

## Ubuntu Leaders Fellows Program: Addressing the Global Goals through Community Based Projects

Rashin Osman, Carolina Hidalgo-Ahmed, Niema Abdullah, & Katherine McLaughlin

### Abstract

*The United Nations (UN) has adopted 17 global goals that must be met by 2030, called Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the Ubuntu Leaders Fellows Program (ULFP) 2021/2022 academic year, three undergraduate students from three majors are required to design a research project that contributes to at least one of the 17 SDGs. This paper shares ULFP's mission, goals, and structure, provides an overview of students' projects, and discusses lessons learned.*

The Learning Institute established the ULFP to promote global citizenship by teaching undergraduate students about global issues and provides them with the tools to promote positive social change. With the support of their mentor, fellows designed and implement a social justice project responding to one or more United Nations' SDGs. Furthermore, they presented their research or community-based project at an annual conference, such as the SDG or Made in Millersville conference. Students were given \$2000 each to support the implementation of projects and complete the program evaluation.

The 2021/2022 fellows' SDG projects focused on poverty, hunger, quality education, and climate change. In their SDG projects, fellows creatively utilize their knowledge and experience in their areas of studies, and from the ULFP to address these global issues. The 12by12 project by

Carolina, a social work student, responds to SDG 1: No poverty and Goal 2: Zero hunger. The project aims to increase the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers in the Least Developing Countries (LDC). The early childhood education student, Niema's Critical Race Theory Project (CRT) responds to SDG 4: Quality Education. She designed this project to respond to House Bill 1532 (HB. 1532). Finally, Katie, a Speech Communication student, is working on her Climate Action Project (CAP). The next paragraphs provide overviews of the fellows' projects and what they learned from participating in the ULFP.

### 12 by 12 Project by Carolina Hidalgo Ahmed

Goal 1: No Poverty: The social welfare problems that lie ahead are not unique. They have been here, and they are

getting worse unless we do something about it. Most of what is needed is awareness and multidisciplinary contribution to ending hunger and poverty as we know it today. Going further I explored why basic needs like clean water, access to nutritious meals, and adequate shelters are a problem. Who is profiting from this problem? This is a question I ask myself every time I look at a problem in practice. Who is at the top? Who is at the bottom? And who is getting away with profiting from the basic needs of suffering human beings? It does not end there. You must also be ready to hear those answers and make a change.

Stepping into economics as a social worker, dissecting and finding effective ways to reduce poverty domestically and internationally is essential. The United Nations SDG Goal One focuses on no poverty as a means to do just that. We must come together to focus on interlocking ambitions for global wellbeing. 12 by 12 focuses on raising Least Developed Countries' Gross Domestic Product (GDP) output while supporting domestic small businesses who provide those products.

Goal 2: Zero Hunger: The observation of established food security resources enables a thorough review of risk factors that increase food insecurity among children. Outlining the outcome of risk factors highlights the effects which negatively impact children's well-being. Review of interventions holds accountability for the effectiveness and inefficiency in addressing the foundation of food insecurity. The exploration of emerging methods quantifies the challenges in combating food insecurity amongst children.

### **Critical Race Theory Project – Niema Abdullah**

Goal 4: Quality Education. CRT addresses Goal 4. House Bill 1532 is a law that aims to change the way teachers can

discuss racism, sexism, and issues surrounding systemic inequality in the classroom. As we navigate a society restoring itself through a pandemic, and the killing of George Floyd which propelled conversations on race, diversity, equity, and inclusive practices, bills like these threaten the knowledge students can receive in the classroom. Bills like these would also censor educators and threaten the ways they plan and distribute information to students. Such censorship in schools (which affects curriculum, materials, and resources used for lessons), will not only have harmful effects on the schools and teachers but most importantly the students. It prevents students from becoming global citizens; it limits their inquiring minds from exploring the world, seeking truth and reason, critically-thinking, engaging in intellectual capacities, and understanding the diverse perspectives & experiences of others.

The CRT project is a Black History Calendar that is accompanied by lesson plans and pedagogy designed to help teachers expose their students to individuals, organizations, and events within the African American diaspora. Lessons are planned using the 5 Learning Pursuit standards which were designed by Dr. Gholdy Muhammad. These learning pursuits include identity, skills, intellectualism, criticality, and joy. They are aimed at teaching the whole child and therefore keep learning, student-focused and driven. The project also addresses the stigma associated with critical race theory. With the CRT project, educators, communities, parents, and administration will be encouraged to develop curriculums that meet state standards and are equitable in their practice and intention.

Education is important to me as an early childhood education major. As an educator, I strive to ensure equal access to all education levels and promote the

knowledge and skills needed to support sustainable development. The ULFP has provided me with an invaluable experience that I will use throughout my career and future endeavors. I am an undergraduate student who wants to pursue higher education, and the ULFP has been the perfect steppingstone toward my dreams, aspirations, and goals.

### **Climate Action Project - Katherine McLaughlin**

Goal 13: Climate Action: Climate change is a very real issue, present in much of our world today. Between the increasingly dangerous storm conditions, such as the Category 4 and 5 hurricanes, the flipping back and forth between seventies and thirties, the severe forest fires, and the melting ice caps, our world has faced some severe and intense issues. However, another issue arising is that a lot of refugees are coming to our area of the country. The people who live in these areas are slowly starting to leave, and other areas are going to be welcoming a lot of new visitors. They're known as climate refugees, and, according to the New York Times, they are going to reshape America (Lustgarten, 2020). Climate disasters are not an official reason for a person to gain refugee status yet, but many refugees come due to issues that are intertwined with climate change (M. Johnson, personal communication, March 16, 2022).

Climate Action Project (CAP) is a short story written about these severe consequences of climate change, and how people are fighting for change to help prevent this as much as we can. It focuses on these climate refugees and connects all these issues together. The story takes place in America, near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, but the issues discussed are not only native to our area. This story touches on issues such as stormwater waste and runoff, severe

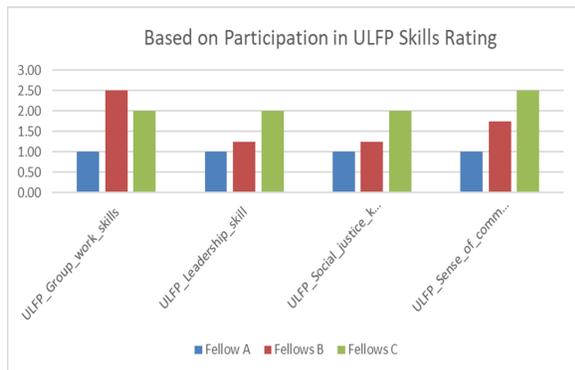
weather events, refugees coming to the Lancaster area, and the tragic effects of natural disasters across the world. The aim is to help the community be more aware of their surroundings and the current climate situation and show that there are ways to help. It is my hope that this story allows for the Lancaster community to learn more about these issues and even how to solve them.

During my research, I found that the climate crisis is increasingly worsening, and everyone is affected worldwide. Despite trying to solve the problem, people suffer from the consequences of climate change daily, for instance, deaths from climate-prone disasters and health issues in the aftermath of an emergency. Therefore, there is an urgent need to create awareness and outreach to help our community understand the severity of climate change and how our efforts now can sustain the planet for our generation and future ones.

### **Lesson Learned**

The Ubuntu fellows' projects are important because children from low-income families are likely to experience poverty, food insecurity, inadequate education, live in an environment plagued with violence, and suffer the consequences of climate change (O'Day & Smith, 2016). The ULFP monthly meetings and project implementation exposed participants to leadership training. Additionally, they gained a deeper understanding of global issues and policy through the Learning Institute events. In the Fellows Networking Team, fellows set goals and hold each other accountable. In addition, fellows develop and maintain partnerships with local agencies addressing SDGs in Lancaster throughout the program. Therefore, fellows gain the skills to serve their communities effectively, collaborate effectively with others, and achieve sustainable development

goals. The program coordinator conducted a ULFP survey at the end of the Fall 21 semester to measure mid-program outcomes and reviewed Fellows Networking Team meeting reports. Based on the results shown below, fellows have improved their working group skills significantly, moderate improvement in their leadership skills, and social justice knowledge, and significant improvement in their sense of community. The Learning Institute will conduct a post-test survey and qualitative interview to compare mean differences after the Spring 2022 semester.



End of Fall21 semester ULFP survey results

## References

- Lustgarten, A. (2020, September 15). *How climate migration will reshape America*. The New York Times. Retrieved March 11, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/15/magazine/climate-crisis-migration>
- Muhammad, G. (2020). *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework For Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy*. Scholastic Inc.
- O'Day, J. A., & Smith, M. S. (2016, August 31). *Equality and quality in U.S. education: Systemic problems, systemic solutions. policy brief*. Education Policy Center at American Institutes for Research. Retrieved March 12, 2022, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED571841>
- Teaching Racial and Universal Equality Act, HB. 1532, *Pennsylvania General Assembly*, Regular Session 2021-2022
- The Global Goals. (2022, March 15). *Goal 1: No poverty*. The Global Goals. Retrieved March 22, 2022, from <https://www.globalgoals.org/goals/1-no-poverty/#things-to-do>
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Goal 13 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. United Nations. Retrieved March 31, 2022, from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13>