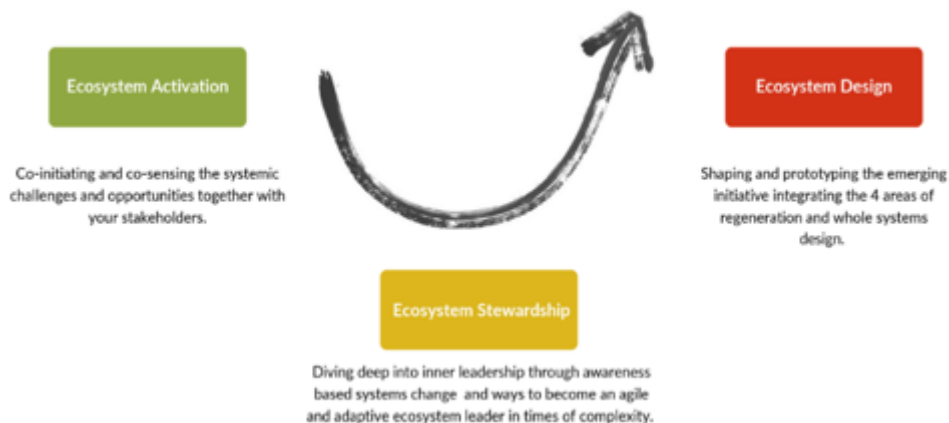
REGEN-Nations is a 6-month learning journey and prototyping lab using whole systems thinking to design solutions for sociological, cultural, economic, and ecological resilience and regeneration.

The program aims to grow and strengthen relationships, collaboration, cross-pollination and the emergence of regenerative projects in Asia and Oceania.

REGEN-Nations was inspired by the ecovillage design education program which develops from the ecovillage map of regeneration. The program circles through five areas of regeneration: the social, cultural (worldview), ecological, economic to whole systems design.



Inspired by Theory U and Regenerative Design Thinking tools, the programme journeys through 3 stages:



This program aims to:

- Empower individuals and communities to develop impactful projects
- Teach skills for empathic, collaborative, and agile leadership in times of complexity
- Provide access to real-world practitioners to inspire participants as well as coach each project on a one-to-one basis
- Develop an online ecosystem of regenerative projects to provide ongoing support in the form of peer-to-peer learning, cross-pollination of ideas and increased collaboration

The program ran its first cycle from September 2020 to March 2021 with 49 participants (16 teams) from 11 countries in Oceania & Asia. Participants journeyed through five areas of regeneration (cultural, social, ecologically, economic and whole system design) together with the companionship of 2 coaches, 9 workshop facilitators and 15 speakers who are thinkers and practitioners in different fields. Its 2nd cycle will run from January to June 2022 on the GEN Learning Platform.

Through the REGEN-Nations program, GENOA was able to also engage a network of thought leaders, trainers, activists, ecovillages and kindred spirit organizations from the region as trainers, speakers and partners of different learning sessions. It was special to feature topics that ranged from Buddhist worldview on right livelihood and Maori perspectives on doughnut economy, interfaith peacebuilding from Sri Lanka, Filipino innovations in disasters, to Permaculture design, popularized by Australians, to offer more applicable solutions to the complex realities of countries in the region ranging from poverty, conflict, and the climate crisis, among others.

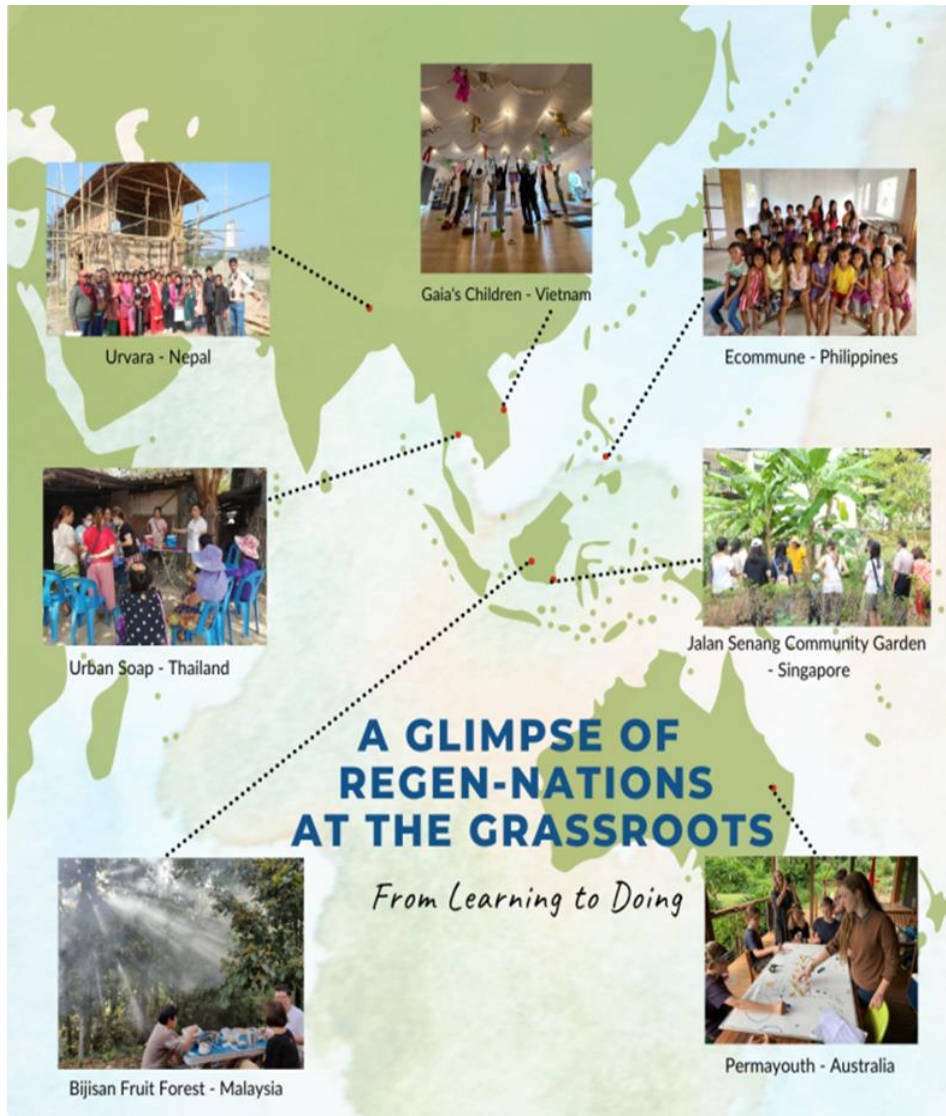
On the topic of Conscious food system, the program offered extensive sessions on:

- The indigenous link between food, biodiversity and health;
- Regenerative agriculture practices (including permaculture, analog forestry and appropriate technologies);
- Local and regenerative agri-economic systems (e.g., co-operatives, and community supported agriculture CSA);
- Whole system design for agricultural systems;

### **Outcomes & Impact**

In 2020 the first REGEN-Nations course was given to 16 project teams from Oceania & Asia. We welcomed 49 participants from Australia, Japan, India, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. Our live expert speaker sessions were open to the public and joined by an additional 120 people. At the end of the course, 10 projects were incubated & activated. Some examples of these projects are featured in the graph below:







The background of the page is a photograph of the United Nations Secretariat Building in New York City. The building is a large, classical-style structure with a prominent entrance. Above the entrance, the words "UNITED NATIONS" and "NATIONS UNIES" are inscribed on the facade, flanking the United Nations emblem. In front of the building, a long, straight path of green grass is lined with numerous flagpoles, each flying a different national flag. The sky is overcast and grey. A large, semi-transparent orange circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the text for the case study.

**Conscious Collaboration**

# CASE STUDY 12

**The UN Action Learning Lab**

**Leading Transformative Change in the  
United Nations**

*Author: Laurel Patterson, Head, UNDP SDG Integration  
Team*

## Context

COVID-19 has changed the development landscape. Progress toward the SDGs has been reversed. The tectonic shifts and blind spots surfaced by our current moment have underscored the need for new capabilities to navigate the Decade of Action and seize emergent opportunities for systems transformation. Deep systems change starts with fostering collective capacities to situate the 'self' in systems, to operate from a place of connectedness between our minds, hearts, and hands and between each other, and to move from ego-system to eco-system awareness.

## The Action Learning Journey

In June-September 2020, UNDP partnered with the [MIT Presencing Institute \(PI\)](#) to host a series of [Summer Dialogues](#), aimed at building inner capacities for awareness-based collective action.

Drawing on the energy and insights from the Summer Dialogues, UNDP continued with a global [Transformation Dialogue Series](#) in the first half of 2021 to strengthen systems leadership capacities for the Decade of Action. These virtual gatherings and learning spaces invited UN practitioners into a unique space to understand and apply awareness-based approaches, such as deep listening, mindfulness, and embodied practices for systems inquiry, to the complex challenges at the core of their work. UN staff had the opportunity to hone their action confidence by applying consciousness approaches to problems of their choice. The sessions took the main questions from [the 2020 Human Development Report on Human Development and the Anthropocene](#) as a point of focus for co-inquiry into mechanisms for systems transformation.

The 4-month initiative was advanced as a collaborative powered by UNDP's integration function, with FAO, UNHCR, UN Women, UNCDF, UNV, UNEP and DPA/DPPO, facilitated by the Presencing Institute, and moderated by Laurel Patterson, Head, UNDP SDG Integration Team.

To know more about the dialogues held you can watch the recordings below:

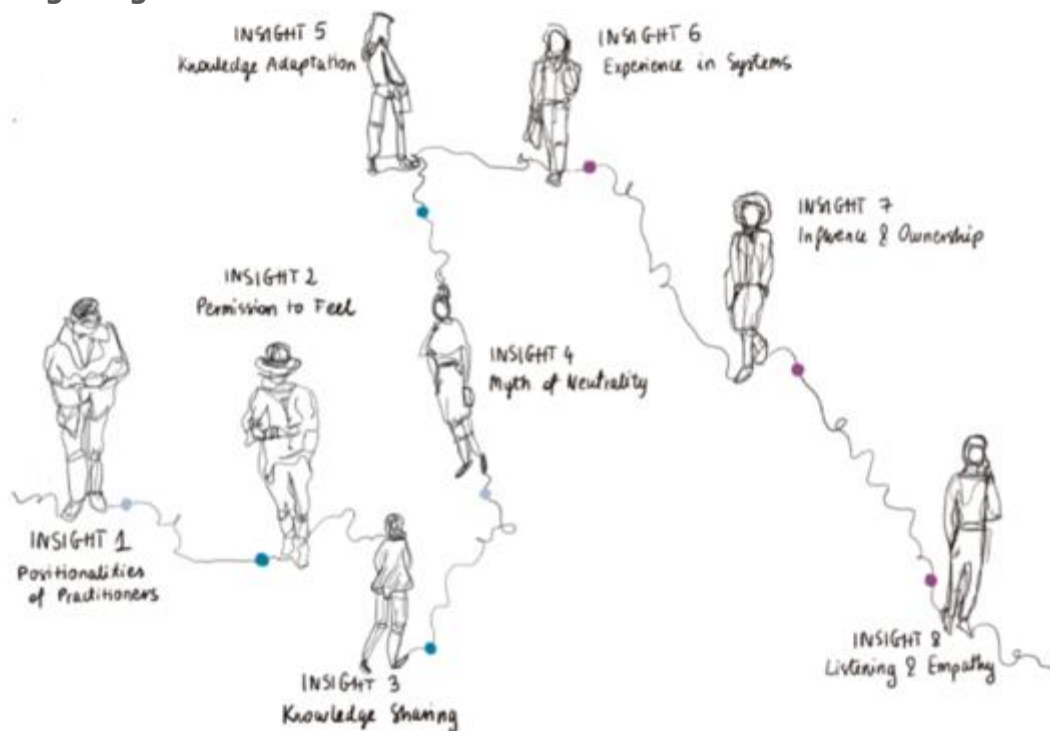
💡 Dialogue 1	💡 Dialogue 2	💡 Dialogue 3	💡 Dialogue 4	💡 Dialogue 5
<a href="#">Co-Initiating: Uncovering Shared Intention</a>	<a href="#">Co-Sensing: Seeing Reality from the Edges of the System</a>	<a href="#">Presencing: Connecting to the Highest Future Potential</a>	<a href="#">Co-Creating the Emerging Future: Doughnut Economics</a>	<a href="#">Co-Evolving: Organizing the Future As It Emerges</a>

During this four months' interactive journey practitioners learned how to move from concept to prototype and build the confidence to enact them. Participants were introduced to systems methods by the Presencing Institute, drawing on its Theory U methodology, in a series of workshops, and received and contributed to peer-coaching to collectively move ideas from paper to practice.

This journey equipped participants with a unique skill set that empowers them to be a true agent of change in the Decade of Action, by learning:

- Modalities for sensing - ways of finding, navigating, and understanding complex development challenges by situating yourself in the system and centering the voices of the people with lived experience.
- Modalities for presencing - ways of reducing the noise in complexity and finding clarity about what and how to tackle acute challenges.
- Modalities for prototyping - ways of proactively testing actions required for operating in uncertainty.

## Learning Insights



Over the four months, a UNDP team with external partners conducted design-led research to capture some of the lessons related to changes in behaviors, attitudes, needs and constraints of participants of the Action Learning Lab. Through observation, interviews, surveys and focus groups, the team sought to better understand how UN practitioners act as systems leaders, what enables their actions, how these actions change over time, and the pathways by which a container like the Action Learning Lab can influence this. Among the insights that emerged:

### **Insight 1: Positionality of Practitioners**

Different positionalities – understandings of the world based on personal values, views, and location in time and space – of UN practitioners who participated in the Action Learning Lab influence how they theorize change, understand, and act in systems. This creates a myriad of expressions of what 'systems' are and contributes to differing preferences on how to engage in learning about them.

### **Insight 2: Permission to Feel**

When UN practitioners perceive spaces to be different from other UN spaces, such as the Action Learning Lab, they feel that they've been granted permission to be vulnerable. Practitioners who see these types of spaces as unique, point to an acceleration of relationship building within them and a potential for the space to provide a sense of belonging for participants. In these same spaces, other UN practitioners feel discomfort with the examples, activities, and ask them to participate. These practitioners point to dissonances experienced due to culture and language and missed expectations of the space to deliver practical methods.

### **Insight 3: Knowledge Sharing**

UN Practitioners seeking to upskill in systems leadership often make implicit references to a personal-work divide, and they associate "inner transformation" learning with a personal environment. Some practitioners place a high value on reflective learning spaces, indicating how the Action Learning Lab helped them gain clarity about their priorities and goals. At the same time, a majority of research



respondents identified uncertainties about how to share knowledge from the lab with colleagues and carry over their experience into their work.

#### **Insight 4: Myth of Neutrality**

Some Global South and BIPOC UN practitioners identify a “myth of neutrality” in approaches to systems transformation, particularly as taught through a Western lens without unpacking its foundational entanglement with inequality and structural racism. These practitioners stated how the Western approach poses explanations, while for them, systems transformation is experienced with little need for explanation.

#### **Insight 5: Knowledge Adaptation**

Despite widespread acceptance that adaptations are needed when learning new ideas and methods, UN practitioners expressed a high degree of uncertainty about how to apply what they were learning in the lab in their work environments. Furthermore, they feel conflicted about who has the responsibility to translate and spread learnings from the lab, questioning whether or not it is their role or if others should create these bridges.

#### **Insight 6: Experience in Systems**

UN practitioners that consider themselves advanced systems thinkers seek to learn how to act in systems. They display an eagerness to get to the applications in context and to better understand the ‘how to’ of systems practice. At the same time, some practitioners that present as novices to systems thinking demonstrated an acceptance of starting by situating themselves in systems to explore sophisticated actions later.

#### **Insight 7: Influence & Ownership**

UN practitioners participating in the Action Learning Lab expressed desire to change processes. At the same time, they showcased doubts in their level of influence to do so, and a tendency to look for leaders outside of themselves to provide an invitation and permission to lead a process. A group of practitioners referenced fears they have that encourage them to ask for permission to lead.

#### **Insight 8: Listening & Empathy**

A significant number of UN practitioners who participated in the Action Learning Lab said that listening and developing empathy are valuable inner transformation practices that strengthen the connection between them and others. Some practitioners said listening is a good first step for systems transformation because it helps to create connections between otherwise very different roles, expertises, and focal areas. Practitioners remain divided on the meaning of listening and empathy, and hence applications of it for systems transformation also vary.

Building on the initial momentum and insights from the Action Learning Lab and dialogues, UNDP SDG Integration is continuing to work with partners to expand democratized spaces for building systems leadership capabilities, with a focus on how to shape social fields and learning infrastructure that catalyze more awareness-based modes of collective action.

A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile, looking out a large window. The window reflects a modern building with a red facade. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an indoor setting with large glass panels. The overall atmosphere is professional and contemplative.

**Conscious Collaboration**

# CASE STUDY 13

**The Contemplative Sustainable Futures Program**

**A research programme on the role of inner dimensions and inner-outer transformation for sustainability**

*Author: Christine Wamsler - Professor of Sustainability Science and Director of the Contemplative Sustainable Futures Program*

## Context

Humanity is facing increasingly complex sustainability challenges, such as climate change, disasters, and food, energy, land or water conflicts. The influence of human activities on their environment and climate system is so profound, and unprecedented, that a new geological epoch—the Anthropocene—has been declared. It is clear that our trajectories remain deeply unsustainable.

While sustainability scholarship and practice has led to substantial advancements over the past decades, it has not catalyzed the necessary change. A critical review shows that the vast majority has, so far, focused on the external world of ecosystems, wider socioeconomic structures, technology and governance dynamics. At the same time, a critical second dimension of reality has been neglected: the (individual and collective) inner dimensions of sustainability. In order to fill this gap, at the end of 2015, the Contemplative Sustainable Futures Program was set up at the Lund University Centre for Sustainability Studies (LUCSUS).

## Objective

The aim of the [Contemplative Sustainable Futures Program](#) is to create space and opportunities for knowledge development, learning and networking on the role of inner dimensions and inner-outer transformation for sustainability. It consists of three building blocks: [research](#), [education](#), and [networking](#)/outreach activities.

Research: research on the role of inner dimensions and spheres of inner-outer transformation in sustainability includes theoretical and empirical studies on: mindsets, social values, beliefs, worldviews and associated cognitive/ emotional capacities and virtues, such as awareness, consciousness, compassion, empathy and mindfulness, for improving sustainable governance. In this context, it explores the linkages between adult development, personal transformation, norms, policy, and systems change.

Education: education activities on the role of inner dimensions and inner-outer transformation in sustainability includes a Master's level Course on 'Sustainability and Inner Transformation', PhD education and contemplative teaching and learning activities, such as Practice Labs and Weekly Councils. All educational activities are linked to research activities and together address the linkages between personal transformation, norms, policy and systems change.

Networking/outreach and practice: networking activities include cooperation with practitioners and the development of a professional database of stakeholders, networks, projects and resources on inner dimensions and inner-outer transformation in sustainability. A platform for sharing and mutual support is created where it is possible to work closely with different organizations, implement together a range of different projects, and engage in various networking events.

## Interventions

The Program includes a range of interdisciplinary projects and interventions on the interface between the mind, consciousness and sustainability, such as the [TransVision](#) , [Mind4Change](#), [ActivateChange](#), and BeChange-Together projects.

Related collaborative interventions include, amongst many other things, i) the implementation of [Co-Creative Reflection & Dialogue Spaces](#) at the COPs (Conferences of the Parties, a decision-making body responsible for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC); ii) SenseMaker work for governmental and non-



governmental organisations to improve joint city-citizen cooperation for climate action; iii) different training interventions to support inner-outer transformation for sustainability.

Additional information on some projects: TransVision and [Mind4Change](#) focus on the questions:

- i) What mindsets (values, beliefs, paradigms and associated cognitive/emotional and relational capacities) support sustainable climate action?
- ii) What is needed to enable such mindsets (learning processes, enabling factors, methods)?

The target group of Mind4Change are policy- and decision-makers. In contrast, TransVision focuses on the role of citizens as key agents of change for sustainability and climate action. Both projects involve the assessment of a range of different practice and education interventions.

The project BeChange-Together focuses on the work with local governments and connects mental tools with climate-related guidance in a multi-step program that encourages inner and personal lifestyle changes with wider societal transformation. In previous applications, the methodology has shown to achieve a carbon dioxide reduction of an average of 45% for participants and give measurable results around improved wellbeing and reduced climate anxiety. The project involves: (1) applying and further developing the digital methodology, and (2) developing a framework that includes the methodology and a strategy for scaling it. Note: Web Page is currently under development.

## **Actors**

The Program involves many partners that are linked to different research projects.

Practice partners include: The Transition Network, local governments (e.g. Malmö, Umeå), the sustainability leadership network Forward Malmö; Ekskäret Foundation; Awaris and its Inner Green Deal Initiative; BeChange; the European Network for Community-Led Initiatives on Climate Change and Sustainability (ECOLISE), Parliamentarians and other policy-makers, etc.

Research partners include: The Centre for Social Sustainability and Department of Neuroscience at Karolinska Institutet, Sweden; the International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics (IIIEE), Sweden; the Aberystwyth Behavioural Insights Research Centre, Aberystwyth University, UK; the Center for Healthy Minds at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, USA; the Research Centre for Environmental Humanities at Bath Spa University, UK; the University of Oslo, Norway; the Centre for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education at Stanford University, USA; and the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies (IASS), Potsdam, Germany.

## **Outcomes and impact**

The many outcomes involve i) the implementation of different training programs, including professional courses and a Master's level course on sustainability and inner transformation (the first of its kind in sustainability and environmental higher education), ii) around 50 publications and associated talks on the issue of inner-outer transformation with strong influence on local, national and international discourses on transformation and sustainability, iii) an increasing number of interdisciplinary projects, and iv) a growing network of collaborating partners, including private and governmental organizations with whom we actively engage in linking inner and outer transformation for sustainability in research, education and practice. All projects involve concrete initiatives to support transformational change. There are a range of lessons learnt with potential for replication and scaling up, such as the developed Theory of Change for inner-outer transformation, related implementation of educational training, policy integration, monitoring, and evaluation.

