

Concept Note 06.09.2024

2024 ProSPER.Net Young Researchers' School

“Building Resilience: Integrating Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Change Mitigation”

16-22 December 2024

Colombo and Kandy, Sri Lanka

Co-organized by the University of Peradeniya and the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), with support from gapHQ

Background

Climate change is a pressing global challenge with far-reaching impacts on ecosystems, human societies, and economies. The urgency to mitigate climate change has prompted the development of a wide range of strategies to help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, among which nature-based solutions have drawn significant international attention. These solutions leverage natural processes and ecosystems to address the negative effects of climate change, while simultaneously providing co-benefits for biodiversity, water security, and human well-being.

As the world moves towards the ambitious goals and targets under the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, exploring and implementing effective nature-based solutions is a crucial priority area for achieving global climate goals. Innovative research is critical for advancing and effectively integrating them into national and international climate strategies. Young researchers, therefore, take on a significant role due to their potential to drive new knowledge and approaches that enhance our understanding of nature-based solutions.

The Young Researchers' School (YRS), a flagship activity of the Promotion of Sustainability in Postgraduate Education and Research Network (ProSPER.Net), aims to empower postgraduate students and provide them with an opportunity to advance their research skills. This year's YRS focuses on the theme “Building Resilience: Integrating Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Change Mitigation” and will provide participants with a comprehensive understanding of nature-based climate action strategies through a mixture of lectures, group works and field visits. It offers postgraduate students a collaborative, diverse environment where participants can develop and refine group research

proposals, addressing important knowledge gaps and exploring innovative solutions and approaches to climate change mitigation.

Objectives

This year's YRS aims to:

- Design a blended learning-style workshop for young researchers from the Asia-Pacific region on the concept of nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation, combining traditional instructor-led training with collaborative groupworks and field visits
- Foster transdisciplinary research collaboration among participants, encouraging the exchange of ideas and the development of innovative approaches to climate change
- Empower young researchers with advanced knowledge, skills, and practical experience for effective climate action

Final output

Each group is expected to develop and present a comprehensive research proposal that leverages innovative, nature-based approaches to climate change mitigation. The proposals should integrate essential elements such as compelling research questions, clear objectives, and a detailed methodology, all while addressing the thematic focus of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enhancing community resilience. These proposals will reflect a synergy of transdisciplinary knowledge, practical tools, and real-world case studies, showcasing participants' ability to work within diverse teams and design impactful research projects that foster climate action and contribute to sustainable development.

Expected outcomes

Participants in the Young Researchers' School will:

- Gain a comprehensive and actionable understanding of nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and their critical role in advancing the 2030 Agenda.
- Develop advanced research skills and gain practical experience in designing and presenting research proposals.
- Promote interdisciplinary research collaboration by engaging with peers from diverse backgrounds.
- Translate theoretical knowledge into practical insights through hands-on field visits.

Programme (Provisional)

**Subject to updates*

Arrival Date: Sunday, 15 December 2024	
Day 1: Monday, 16 December 2024	
8:30-9:00	Registration and Pre-survey
9:00-9:05	Official commencement Lighting of the oil lamp
9:05-9:10	Welcome remarks by Professor Ranjith Dissanayake
9:10-9:15	Opening remarks by TBD, UNU-IAS
9:15-9:20	Opening remarks by TBD, Ministry of Environment, Government of Japan
9:20-10:20	Keynote speech by Emeritus Professor Kotagma
10:20-10:25	Vote of Thanks
10:25-10:40	Program Overview
10:40-11:00	Ice-breaking activity
11:00-11:50	Lecture I: “Introduction to the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement” TBD (UNU IAS/ProSPER.Net)
11:50-12:00	Q&A and Discussion Session
12:00-13:00	Lunch break
13:00-14:00	Lecture II: “Innovative Approaches to Climate Change Mitigation” Professor Ranjith Dissanayake (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka)
14:00-14:30	Q&A and Discussion Session
14:30-15:30	Lecture III: “Research Methodology” Professor Guttilla Jayasinghe (University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka)
15:30-16:00	Q&A and Discussion Session
16:00-16:15	Short break
16:15-17:30	Networking session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group formation • Brainstorming to identify research topic • Selection of general project theme

Day 2: Tuesday, 17 December 2024	
9:00-10:00	Lecture IV: “Climate Change Impact on Hydrology: Hydrological Alterations due to Multiple Drivers” Dr. Shakthi Gunawardene (Curtin University)
10:00-10:30	Q&A and Discussion Session
10:30-11:30	Lecture V: “How to Develop a Good Research Proposal” Professor Chaminda Bandara (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka)
11:30-12:00	Q&A and Discussion Session
12:00-13:00	Lunch Break

13:00-13:50	Lecture VI: “Empowering Youth in Driving Innovation” TBD (UNU-IAS/ProSPER.Net)
13:50-14:00	Q&A and Discussion Session
14:00-15:00	Lecture VII: “Designing Sustainable Cities with Nature-Based Solutions” Professor Chaminda Bandara (University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka)
15:00-15:30	Q&A and Discussion Session
15:30-17:30	Group Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting of proposals with focus on problem statement, research objectives, and background • Facilitators periodically check in to provide feedback and guidance • Five-minute pitch by each group

Day 3: Wednesday, 18 December 2024

9:00-10:00	Lecture VIII: “Designing Sustainable Solutions: Practical Applications of Nature-Based Approaches” Professor Janaka Ruwanpura (University of Calgary, Canada)
10:00-10:30	Q&A and Discussion Session
10:30-11:30	Lecture IX: “Innovative Financing Models for Climate Resilience Projects” Professor Ajith de Alwis (University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka)
11:30-12:00	Q&A and Discussion Session
12:00-13:00	Lunch break
13:00-13:50	Lecture X: “Resilience and Community Engagement” TBD (UNU-IAS/ProSPER.Net)
13:50-14:00	Q&A and Discussion Session
14:00-15:30	Technical session on field visit
15:30-17:30	Group work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working on methodology and expected outcomes • Facilitators rotate to occasionally check in and provide feedback and guidance • Five-minute pitch by each group

Day 4: Thursday, 19 December 2024

07:30-10:00	Field Visit Guided by Ms.Sadeepa Dinali
10:00-11:00	Preparing for departure
11:00-13:00	Travelling to Kandy from Colombo Guided by Ms. Sadeepa Dinali
13:00-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-15:00	Post-field visit discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group discussion to facilitate field visit reflection and incorporate lessons learned into final proposals

15:00-17:30	<p>Group work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation and practice of 10-min presentations • Facilitators provide feedback on effective presentation strategies • Finishing touches on the proposal document, ensuring all sections are complete
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Day 5: Friday, 20 December 2024

9:00-10:30	<p>Group research proposal presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each 10-minute presentation is followed by a 5-minute Q&A session, during which other participants are encouraged to provide feedback and offer advice to their peers • Groups submit their finalized research proposals at the time of presentation
10:30-11:00	<p>Post-presentation reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants briefly reflect on the workshop’s outcomes (challenges and gained knowledge about research proposals, teamwork, etc.) and next steps
11:00-12:00	Visit at the University of Peradeniya
16:00-19:00	Opening Ceremony
19:00-21:00	Opening Dinner at the Earl’s Regency Hotel Kandy

Day 6: Saturday, 21 December 2024

	Details will be shared at a later date
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Day 7: Sunday, 22 December 2024

	Details will be shared at a later date
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Departure Dates: Sunday, 22 December and Monday, 23 December 2024