

One World talks

On March 15 and 16 2021, two groups of young people in Hesse, Germany, and Southwest Cameroon engaged with the vision of the Earth Charter. Part of the parallel seminars was a digital exchange between both groups. The student Dora from Germany and the coordinator Anya from Cameroon tell us about their impressions.



It is a very ambitious goal to try to understand within two days what other people devote their whole lives to. Nevertheless, the attempt to take at least a little bit of it with us, I think we succeeded. We, a bunch of volunteers in the ecological year from all over Hesse in Germany, who wanted to learn something about the Earth Charter. We did not get to know each other personally, but we experienced a lot together during these two days of video seminar. Franziska Geissbühler, our seminar leader from the protestant social welfare organisation Diakonie Hesse in Germany, had brought the Earth Charter Ambassador Jana Burke on board for emotional and, of course, professional support, who first introduced us to the core contents of the Earth Charter.

Meaningful, necessary and above all much too little known. That was our impression of the Earth Charter. Neither in school nor through the news had we heard of the Earth Charter. Therefore, we took the chance and tried to absorb as much as possible of what Jana told us, and that was really a lot.

On the second day, we connected with a school class from Cameroon. The class was full of curious students whose good mood could be felt even through the screen. The internet connection was very poor, but we were able to ask and answer a few questions to each other despite the difficult conditions.

One student in the class told us that they had covered the Earth Charter in school and had talked about Earth Charter projects that had been implemented in Cameroon. A bit shameful for the German school system, we agreed. Since the discussions in the small groups had not worked so well because of the internet connection, we did another question and answer session in the plenum afterwards. We were

asked about agriculture, our ecosystems, our democracy and much more, and we returned at least as many questions. In the afternoon, we talked about what we had learned and experienced together. Finally, out of the sudden, two days of the Earth Charter seminar were over.

Author 1st part

Dora Reinicke, 19 years old, is currently engaged in a voluntary ecological year. In her free time, she enjoys being creative, spending time with friends and in nature. She dreams of a better world and tries to be a small part of it.

I was very happy to be part of such an inspiring project. And for a long time I had no knowledge of the Earth Charter or the opportunities for exchange that the educational format "One World Dialogue" can bring us. It was last year that Denis Kupsch, coordinator of the Earth Charter Initiative in Germany, introduced all this to me personally. I was very happy and willing to coordinate such a conversation between young people in Cameroon and Germany.

Since such a project in Cameroon is a bit more elaborate for many reasons, I put together an organizing team: the moderator and pastor Abigail Abamukong and the technical assistants Cyril Motiti, Walson Mboa and Michael Nchendia. We were very motivated and worked hard to make the first Earth Charter Seminar of this kind in Buea a success.

Right at the beginning, we encountered unexpected challenges: Several schools we approached had reservations, as they had no experience with digital education formats and were also not yet familiar with the Earth Charter Initiative. Thus, we needed time, energy, and persuasion. Finally, we were able to win over Salvation Comprehensive High School in Buea for the project and make an appeal to the higher grades to participate in the One World Dialogue.

On the first day, the special meaning of the Earth Charter ethics and vision was highlighted with the interested students and the format of video sharing was introduced. We prepared especially on social and justice topics. On the second day of the seminar, the organizing team began preparing the hall three hours before the scheduled video conference. We organized four internet modems of different mobile networks from acquaintances as well as six laptops, since most of the students do not own smartphones. Since Buea suffers from an unstable power supply, we also rented a diesel generator, which we connected to the school network. Even though, despite our best efforts, the internet connections were too weak to consistently dial up all laptops for the small group discussions, all participants were consistently happy with what they experienced.

I personally learned a lot about the German political system, which is very different from ours. I think that this exchange helped to change the mind-set of some young participants here in Buea, who unfortunately still feel inferior to people from the Global North. I hope that we can create more such opportunities for exchange so that we can share our perceptions of the world and improve our understanding of each other. Bravo Earth Charter!

Author 2nd part

Anya Dabite Abeh, 23, studies geography at the University of Buea, Southwest Cameroon, where he works to increase sustainability, peace, and equality. He finds inspiration from studying the Bible.

Individual voices from participants at Buea

Peace

I am very happy today because what I thought was impossible was made possible, namely to discuss with Europeans in a very friendly and relaxed way. Now I understand that we are all the same, despite our small differences. The conversation was very interesting and I learned a lot today. Thank you to the Earth Charter team!

Abigail

I am very happy to have met people of different skin colour and perception on a completely different continent. I am happy because it can improve my knowledge level about some important aspects like diversity of life and social equality

Rawlings

My interaction with the Germans was cool. I learned a lot today, from their way of life to their environmental conditions. I think this will help me a lot because I know that regardless of our skin color, we are all human.

Bernard

Am happy for the opportunity I experienced. I think the Earth Charter is a good movement to be interested in. I myself never thought that such an event is possible, but with joy I saw it happen and I was a part of it. Wow!

Norine

I never knew how relevant it is to talk to people from different backgrounds and learn about our differences and similarities. I think such an exchange is a very good idea for young people like us, I learned a lot today and I am very excited and ready to learn more. Thank you very much Denis and the whole Earth Charter team for this opportunity.

Nicole

Thank you, Denis and the whole Earth Charter team, for making this call possible. Through this call, I will learn more about the Earth Charter and also how Germany works in some aspects like democracy and environmental awareness. I wish I could come to Germany to experience these things

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