

GEEP Africa Webinar—Weaving Strength from Complexity: Amplifying Home-Grown Wisdom to Navigate the Polycrisis

January 30, 2025

Link to the recording: <https://youtu.be/OcjNwsNltvI>

eePRO post: <https://eeepro.naaee.org/learning/weaving-strength-complexity-amplifying-home-grown-wisdom-navigate-polycrisis>

Speakers:

- **Gerry Salole** | Independent Consultant, International Development and Philanthropy
- **Tamzin Ractliffe** | Lead, The Impact Trust
- **Cindy-Lee Cloete (moderator)** | Chief Executive Officer, Wildlife & Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA)

Chat transcript:

Welcome!

Adedoyin Adeleke: Great to be here

Ezera Mugenyi: Hello Everyone,

Mensa TSEDZE: hello Everyone

Harrison Ashangwa: Happy new year everyone!!

Nomfundo Ndlovu: Hello everyone..

Minna Paul: Happy New year everyone

Sarah Mabey: Good morning from northeast Ohio, USA

Ezera Mugenyi: Greetings from Indigenous Batwa of Bwindi-Uganda

Tamzin Ractliffe: welcome everyone ...

Chris Hoffman: Good Morning from Washington D.C.!

Ravhee BHOLAH: Greetings from Mauritius. Ravhee Bholah

Alex Kudryavtsev: Hello everyone! Alex Kudryavtsev from Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Love this discussion already! 😊

Risa Yost: Hello from Kentucky!

Tak Kunthea: Good evening from Cambodia. I'm Tak Kunthea. Happy New Year, everyone.

Tracy Wong: Hello from Hong Kong! Happy Lunar New Year

Kgosietsile Velempini: Greetings from North Carolina.

Natalija Matic: hello from Croatia

Franklin Ngalim: Green Greetings from Western Colorado University, Gunnison, CO.

Esther Cowles: Hello from chilly Vermont, USA

NAAEE Staff: Great to have so many people joining us! Please share your name, organization, and where you're joining from!

Marlow Saucier: Good morning from Vermont, USA, Nulhegan Abenaki land

Julie Kasper: Good morning, evening all. Julie Kasper joining from Tucson, Arizona.

Vivian Chen: Hello from Washington, DC

Tamzin Ractliffe: hello everyone from Gerry and me

Joy Hayley Munthali: Hello from Malawi!

Musa Kondeh: Hello from Makeni Sierra Leone, I am Musa, I am pleased to be here.

Tamzin Ractliffe: please do let us know what drew you to the conversation today, what questions are you arriving with, what are your hopes for this session

Julia Liljegren: Good morning from Michigan!

Isabella Makgatswana: Greetings from Washington DC

toolsee DABY: Hello from Mauritius,

Preethi Mony: Good morning from Ohio

Nina Hamilton (NAAEE): So grateful to share this space with all of you today! Welcome all. Joining from North Carolina.

Heather Kuhlken: Hello from Texas

Franklin Ngalim: Green Greetings, I'm Franklin Ngalim, Executive Director of The Greens, an environmental organization in Cameroon but currently an Environmental Management Graduate Student of Western Colorado University, Gunnison, CO.

Ginger Potter: I'm here. Thanks for the shout out!

Tamzin Ractliffe: I've counted ten countries already in the introductions ... fantastic

Julie N: hello from near Toronto, Canada

Matt Young: Hello from Saint Paul, Minnesota!

Nhlanhla Ndlovu: Wonderful to join from Johannesburg South Africa. Hello everyone

Dinah Awino: Hello from the Green institute

Tamzin Ractliffe: lovely to have you here Nhlanhla

Julie Carlisle: Hi. Julie from Plettenberg Bay, South Africa

Nhlanhla Ndlovu: Lovely to be here Tamzin. Thanks

Sarah Mabey: You ask why here -- I'm teaching an upper-level undergraduate course titled "Creating Resilience" focuses on the polycrisis and resilience at multiple scales

Tamzin Ractliffe: would love to know more Sarah

Ezera Mugenyi: Dear Cindy, I just was introduced in here by Laura - from Colorado , we've been working STEAM conservation projects with children and schools around Bwindi on how to manage Plastics and planting trees with the knowledge of Indigenous people to preserve medicinal plants in both communities as an alternative and we surely believe partnership with GEEP would be of an honor . Thanks, Ezera- Bwindi Uganda

Franklin Ngalim: My passion for addressing the poly crisis which affects developing countries the most drew me to this conversation today. While environmental education remains the foundation of sustainable development, I am keen to understanding and learning more about educational opportunities and programs that not only educate young people but also empower them to exploit the circular economy opportunities available during these critical times that can contribute in their socio-economic, health, and environmental wellbeing.

Sarah Mabey: @Franklin -- YES! Education is just the starting point -- motivated, thoughtful action must follow (or lead)

Risa Yost: Kentucky, US - I feel a need to hear voices from other regions and establish a bit of hope in weaving strength.

Cindy-Lee Cloete: Welcome everyone

Question from Tamzin Ractliffe: Words associated with our current global state

Chris Hoffman: conjunctural crisis (Hall & Massey 2010)

Profe Tiburón: Peace building

Julie Carlisle: Frustration

Julie Carlisle: Hope

Minna Paul: Time to draw from inner strength

Risa Yost: confusion - contradictions

Harrison Ashangwa: Unpredictability

PJ Sisson: Unraveling, tumultuous

Tak Kunthea: DRR and Climate Adaptation

Matt Young: Recommitment to values

Tamzin Ractliffe: transition transformation

Tamzin Ractliffe: awakening

Tamzin Ractliffe: unravelling collaborative multisolving

Tamzin Ractliffe: reciprocity resilience regenerative

Naamal De Silva: Pedagogy of the Oppressed remains such a powerful book.

Mphemelang Ketlhoilwe: I wonder what would be the educational implications given the current situation that may be a polycrisis

Tamzin Ractliffe: eco-imperialism: solutions to many problems are place based. dichotomy between global problem and local solutions

Tamzin Ractliffe: learning from others

Tamzin Ractliffe: understanding the context and relevance

Tamzin Ractliffe: not going for templates

Group Discussion

Dan Marsh: Dan from Cincinnati, Ohio - I was attracted to the local wisdom thread in the title. Voice, self-determination and validation of local people seemed to be at the center. This is a long held interest of mine.

Naamal De Silva: Dan's comments made me think of this article on critical pedagogy of place, which also includes references to Paulo Freire:
https://faculty.washington.edu/joyann/EDLSP549Beadie_Williamson/gruenewald.pdf

Dan Marsh: You are welcome - appreciate the opportunity to contribute.

Tamzin Ractliffe: the way we understand things is often by accepting that things we learned are often experienced and reflected upon reflexive practice ... listening and not judging prematurely

Question from Cindy-Lee Cloete: Do you have any examples in your community that shows the polycrisis in "action"

Marlow Saucier: there is nothing new under the sun, but there are new suns - Octavia butler

Maye Padilla: You don't have to know the details of the science to be part of the solution. And if you wait until you know everything, it will be too late for you to do anything - Xiye Bastida

Sarah Mabey: This point about uncertainty and jumping to conclusions about the 'right' action is critical. Training in conflict management, collaboration, and decision analysis has helped me step back to ask: What is the real problem here? How do others see this problem? How do those perspectives combine to create a new understanding of the problem and what we need/want to achieve. Then, build on that (revisit it often) to decide what action will be most effective (given uncertainty) in helping us lead us to what we want to achieve. Hope that makes sense

Julie Carlisle: We all come from such diverse histories and cultures and perhaps we need to try to reimagine a way of being and doing that is not framed by our own perceptions. Just a thought

Zipporah Musyoki: Usually in project development we have the

Cindy-Lee Cloete: Very important Zipporah.

Dan Marsh: The diversity of place, experience and thought of this group is astounding! Thank you for bringing us all together.

Question from Cindy-Lee Cloete: What is your experience with fundraising and project development?

Zipporah Musyoki: Usually in project development we have a contextual analysis. What I am gathering is that we need to invest more in contextual analysis to inform any form of intervention.

Naamal De Silva: Apologies for joining the conversation a bit late! I'm Naamal. I lead the Together for Birds work at American Bird Conservancy, and live in DC. Thanks to all of you for providing some inspiration! Thanks to Tamzin for mentioning bricolage in describing Jerry. I've found metissage to be very relevant too, especially in weaving in Indigenous perspectives. I'm really enjoying the emphasis on reflection, adaptation, listening, place, and local knowledge.

Mensa TSEDZE: I totally agree with Sarah

Franklin Ngalim: Thank you for sharing this Sarah, I totally agree.

Ezera Mugenyi: Me too, she really does have great ideas

Nhlanhla Ndlovu: Last year, while training young people, a question that somehow prevailed (coming in different ways), and that question was does one need science and academic education to understand the polycrisis and to be able to be involved in the solution?

Naamal De Silva: Cindy - thank you - I am happy to just listen today but would love to stay in touch. Here is the metissage article: <https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/1082>

Cindy-Lee Cloete: Thank you Naamal :)

Maye Padilla: agreeing with Zipporah! Oftentimes the solutions are already with the

communities - maybe just "labelled" differently from ours.

Chris Hoffman: I'm very interested in strengthening indigenous knowledge, Zipporah! Especially documenting, fostering more value, and preserving! And I work in a western organization, so I worry about Western oversimplification, othering, and not respecting closed practices

Tamzin Ractliffe: that's a good question for you also Nhlanhla with ecopreneurs

Maye Padilla: the young people need SCIENCE and conscience :) head, heart, hand

Dan Marsh: This feels like the same issues that we encounter in relationships - that is to immediately go to fixing a problem that is brought to us rather than what the person bringing the problem may need first is for one to listen, support and understand. The solution comes collaboratively later, and not necessarily from you...

Naamal De Silva: really important point

Judy Braus (NAAEE): I think Gerry's point about listening is so important and what Sarah and others have said about understanding the problem we are trying to solve with input from those who have lived experiences with the issues. With the overwhelming issues we face today, we know that if people have agency and feel that they can do something (taking some action individually or collective), it can help with depression, denial, and mental health issues. Active hope.

Sarah Mabey: Love the term "valorize"

Naamal De Silva: due recognition

Judy Braus (NAAEE): Thanks, Franklin!

Dan Marsh: Nhlanhla - I think the young people you work with are making a very important point. they do not need science or higher education to contribute.

Mphemelang Ketlhoilwe: Thank you Cindy and speakers for this informative discussion. This reminds me of the CRC (collaborative research community) approach. Let's explore it and see if it would not empower communities to be more resilient in the face of a polycrisis

Zipporah Musyoki: We need to invest heavily in documentation of indigenous knowledge and ensure it is patented.

Ezera Mugenyi: Thanks Zipporah, you've a good point that we need to focus on

Rita Hindin: Years ago, an op-ed about AIDS that appeared in the newspaper The Nation is still memorable because of its title: Another Way of Dying, and, as well, how the essay explained that perspective. This article came to mind at the start of this conversation.

Question from Tamzin Ractliffe: how do we better connect and honour knowledge systems

Julie Carlisle: I love that there is such honesty in these conversations. At times it feels as

though there are almost sandwiched levels of thinking. From the ground up - the needs of society and community ... and from the top down, the push/pull of leaders, funders, corporations, governments. The "meat" in the middle is what really matters though and it is perhaps an honest middle-group that has the integrity, nutrition, flavour. How do we climb out of the sandwich?

Julie Carlisle: Thank you so very much for this session. I sadly have to leave.

Julie N: I think part of the issue is that these conversations happen in English

Cindy-Lee Cloete: thank you Julie

Tamzin Ractliffe: Julie thank you ... we have in fact started using different language software to try to remedy that too

Cindy-Lee Cloete: very important point Julie!!!!

Zipporah Musyoki: We need to bring all actors together to understand the diverse perspectives and arrive at points of convergence on how to address the issues we face for a better world and planet - be it a community level, national, regional or global levels. Bottom up approaches will always bring in more transformative success in the longer term.

Dan Marsh: In our celebrated "global society" how many of us are truly indigenous? Many do hold local knowledge however. How to respect and tap into this is important. Cindy - this is in response to your comment about indigenous as a trendy phrase and the "shaky architecture of nomenclature" of using catch phrases. Not understanding what we mean when we use words can cause confusion. Local people have the solutions to local challenges.

Risa Yost: I like this question, Dan - where does sense of place come in to those that are not indigenous, yet still multi-generational in their region?

Nhlanhla Ndlovu: @Risa, I think it is a collaborative process. It is not one over another. But a convergence of worlds.

Rita Hindin: Do folks know of Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin, a Guatemalan man, now in the U.S. who wrote the book *In the Shadow of Green Man* and founded the Regenerative Agricultural Alliance—regenagalliance.org?

Sarah Mabey: Humans are social learners -- talking is vital to building the understanding that so many hear have discussed beautifully

Dan Marsh: Yes - a convergence of worlds for sure.

Closing:

Julie Kasper: Thank you, everyone, so very much!

Judy Braus (NAAEE): Thank you, Cindy, Gerry, and Tamzin, and all the comments!!

Sarah Mabey: Thank you, Cindy-Lea, Tamzin, and Gerry -- and everyone. Great conversation

Nina Hamilton (NAAEE): Thank you so much everyone for this important conversation

Themba Nkuna: please share the recording. I joined late.

Naïk Faucon: what was the Bob Dylan's phrase??

Risa Yost: I am grateful for the opportunity to listen, thank you!

Nina Hamilton (NAAEE): Really appreciate all of you sharing your perspectives!

Zipporah Musyoki: Thank you for an interesting conversation!

Mensa TSEDZE: Thank you, Cindy-Lea, Tamzin, Gerry and all of us

Carrie Albright (NAAEE): Thank you to everyone who shared their thoughts, experiences, and questions. This was a wonderful and thought-provoking conversation. (Thanks again, Cindy, Tamzin, and Gerry!)

Nhlanhla Ndlovu: Thank you the NAAEE team, Gerry and Tamzin.

Dan Marsh: Thank you to you all! This is just what I needed today to fill my cup. Gerry - thank you for acknowledging that we need to take the time to talk and understand. Then the doing begins.

Tamzin Ractliffe: please all think of sharing a story on this link:

<https://collector.sensemaker-suite.com/collector?projectID=00fac6a4-5a94-4017-a6c2-e07769025ac6&OID=IMP>

Franklin Ngalim: Thanks everyone! It's been a great day

Ravhee BHOLAH: Thank you Cindy, the speakers and NAAEE staff

Niño Pinalva: Thank you very much

Tak Kunthea: Thank you so much for very nice webinar

Tracy Wong: thank you!

Ravhee BHOLAH: Thank you Judy and GEEP Africa team

Carrie Albright (NAAEE): Thanks to everyone who has joined!