

The Earth Charter Initiative

Education Advisory Committee



Synthesis



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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Background	3
3. Executive Summary	4
4. The Educational Objectives of the Earth Charter	7
5. Education Principles	8
6. Institutional Challenges	13
7. Recommended Priorities for the Education Program	14
8. Conclusions	15
Appendix 1. List of Education Advisory Committee Members	17
Appendix 2. Examples of the Earth Charter in Education	18

1. Introduction

This paper presents a synthesis of the main conclusions and recommendations of the inaugural online (internet) discussion forum of the Earth Charter Education Advisory Committee held between the 26 August and 9 September 2001. The Earth Charter Education Advisory Committee was formed to provide advice and guidance to the Earth Charter Initiative on the development and implementation of the Earth Charter education programme.

The aims of the online forum were to articulate an educational philosophy for the Earth Charter¹ and identify priority tasks for the education programme. The findings summarised in this report reflect the combined wisdom of the participants who represent a diverse array of educators from around the world. The names and affiliations of the advisory committee and forum participants are listed in Appendix 1. Comments have also been included in this document subsequently received from committee members unable to participate interactively. The online forum was made possible via the web site of the Earth Charter International Secretariat and utilizing software developed by the Earth Council.

2. Background

Various international documents, such as the Talloires Declaration² issued by University Presidents and Agenda 21³ (a UN program of action adopted by the 1992 Rio Earth Summit), recognize the central role of education in promoting a more just, peaceful and sustainable future. However, educational activities associated with “values” often constitute a contested field because of concern about “which” values and “whose” values are being promoted. Such concerns are less of an issue when the

¹ The Earth Charter document can be viewed at <http://www.earthcharter.org>

² The Talloires Declaration; http://www.ulsf.org/programs_talloires.html

³ Agenda 21; the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21text.htm>

values being examined represent core values that respect human dignity, are life affirming, and are consistent with those of major cultures around the world. However, at the same time, educators must be aware of the need to avoid proselytising, respect the right of individual learners to independently hold values, and understand that within the search for common ground there remain important values associated with cultural diversity.

The values and principles of the Earth Charter are the result of an extensive global consultation process together with a formal review of important source materials including international law, the wisdom of the world's great religious and philosophical traditions, the declarations and reports of the seven UN summits held during the 1990s, the global ethics discourse, and various NGO declarations and treaties released over the last thirty years¹. The Earth Charter reflects a broad convergence on universal values for sustainability, and can validly lay claim to represent a set of core ethical principles with a very broad, multicultural, base of support.

3. Executive Summary

Principles for guiding development of the education program

- Values education requires that teachers and learners remain aware of the need to avoid proselytising, respect the right of individual learners to independently hold values, and understand that within the search for common ground there remain important values associated with cultural diversity.
- The Earth Charter reflects a broad convergence on universal values for sustainability, and can validly claim to represent a set of core ethical values with a very broad, multi-cultural, base of support.
- As a global ethic for a more sustainable way of living, the Earth Charter can be used to achieve three key educational objectives: consciousness-raising;

¹ The Earth Charter Handbook; <http://www.earthcharter.org/resources/handbook.pdf>

application of values and principles to local and global problems; and a call for action and partnership amongst all sectors and actors.

- The Earth Charter has an additional educational role to play in promoting ongoing dialogue about and intellectual inquiry into global ethics. As noted in the Earth Charter conclusion “...we have much to learn from the ongoing collaborative search for truth and wisdom”.
- A set of principles were identified that should guide the development of Earth Charter educational programs and materials. These include the need for open, participatory, inclusive educational processes that are transdisciplinary in character, and that utilise experiential learning activities. New Earth Charter education material should focus, where possible, on the unique themes and perspectives offered by the Earth Charter.
- Given the crowded character of modern formal education curricula, particularly in primary and high schools, opportunities should be explored to use the Earth Charter within existing educational programmes.
- In higher education, courses likely to be open to use of the Earth Charter include those that already aim to enable learners to clarify, challenge and extend their value systems, and programs that address the challenges of “big picture” issues such as international relations, globalization and peace.
- Another way the Earth Charter can be integrated into existing education programs is through its inclusion in widely used student texts.

Priorities for program development

- Experience to date suggests that in the hands of a good teacher the Earth Charter is its own best resource. Therefore, a priority for the Earth Charter education program is to document a set of case studies that illustrate how educators have made use of the Earth Charter in a diversity of cultural contexts in at least four educational settings: schools; institutions of higher learning; community education; and professional development.

- Documentation is needed that details, among other things: the history and background to the Earth Charter; and commentary on the development and drafting of the Earth Charter, including the various sources drawn upon in the formulation of the principles (e.g. law, science, philosophy) and the global consultation process.
- Given the high level of interest in the Earth Charter at the community level, there is a need for a module/training programming based on the Earth Charter for community leadership in sustainable living and to help promote integrated communities.

Conclusions

- Education is the key to advancing the transition to more sustainable way of living. Transformative education is needed: education that helps bring about the fundamental changes demanded by the challenges of sustainability.
- Accelerating progress towards sustainability depends on rekindling more caring relationships between humans and the natural world and facilitating the creative exploration of more environmental and socially responsible forms of development.
- The Earth Charter provides a unique framework for developing educational programs and curriculum aimed at transformative learning for a more just, sustainable and peaceful world.

4. The Educational Objectives of the Earth Charter

The Earth Charter is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society. The Earth Charter challenges us to examine our values and to choose a better way. It calls on us to search for common ground and to embrace a new ethical vision that will guide individual and social behaviour in directions that better promote a more sustainable way of living. One of the objectives of the Earth Charter Initiative is to advance the educational uses of the Earth Charter in schools, universities, faith communities, and a variety of other formal and informal educational settings. Given this, there are two broad educational functions of the Earth Charter.

a. Education for sustainable living

As a global ethic for a more sustainable way of living, the Earth Charter can be used to achieve three educational objectives:

- *Consciousness-raising* – The first educational challenge is to motivate people to act in more environmentally and socially responsible ways. Here the Earth Charter can be used to help raise people’s consciousness about the massive environmental, social and economic problems facing the world, their interdependencies, and the overarching need to live with a sense of global responsibility;
- *Application of values and principles* – The main body of the Earth Charter is action orientated and functions as a guide to more sustainable ways of living. The Charter can serve as a framework for people to critically compare their reality with its ideals. This kind of analysis in turn provides the basis for identifying action goals for bringing about positive transformations; and
- *Call for action* – The Earth Charter concludes with a call for action through, among other things, new partnerships between civil society, business and government at all levels. The educational challenge here is to help foster a culture of collaboration aimed at promoting justice, sustainability and peace, consistent with the Charter’s values.

b. Promoting a global dialogue on ethics for sustainability

In addition to its function as a global *ethic* for a more just, sustainable and peaceful world, the Earth Charter has an important educational role to play in the ongoing dialogue about global *ethics*. The concluding section of the Earth Charter in fact highlights the need to “...*deepen and expand the global dialogue that generated the Earth Charter, for we have much to learn from the ongoing collaborative search for truth and wisdom*”. Thus, the Earth Charter is also an invaluable tool in promoting global *ethics* in the sense of an intellectual enquiry that looks at and reflects on different positions, adding to the global dialogue surrounding the evolution of a global *ethic* for a more sustainable way of living.

The Earth Charter can be used to help catalyse a global “Socratic” dialogue in both formal and non-formal educational settings - an ongoing, open dialogue that acknowledges the tensions involved in global ethics discourse and respects the differences in opinion that emerge amidst the search for common ground. We should recognize and seek to interact with other theories and worldviews of global ethics. Particularly those whose core values resonate with those of the Earth Charter even if their language of expression or vehicle of communication differ.

5. Education Principles

A set of general principles emerged from the online discussion that provides the basis of a philosophy to guide the development of Earth Charter educational materials. These principles represent both educational best practice and concepts necessary to ensure that the process used to develop these materials, together with their content, are consistent with the ideals and goals of the Earth Charter.

a. The need for open, participatory and inclusive education processes

The process by which new Earth Charter educational materials are developed needs to be consistent with the spirit of the document, respecting diversity and learning from locally-based activities. Materials should be developed using elements of an “action research” methodology, whereby the intended users of the educational resources are engaged in their development and testing. This approach has the added benefit of acting as a capacity building process within a participatory framework that

has multiplier effects. It is particularly relevant to an international initiative such as the Earth Charter. Adopting elements of an action research approach will help ensure the involvement of real actors and people involved in educational processes and the delivery of relevant materials that meet actual needs.

More generally, it is important to work at the local level by identifying motivated people and institutions, promote an open learning environment to share knowledge and experiences, and jointly prepare practical projects. These steps must be followed by review and follow-up with the relevant educational authorities.

The educational challenges of a program in ‘values education for sustainability’ are so vast it further demands that we find collaborative ways to join efforts with professional educators in all fields, including environmental educators and the educational movement for human rights. In addition to professional educators, we also need to build links with decision makers, the media and other significant multipliers. In this way, we can build cooperative mechanisms that better guarantee positive outcomes and prevent further overloading of educational institutions with unrealistic requests to incorporate new materials.

b. The need for some common resources and materials

While educational materials are best developed locally (that is, by educators working within a specific social context), there remain common issues and challenges that emerge from the educational application of the Earth Charter. All educators will be faced with the task of understanding and communicating the unique Earth Charter themes. Experience to date suggests that there is a set of questions that frequently emerges once the learner probes further into the Earth Charter, e.g. “How does this principle apply in my community, my country, my municipality, my organisation?” Such questions can be used to prompt students to research how their community, the private sector or government are responding to the issues raised by a given principle or set of principles and how these responses might be changed to improve the situation. Furthermore, many educators may be keen to incorporate the Earth Charter into their educational activities but need background material to provide some guidance as to the kinds of educational activities others have found useful.

Some general guidelines therefore are needed for suggesting how Earth Charter principles can be discussed and incorporated into teaching and learning activities. For example, it would be useful to provide examples of learning activities that help bring alive the Earth Charter process and launch the learner into a process of considering how its principles are relevant to him/her. Similarly, ways are needed of telling the story of the Earth Charter, in terms of how it came into being, in ways that make people feel like they are in the story and are creating the next chapter through their contributions in thought, dialogue and action.

c. Experiential learning

Wherever possible, Earth Charter-based educational materials should use experiential learning activities that involve action orientated learning or learning by doing. These can comprise both (a) community outreach activities and (b) learning activities that model real life situations, such as role-playing.

Experiential learning is essential in bridging the gap between espoused values and real world actions. It also provides experience in what “living out” an ethical principle means within one’s community or sphere of influence. Experiential learning is particularly important for ethics education, as it is when we are engaged in action that our values become most evident.

d. Transdisciplinarity

Educational materials and programmes developed for the Earth Charter must reflect its multidisciplinary character, spanning the sciences, the humanities and the creative arts. The integrated ethical perspective presented by the Earth Charter can only be conveyed by developing transdisciplinary educational perspectives. Information and experience must be brought together from diverse sources as necessary. All disciplines and methods of acquiring knowledge are potentially relevant to the study of global ethics.

e. Core education themes found in the Earth Charter

There is now a great deal of educational material related to sustainable development, globalisation, environmental degradation, poverty and other issues

embraced by the Earth Charter. Much of this material is widely available at least via the Internet. It is only sensible that these materials are acknowledged, utilised and not reinvented by the Earth Charter education program. Thus, it is useful to consider the unique themes and perspectives offered by the Earth Charter. These should provide the focus, whenever possible, for developing new educational materials.

- *Critical challenges and choices*: The Preamble lays out the critical environmental, social and economic challenges that confront humanity, and highlights the choices we must make in order to bring about a more just, sustainable and peaceful world;
- *Universal responsibility*: The fundamental challenge of the Earth Charter is to live with a greater sense of universal responsibility. The first four main principles provide a strong foundation for an ethic of responsibility. If we assume responsibility is based on these values, then we should give attention to cultivating these attitudes and dispositions through education;

- *Differentiated responsibility*: The Earth Charter draws attention to the additional responsibilities that derive from possessing greater power, wealth, knowledge and freedom. Those in more privileged situations must assume greater responsibility for promoting sustainability, including assisting those in less privileged circumstances;
- *Interdependence of social, economic and environmental domains*: The Earth Charter principles are organised into four main sections, namely, “Respect and Care for the Community of Life”, “Ecological Integrity”, “Social and Economic Justice”, “Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace”. Together these define the domains of responsibility that must be jointly considered when assessing the critical problems we face and their possible solutions;
- *The community of life*: The Earth Charter challenges us all to reconsider the membership of the community for whom we feel morally responsible – does it include people in other countries and cultures, future generations, other living beings, the whole Earth system?
- *Partnerships*: The conclusion to the Earth Charter (“The Way Forward”) argues that every individual, family, organisation, community and government has critical and creative roles to play. Promoting sustainability demands collaboration between all players at all levels;
- *Peace and nonviolence*: The Earth Charter provides an integrated definition of peace based on right relationships with oneself, community and the biosphere. The Earth Charter constitutes a thematic map of the interrelated issues involved in promoting a culture of peace;
- *Ecological Integrity*: The second main section of the Earth Charter brings together a set of action-orientated principles necessary to promote ecological integrity. Principles are drawn from a diversity of fields including biological conservation, environmental law, environmental philosophy, cleaner-production technology, ecological economics, and environmental education. This theme in itself provides an integrated blueprint for more environmentally sustainable behaviour.

Together, the above themes provide a frame of reference for individuals, communities and organizations to discern the implications of development orientated by the “being” dimension compared with the “having” dimension. The interplay between these two dimensions is relevant to addressing the challenges of both over-consumption by wealthy people and the empowerment of disadvantaged communities.

Another key theme can be found in the global consultation process that delivered the Earth Charter. There is much value in the many stories surrounding the drafting of each principle – the groups and individuals involved, their motivations, and how and why agreement was reached. This Earth Charter “creation story” is a unique educational resource.

6. Institutional Challenges

As discussed above, the Earth Charter’s educational objectives can be envisaged in terms of “*Consciousness-raising*”, “*Application of Principles*”, and “*Call to Action*”. Together with the promotion of an ongoing “Socratic” ethics dialogue, these constitute a unique set of educational objectives to guide curriculum development. However, in formal education it can be very difficult to make room for new content. Therefore, wherever possible, opportunities should be explored to use the Earth Charter within existing educational programmes. Educational systems, curricula and materials need to be examined in order to identify opportunities for making use of the Earth Charter, for re-organising existing material, and for informing curriculum development in light of the Earth Charter. Opportunities for using the Earth Charter within existing programs will perhaps be most readily found in two main areas:

- Programs that address values consistent with Earth Charter principles, and that aim to guide individuals to clarify, challenge and extend their own values systems. In this respect, the Earth Charter provides useful moral “navigational aids” to help students in this task. Subject areas might include applied ethics and philosophy, where the Earth Charter can be used as a resource along with other educational materials; and

- Programs that address the challenges of “big picture” issues, such as sustainable development, economic globalisation, and peace. Here the Earth Charter can act as a thematic matrix for working through the interconnected set of challenges, problems, responsibilities, opportunities and choices.

Another way in which the Earth Charter can be integrated into existing higher education programs is through its inclusion in widely used student textbooks.

A surprisingly large number of educators are already making use of the Earth Charter in a diversity of educational settings. This is particularly encouraging given that the Earth Charter was only officially released in mid-2000. Appendix 2 provides some examples of the diversity of ways in which the Earth Charter is being used as an educational resource.

7. Recommended Priorities for the Education Program

a. Case studies

Given the diversity of potential educational settings in which the Earth Charter can be applied, it is neither feasible nor desirable for the Earth Charter International Secretariat to independently prepare a set of “generic” instructional materials that try to be relevant to all cultural and educational settings. Furthermore, experience to date suggests that in the hands of a good teacher, the Earth Charter is its own and best educational resource. Therefore, one of the most practical and useful courses of action will be to document a set of case studies that illustrate how educators have made use of the Earth Charter in four educational settings: Schools; Institutions of higher learning; Community level; and Professional development.

A case studies approach will require the International Secretariat to form partnerships with a global network of educators who have developed, or who will develop, educational applications of the Earth Charter in their own learning environments, and who will cooperate to share their experiences and systematically document the results of their endeavours. Key tasks for the International Secretariat will be to:

- Identify the participating educators and establish the network of case studies;

- Co-develop with the network of educators an appropriate set of guidelines for conducting and documenting the case studies;
- Provide the resources and support necessary to allow educators from developing countries to participate;
- Undertake systematic evaluation of the cases studies.

b. Resource materials and guidelines

There is a fundamental need to produce a range of background materials and guidelines for the educational use of the Earth Charter that can drawn upon by motivated educators as they work to develop curriculum and syllabi relevant to their local educational settings. Many people are interested in learning about the process by which the Earth Charter was produced, the origins of its principles, the dialogue that surrounded its structure and wording, and examples of its uses and applications.

The demand for such materials is already evident. Initial versions of some of these materials have been produced but need to be updated and distributed. Wherever possible, materials should build upon these existing sources. Examples of existing and proposed resource materials and guidelines include:

- The Earth Charter Handbook – Already produced which details the history and background to the Earth Charter;
- The Commentary – Currently in development, which discusses the various sources for the Earth Charter principles including law, philosophy, science, sustainability best practice, and the global consultation process;

c. Community education

There is currently a high demand for a training manual that provides background materials and guidelines for use by interested individuals, communities and organizations within informal educational settings. In particular, there is demand for a module that uses the Earth Charter to help promote “integrated communities”. For example, the Earth Charter could be used to frame an educational programme that brings together different community leaders (civil society, business and government) in a multi-stakeholder dialogue and process aimed at “consciousness raising”, finding a shared vision, and developing strategies and plans for more sustainable ways of living at the local level.

8. Conclusions

The opening paragraph of the Earth Charter's Preamble states, "We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future." However, the transition to more sustainable ways of living will only eventuate when people in all cultures and societies understand and support the need for such change. Progress will be made when the values that motivate people begin to reflect principles that promote more sustainable ways of living. But, people cannot be forced to change their values. Rather, education is the key to assisting people in the difficult task of re-examining their values systems and encouraging the adoption of more ethically-based behaviour by individuals, organisations and governments. Transformative education is needed: education that helps bring about the fundamental changes demanded by the challenges of sustainability.

Accelerating progress towards sustainability depends on rekindling more caring relationships between humans and the natural world and facilitating the creative exploration of more environmentally and socially responsible forms of development. The first educational challenge is to advance understanding of our shared global problems and the need to act with a sense of universal responsibility. The second is to provide people with a framework for critically evaluating their situation and identifying action goals for bringing about positive change. The third educational challenge is to foster a culture of collaboration that facilitates new partnerships between civil society, business and governments.

The Earth Charter uniquely meets these new educational challenges. It is a global ethic articulating fundamental values and principles for promoting more sustainable ways of living. It was produced as the result of a decade long, multicultural, global dialogue. This global consultation process was the most open, participatory and cultural diverse in the history of an international document of this kind. The Earth Charter provides a comprehensive map with which to explore the major themes associated with sustainability and globalisation. It provides a bridge between science and the humanities that can help accelerate the role of transdisciplinary studies in our educational systems. Its integrated perspective circumscribes the complex suite of themes that underpin the necessary pedagogy for a

“culture of peace”¹. The Earth Charter provides a unique framework for developing educational programmes and curriculum aimed at transformative learning for a more just, sustainable and peaceful world.

Appendix 1. List of Education Advisory Committee Members

(forum participants indicated by “*”)

Teeluck Bhuwanee	Director of Education; UNESCO Consultant; Impasse Edouard Brunel, Beau Bassin, Mauritius
Gabrielle Back	Hon. General Secretary, National Association for Environmental Education, UK
Abelardo Brenes*	University for Peace, Costa Rica
Peter Blaze Corcoran*	Professor of Environmental Studies and Environmental Education, College of Arts and Sciences, Florida Gulf Coast University, USA
Jeannie Damlamain	Senior Programme Specialist, Office of the Assistant Director General for Science, Coordination for Environment and Sustainable Development, UNESCO, France
Nigel Dower*	Department of Philosophy, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Scotland, UK
Ron Engel*	Research Professor in Environmental and Social Ethics, Meadville/Lombard Theological School at the University of Chicago, USA
Karine Danilyan*	Dr. Assoc. Prof., Dept of Geography, Yerevan State University, Yerevan, Armenia
John Fien*	Director, Griffith University EcoCentre, Australia
Moacir Gadotti	Director, Paulo Freire Institute, Brazil
Ian Hill*	Deputy Director General, International Baccalaureate Organization, Switzerland
Song Li	Senior Environmental Specialist, Global Environmental Facility, China/USA
Brendan Mackey*	Director, Earth Charter Education Programme; Reader in Ecology and Environmental Science, The Australian National University, Australia
Gillian Martin Mehers*	Director of International Training, LEAD, USA/UK
Fred Mednick	Founder and President, Teachers without Borders, USA
Edmund O’Sullivan*	Professor of Education; Director of the Transformative Learning Centre; University of Toronto, Canada
Henriette Rasmussen*	Publisher and Journalist, Earth Charter Commissioner, Arctic/Greenland (Inuit),
Dina Rodriguez*	Gender and Peace Project, University for Peace, Peru.

¹ The UNESCO Global Movement for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence; <http://www3.unesco.org/ivcp/>

Michele Sato*	Federal University of State of Mato Grosso, Brazil
Virginia Straus*	Executive Director, Boston Research Center, USA
Daniella Tilbury*	Senior Lecturer in Sustainable Development and Environmental Education, Graduate School of the Environment, Macquarie University, Australia
Moema Libera Viezzer	Founder and former president of the Brazilian Women's Network for Education, Brazil
Jane Walton*	Henderson Walton Consulting P/L, Australia
Laura Westra*	York University Osgoode Hall Law School, Canada

Appendix 2. Examples of the Earth Charter in Education

a. Teacher development

UNESCO has released (under the guidance of Dr John Fien, Griffith University, Australia) an online programme of professional development for teachers in the area of sustainable development (Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future¹). The Earth Charter has been used in a number of places within this programme, but particularly in *Module 20* that provides guidance on principles for values education and examples of both values education and values analysis in practice.

b. Secondary education

The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) has undertaken to examine the potential use of the Earth Charter in the following subject areas within its curriculum: *Theory of Knowledge; Environmental Systems; Environmental Science; Technology and Social Change; Peace and Conflict Studies; the Experimental Sciences; Philosophy; History; Geography; Maths; and the Arts.*

c. Higher education

Karine Danielyan from Yerevan State University, Armenia, makes extensive use of the Earth Charter within her courses that address sustainable development.

¹ Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future is a multimedia professional development programme prepared by UNESCO for teachers; <http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/>

After being introduced to the Earth Charter through a four-hour seminar, students make presentations on the different sections of the Charter and then examine and debate how the text corresponds with the dominant values and situation in Armenia and globally. A selection of university students then carry out analogous training at schools. During one year, the concepts of Agenda 21 and the Earth Charter were introduced to students involved in a national poster contest, with the resultant images receiving TV media coverage. In the Erebuni region, Dr. Danielyan has worked with 80 youth leaders from 17 schools who acted as “Ambassadors” at a “World Summit” to debate Agenda 21 and the Earth Charter. In addition, a play dedicated to the Earth Charter was prepared by school children and presented at a national workshop.

Michele Sato from the Federal University of the State of Mato Grosso, Brazil, utilises the Earth Charter in a subject called Environmental Education Topics. This course involves students from various streams including biology, teacher education, geography, chemistry and engineering. After presentation of background theory, students are required to develop an action research plan (which can be located anywhere, e.g. local community, school, zoo) to examine the contributions of Environmental Education and the Earth Charter. They are asked to involve more people who participate as part of a distance education course. Students attend three seminars: the first introduces Environmental Education and Earth Charter principles and the course itself (material, evaluation, process, methodology); the second seminar is called "critical incidences", where the challenges and opportunities are discussed, and activities planned; while the last seminar involves presentations by the students (both the on-campus and distance-learners). A diversity of activities is encouraged including dance, theatre, musical presentation and poetry. The subject is opened to all graduate students, and the distance-learning component is opened to both students and members of communities. The overall programme is developed on a team basis involving teachers from different disciplines and an interdisciplinary perspective is promoted.

Dr. Terry Link at Michigan State University has developed a course based upon examining each of the themes represented by the Earth Charter’s sixteen main principles. Each week of the course comprises lectures on an Earth Charter theme given by experts drawn from the University’s extensive academic network, together

with a selection of related literature and required readings. Over the course, the students must also undertake a community outreach activity that embodies and gives expression to one or more Earth Charter principles.

d. Community development

An exemplar of a community-based educational use of the Earth Charter is the Central American Culture of Peace Program of Abelardo Brenes from the University for Peace, Costa Rica. A series of thirteen workshops were held in Rincon Grande de Pavas, Costa Rica Grande during 1999. This is a very poor urban community of 60,000 people living in a 3km² area. The Culture of Peace program has been supporting the community leadership since 1997 in the design of a vision and plan for community development, including strategies for achieving effective support on the part of local and national governments, by means of non-violent action. On the assumption that the community had accumulated significant experience of educational value, the workshops developed in 1999 were geared to supporting the leadership in valuing the cultural significance of their emancipatory struggle and to develop skills as peace culture promoters. The Earth Charter provided a framework of global challenges and an ethic of universal responsibility, which gave an opportunity for those community participants to reappraise the significance of their development plans.