



# 2024

10 am - 5 pm  
12 & 13 June, 2024

#### Location

Toronto Metropolitan University,  
DCC, 7th Floor, Collab Space

#### Contact

+1 (437) 345-6722  
[hsdn2014@gmail.com](mailto:hsdn2014@gmail.com)  
<https://www.hsdni.org/>

## HSDNI'S 8TH SUSTAINABILITY COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE

**Theme: Inclusion and Diversity for  
Sustainable Society**

(Sub-themes: Good Governance, Global Public Health,  
Food Insecurity, Racism And Discrimination)



**Toronto  
Metropolitan  
University**



## FLYER

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## SCHEDULE

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## DAY 1

• Session-1: Racism & Discrimination (BCS Session) .....	10-19
• Session-2: Good Governance .....	25-31

## DAY 2

• Session-3: Public Health (Access Alliance Multicultural Health & Community Services Session) .....	25-31
• Session-4: Food Insecurity .....	32-37



HSDNI AT TMU PRESENTS:

## HSDNI'S THE 8TH SUSTAINABILITY COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE-2024

# Theme: Inclusion and Diversity for Sustainable Society

Sub-themes:

Food Insecurity, Good Governance, Global Public Health, and  
Gender and Race Inequality & Violence

Abstract Submission Deadline: 15th February  
2024, Email: hsdn2014@gmail.com

Scan for registration  
and more details:



12 & 13 June 2024 from 10 am-5 pm at Toronto Metropolitan  
University, DCC, 7th Floor, Collab Space.

Collaborative partners



Toronto  
Metropolitan  
University

# Introduction

The **Holistic Sustainable Development Network (HSDN) International** is a non-profit organization that creates, coordinates and disseminates research relating to sustainable development. Although we are based in Canada, we collaborate and work internationally, arrange conferences and seminars as well as publish research in our peer reviewed journals. Our aim is to disseminate relevant research and work experiences to the public and increase stakeholder participation in the practices and processes that impact sustainable development.

HSDN International, initiated in 2014 by the Environmental Policy Institute Graduate Candidates at Memorial University of Newfoundland, was pioneered by Jannatul Islam with the name “Worldwide Holistic Sustainable Development Cooperation (WWHSDC)”. Afterward, Jannatul Islam moved to Toronto and continued the initiative under its current name, incorporating it into Canada under the leadership of Dr. Nasima Akter. The HSDN is defined by the motto “Live simply, live lively”. It is a growing organization of academics dedicated to increasing access to high-quality peer-reviewed literature on sustainable development. The HSDN is truly an international undertaking with executive members from Canada, Bangladesh, the United Kingdom, Nigeria, and Jamaica.

We create student clubs in potential locations to build the network and strengthen the sustainability movement. Currently, we have student clubs at the University of Toronto, Toronto Metropolitan University, and Bangladesh.

HSDNI runs and mentors initiatives that include Toronto Bangla School, HSDNI Academy, Community Exchange Network, The Trajectory of Sustainable Development (ISSN), PROYASHEE Foundation, Community Sustainability Global, and regular outreach activities year-round.

HSDNI has been organizing sustainability collaborative conferences periodically on current burning issues affecting community sustainability in different locations. In the continuation of this conference, the Student Club of HSDN International formed at Toronto Metropolitan University is hosting the HSDNI’s 8th Sustainability Collaborative Conference-2024 for Future Sustainable Societies.

**The theme of the year:** Inclusion and Diversity for Sustainable Society



## VISION

Attain sustainable development goals through **collaborative movement**

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## MISSION

Promote socio-cultural, economic and environmental well-being for all from grassroots to global level

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## VALUES

Complementary regard for human and environmental subjects

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## OBJECTIVE

- **Generate Ideas** through local experiences and spread it globally
- **Identify and engage to the projects** related to the organization's goals
- **Accumulate efforts** to mentor or make projects successful within jurisdictions
- **Support** for class neutral development of policies
- **Communicating activities** of the organization and giving feedback to stakeholders
- **Expanding network** and cooperation worldwide to secure greater success in sustainable development





**We invite you to join us as a participant, a teacher, a student, and a voice in this movement toward holistic sustainable development.**

# **ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE?**

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# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## HSDNI'S 8 TH SUSTAINABILITY COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE-2024

**THEME:** INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY (SUB-THEME: GOOD GOVERNANCE, GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH, FOOD INSECURITY, RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION)

**DATE & PLACE:** 12 TH AND 13 TH JUNE 2024 AT TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY (FORMERLY RYERSON UNIVERSITY), IN DAPHNE COCKWELL COMPLEX (DCC) 7 TH FLOOR (PRESS SECURITY OR CONTACT/TEXT#4373456722 TO ENTER)

### DAY 1

9:30 AM - 10:00 AM	EVENT START (REGISTRATION, SETTING TABLE & BREAKFAST)	
10:00 AM - 10:05 AM	LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
10:05 AM - 10:25 AM	<u>OPENING REMARKS</u>	DR. ANDREW LAURSEN, GRADUATE PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL APPLIED SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT, TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

### SESSION-1: RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION (BCS SESSION)

10:25 AM - 10:55 AM	<u>KEYNOTE SPEECH</u> (Click for PPP)	DINOBA KIRUPA, PROJECT MANAGER OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE RESEARCH, COUNCIL OF AGENCIES SERVING SOUTH ASIANS (CASSA)
10:55 AM - 11:15 AM	<u>PRESENTATION-1</u> (Click for PPP)	DR. MAHBUB HASAN, PROFESSOR AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST& URBI KHAN, JOURNALIST AND COMMUNITY WORKER
11:15 AM - 11:35 AM	<u>PRESENTATION-2</u> (Click for PPP)	AKM ALAMGIR, PH.D, DIRECTOR, ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING, ACCESS ALLIANCE MULTICULTURAL HEALTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES
11:35 AM - 11:55 AM	<u>PRESENTATION-3</u> (Click for PPP)	TAHSEEN HOSSAIN ANAYET, HONOURS BACHELOR IN MENTAL HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO RABEEYA TASNIM, HONOURS BACHELOR OF SCIENCE, POPULATION HEALTH, UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
11:55 AM - 12:15 AM	<u>PRESENTATION-4</u> (Click for PPP)	AFIYAH ISLAM, HONOURS BACHELOR, UNIVERSITY OF MCMASTER
12:15 AM - 12:35 AM	SESSION CHAIR	DR. NASIMA AKTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BANGLADESHI-CANADIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES

### LUNCH BREAK & NETWORKING

### SESSION-2: GOOD GOVERNANCE

1:20 PM - 1:50 PM	KEYNOTE SPEECH	SHAWNA NOVAK, MD, MA, MMSC-GHD, FRSPH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE CANADA INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGE PROGRAM
1:50 PM - 2:10 PM	<u>PRESENTATION-1</u> (Click for PPP)	MD. IDRIS ALI, PH.D. CANDIDATE, ENVIRONMENTAL APPLIED SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT, TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
2:10 PM - 2:30 PM	<u>PRESENTATION-2</u> (Click for PPP)	HANIE FARD, PH.D. STUDENT, OSGOOD HALL LAW SCHOOL, YORK UNIVERSITY
2:30 PM - 2:50 PM	SESSION CHAIR	DR. BRYAN D. KOIVISTO, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY AND BIOLOGY AND FORMER DIRECTOR, ENSCIMAN
	CLOSING REMARKS	BY ORGANIZER

## HSDNI'S 8 TH SUSTAINABILITY COLLABORATIVE CONFERENCE-2024

**THEME:** INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY (SUB-THEME: GOOD GOVERNANCE, GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH, FOOD INSECURITY, RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION)

**DATE & PLACE:** 12 TH AND 13 TH JUNE 2024 AT TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY (FORMERLY RYERSON UNIVERSITY), IN DAPHNE COCKWELL COMPLEX (DCC) 7 TH FLOOR (PRESS SECURITY OR CONTACT/TEXT#4373456722 TO ENTER)

### DAY 2

9:30 AM - 10:00 AM	EVENT START (REGISTRATION, SETTING TABLE & BREAKFAST)	
10:00 AM - 10:05 AM	LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
10:05 AM - 10:25 AM	<u>HSDNI PRESENTATION</u> (Click for PPP)	AYOOLA ODEYEMI, FOUNDING MEMBER, HSDNI AND BARRISTER AND SOLICITOR OF THE SUPREME COURT OF NIGERIA AND THE ONTARIO BAR.
<b>SESSION-3: PUBLIC HEALTH (ACCESS ALLIANCE MULTICULTURAL HEALTH &amp; COMMUNITY SERVICES SESSIONYU)</b>		
10:30 AM - 11:00 AM	<u>KEYNOTE SPEECH</u> (Click for PPP)	AXELLE JANCZUR (SHE, HER) EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ACCESS ALLIANCE MULTICULTURAL HEALTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES
11:00 AM - 11:20 AM	<u>PRESENTATION-1</u> (Click for PPP)	COURTNEY KUPKA, MHE, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION COORDINATOR, ACCESS ALLIANCE MULTICULTURAL HEALTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES
11:20 AM - 11:40 AM	<u>PRESENTATION-2</u> (Click for PPP)	JANNATUL ISLAM, MAEP, PH.D. CANDIDATE, ENSCIMAN, TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
11:40 AM - 12:00 PM	DISCUSSANTS-1	ROSANRA YOON, PH.D, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DAPHNE COCKWELL SCHOOL OF NURSING, FACULTY OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
12:00 PM - 12:20 PM	<u>PANEL DISCUSSANTS-2</u> (Click for PPP)	AKM ALAMGIR, PH.D, DIRECTOR, ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND LEARNING, ACCESS ALLIANCE MULTICULTURAL HEALTH & COMMUNITY SERVICES
12:20 PM - 12:35 PM	SESSION CHAIR	NEETHAN SHAN, TRUSTEE, TDSB AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, TAMIL CANADIAN CENTRE FOR CIVIC ACTION
<b>LUNCH BREAK &amp; NETWORKING</b>		
<b>SESSION-4: FOOD INSECURITY</b>		
1:15 PM - 1:45 PM	<u>KEYNOTE SPEECH</u> (Click for PPP)	DR. MUSTAFA KOC, PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND DIRECTOR, CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN FOOD SECURITY, TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
1:45 PM - 2:05 PM	PRESENTATION-1	ALYSSA MOSGOPOULOS, FOOD SECURITY FACILITATOR AT AGINCOURT COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSOCIATION (ACSA) AND CERTIFIED NUTRITIONAL PRACTITIONER
2:05 PM - 2.25 PM	<u>PRESENTATION-2</u> (Click for PPP)	QAZI SHAFAYETUL ISLAM, MBBS, PROGRAM COORDINATOR, BANGLADESHI- CANADIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES
2:25 PM - 2:45 PM	<u>PRESENTATION-3</u> (Click for PPP)	DR. MD MAHATAB UDDIN, ADJUNCT FACULTY-CDE, SCHOLL OF ENVRIOMENTAL DESIGN AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT, UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH
2:45 PM - 3:05 PM	SESSION CHAIR	DR. FATIH SEKERCIOGLU, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF OCCUPATIONAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH AND DIRECTOR OF THE PLANETARY HEALTH RESEARCH LAB AT TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
	CLOSING REMARKS	BY ORGANIZER

# DAY 1

## SESSION-1: RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION (BCS SESSION)





**Assistant Professor  
Faculty of Science  
Department of Chemistry and  
Biology**

## DR. ANDREW LAURSEN

### OPENING SPEAKER

Andrew Laursen is a professor in Chemistry and Biology, and the Interim Graduate Program Director of the Environmental Applied Science and Management Programs at TMU. Since joining TMU in 2003, he has had the pleasure and privilege to supervise or co-supervise 39 Master's students and 3 PhD students. Andy is an ecosystem ecologist, and much of his work has focused on trying to restore the function of human-impacted aquatic systems. He has co-developed novel technology for the aeration of aquatic systems to improve oxygen conditions and enable healthier ecological processes, improve habitat for aquatic organisms, restore more natural biogeochemistry, and suppress emissions of greenhouse gases from eutrophic systems. Dr. Laursen's contributions to teaching and training have been recognized with the Dean's Teaching Award (2015), Provost's Innovative Teaching Award (2015) and the Chancellor's Award of Distinction conferred on an educator recognized within the TMU community as an exemplary model of life-long career commitment to teaching and learning (2020).

# DINOBA KIRUPA

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER: RACISM & DISCRIMINATION

As a political activist and community organizer, Dinoba worked extensively in the field of gender equity at the intersection of race. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science from the University of Toronto and later obtained a Master of Public Policy and Global Affairs degree from the University of British Columbia. Her passion for addressing gender and racial inequity influenced her work at the United Nations within the Regional Office of South Asia in Nepal. There she was instrumental in writing country profiles on the barriers to education faced by South Asian girls in rural communities and in helping to organize one of the first meetings to amalgamate the regional direction on gender equity. Dinoba also co-published a policy report on the Rome Statute's understanding of conflict-related sexual violence which was submitted to Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice in the Netherlands. She currently works as Project Manager for the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians leading a research study on gender-based violence within the South Asian diaspora. Outside of the office, Dinoba is a classically-trained Bharathanatyam dancer who completed her arangetram. She speaks fluent Tamil and loves all things connected to her roots.

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**Project Manager, Gender-Based  
Violence Research, Council of  
Agencies Serving South Asians  
(CASSA)**

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: A SILENT PANDEMIC IN CANADA

In order to find solutions to reduce incidences of gender-based violence (GBV), it is critical to understand its insidious and prevalent nature. Without this comprehension of the experiences of GBV survivors, the law will struggle to empower them nor impede or penalize abusers. Furthermore, the intricate challenges raised by the intersectionality of survivors point to the significance of recognizing nuance. Vulnerable demographics, such as those with precarious immigration status, likely face additional fears and barriers to accessing help. Sadly, this is the case with international students in Canada, who are seeing a stark rise in GBV and various exploitation with increased admittance. It often takes a survivor seven attempts to leave an abuser, with the final one being the most dangerous as that is when the abuser has lost all control of the situation. Unfortunately, even when survivors manage to leave, service delivery providers are overwhelmed with the number of clients for a variety of reasons.

This keynote will discuss the faces of GBV within Canada and the nuanced experiences of particularly vulnerable communities when confronted with it. It will also touch on criminal and immigration law as they pertain to GBV to inform survivors and allies of legal options that are available to them. Additionally, this talk will dive into elements of a currently ongoing study led by Dinoba on the causes of GBV as they relate to perceived ideas of masculinities. Finally, it will discuss the experiences of international students as it relates to GBV within Canada. Some examples will be drawn from previous studies on the experiences of the South Asian population to highlight the dire situation faced by survivors.



**Social Worker, Educator,  
and Professor, Centennial  
College and Toronto  
Metropolitan University.**

## DR. MAHBUB HASAN

### PRESENTER

Dr. Mahbub Hasan is an experienced social worker, educator, and international development worker with over a decade of experience in teaching and leading experiential learning at Centennial College and Toronto Metropolitan University.

With more than 25 years of experience in community development, social service administration, project management, and fundraising in Canada and Asia, Dr. Hasan has worked with prestigious organizations such as the University of Toronto, Centennial College, City of Toronto, CASSA, BCS, Action Aid International, VSO, and CIDA. His work has transformed the lives of students, newcomers, children, and youth from marginalized communities worldwide.

Dr. Hasan is skilled in strategic planning, project management, and partnership development in both higher education and social service sectors. He is also a published researcher in various fields such as social policy, affordable housing, and social entrepreneurship. As the host of "Podcasting Social Work," he provides a global platform for learning, sharing, and activism.

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**Journalist and Community  
Worker.**

## URBI KHAN

### CO-PRESENTER

Urbi's work has appeared in The Narwhal, The Local, and The Globe and Mail, among others. Urbi worked as a staff reporter for the Toronto Star, where she was one of the lead reporters on Ontario's nursing crisis series, "Critical Care". Urbi also leads workshops on media and community story-writing at the non-profit Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS) since 2021, serving Toronto East communities.

Urbi has served as a mentor and project associate for the following BCS programs: "Fight Misogyny, Achieve Gender Equality", "Resilient Youth for Change" and "Together End Racism in Toronto".

Urbi's journalistic reporting work focuses on health and education stories, specializing in investigative journalism. Urbi graduated from Toronto Metropolitan University in 2020.

## EMPOWERING YOUTH FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY BUILDING: LESSONS FROM THE RESILIENT YOUTH FOR CHANGE PROJECT

Resilient Youth for Change, a transformative initiative in Toronto, Canada, aimed to empower and uplift racialized youth from the South Asian and Black communities, fostering inclusivity, resilience, and social entrepreneurship. Spanning ten months from July 2023 to March 2024, this project supported 60 youths aged 15 to 30, surpassing its initial goals through innovative strategies and community engagement. Implemented by Bangladeshi Canadian Community Services (BCS) and funded by the Canada Service Corps, the project addressed the exacerbated challenges faced by racialized youths in Toronto.

This seminar presentation will explore the comprehensive evaluation of the Resilient Youth for Change project, highlighting its successes, challenges, and impactful outcomes. Utilizing a blend of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the evaluation captured insights from project participants, mentors, and staff members.

Through surveys, focus group discussions, and case studies, the evaluation examined the project's achievements in mental health support, financial literacy, social entrepreneurship, employment counseling, and community development.

Key findings reveal the profound impact of the project on enhancing mental health and well-being, empowering youth through financial literacy and social entrepreneurship, and fostering leadership and inclusive and sustainable community building.



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## DR. AKM ALAMGIR

### PRESENTER

Akm Alamgir earned a Ph.D. degree in evaluation, a Master's degree in epidemiology, and a Bachelor's in medicine. He is the Director of Knowledge & Learning at Access Alliance (Toronto), an Adjunct Professor at York University (Toronto), and an Academic Editor of the scientific journal PLOS One. He is a mixed-method community-based researcher on social determinants of health (ORCID #0000-0003-4804-6609). He generates knowledge, creates learning materials, and builds the capacity of the stakeholders to utilize generated evidence to make a change. His funded research projects are on racism, refugees, youth mental health, and gender-based domestic violence. Along with over 50 publications, he wrote a post-secondary textbook on community medicine and public health. He reviews manuscripts submitted to the Journal of International Migration and Integration, PLOS One, and Health Promotion International. He was an "expert reviewer" of the Canadian government for the New Frontiers in Research Fund Transformation Competition applications. He worked as the Professor and Head of the Department of Community Medicine at Dhaka National Medical College, Bangladesh; and the Associate Dean of Health Sciences at the State University of Bangladesh.

**Director, Organizational Knowledge & Learning, Access Alliance MCHCS.  
Adjunct Professor, School of Social Work, Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, York University,  
Academic Editor, PLOSOne Journals.**

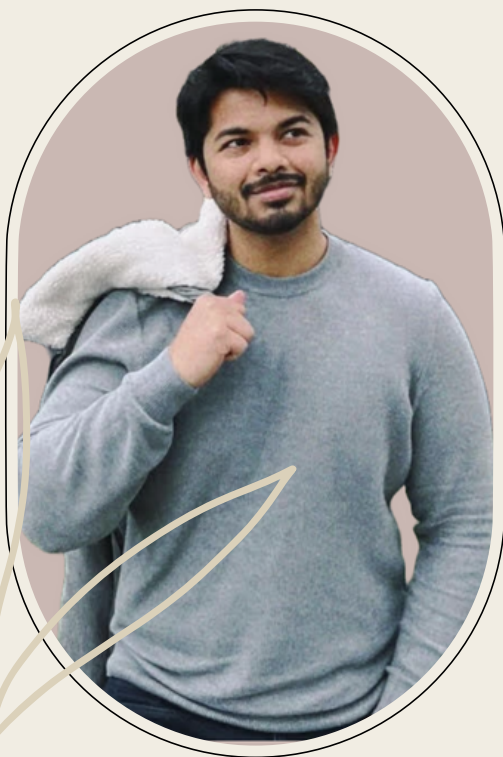
## DISCRIMINATION AND DEPRIVATION

Diversity is the reality in the social fabric of Canada- a Canadian beauty to be proud of. However, colonialism and structuralism impose systemic discrimination to disproportionately deprive the racialized communities and immigrants. Discrimination includes material, intellectual, and thriving deprivation through inequitable access to health, receiving quality healthcare, access to quality education, economic opportunities, employment, housing, and social services. Discrimination nurtures a culture of deprivation by the pseudo-universalism activists against the cultural relativism practices. Despite progressive policies and constitutional commitment to multiculturalism, minority ethnic groups experience discrimination and disparities. Therefore, the call to action is to advocate more effective and inclusive measures to address these systemic barriers.

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## HOSSAIN TAHSEEN ANAYET

### CO-PRESENTER

Tahseen recently completed his Honors Bachelor of Science at the University of Toronto, majoring in Mental Health Studies with a double minor in International Development Studies and Applied Statistics. He will be pursuing his Juris Doctor at Toronto Metropolitan University's Lincoln Alexander School of Law this fall. Tahseen joined HSDNI in 2020, looking to make a difference in his community.

He believes that mental health issues are often overshadowed by other factors contributing to discrimination. Through the resources and community developed, he aims to help society access mental health care services and provide insights into the connections between psychology, discrimination, and sustainability.

**Juris Doctor Candidate, 2027  
Honors Bachelor of Science (HBS),  
University of Toronto**



## RABEEYA TASNIM

### CO-PRESENTER

Rabeeya Tasnim is a third-year undergraduate student at the University of Toronto, pursuing her Honors Bachelor of Science with a concentration in Population Health, and minoring in Psychology and Environmental Science. In 2023, she took on the role of project assistant for HSDNI, an organization that aligns closely with her academic interests and values. She believes that meaningful change requires collaborative, grassroots efforts to address issues affecting the environment, economy, and society. She joined BCS's Education and Allyship (EAP) project as an ambassador to build on her experiences and advocate for a more equitable society.

**Honors Bachelor of Science (HBS)  
Candidate, University of Toronto**

## UNDERSTANDING THE ROOTS OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION

This presentation is repetition and adaptation from a workshop by the Education and Allyship, a BCS project.

The workshop delves into the definitions and fundamental causes of racism and discrimination, emphasizing their persistence and alarming rise. The presentation provides a historical perspective, discussing how colonization in South Asia has impacted various customs and ethnicities, leading to migration and subsequent issues like Islamophobia and cultural invisibilization.

This presentation also explains implicit prejudice and its effects, citing studies that highlight unconscious biases and their influence on hiring practices and empathy towards different racial groups. Further, this presentation also addresses the anxiety and fear that contribute to discriminatory behaviors, referencing research on fear conditioning and its lasting impact.

Discussions include the role of media in perpetuating stereotypes and shaping beliefs, giving examples of how different racial groups are portrayed in TV shows and news coverage. The workshop also provides practical advice on seeking help and filing complaints related to discrimination, mentioning resources like the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Anti-Racism & Cultural Diversity Office at the University of Toronto.

# AFIYAH ISLAM

## PRESENTER



**Bachelor of Health Sciences (BHSc)  
Candidate, McMaster University**



Afiyah Islam is currently a fourth-year student at McMaster University, where she is pursuing a major in health studies and an interdisciplinary minor in globalization. Her academic work is grounded in interpersonal, cultural, and ecological perspectives, where she explores how global health crises are shaped amidst changing social and political perspectives. She is currently engaged in her local community in BCS' Education, Allyship & Partnership Program, where she collaborates with others on developing workshops and building resource toolkits to combat racism and discrimination in marginalized communities.

## EXPLORING ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND ANTI-RACISM AWARENESS AMONG SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA

**Introduction:** The 'Education and Allyship Program' of Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS), funded by the Government of Canada, aims to raise awareness about racism and discrimination, especially among Bangladeshi immigrants in the Canadian community. It explores the attitudes and awareness of South Asians, primarily Bangladeshi immigrants, towards these issues.

**Methods:** The survey was quantitative and gathered information from 105 respondents. We used convenient sampling to collect data from respondents in various community gatherings. The survey was self-administered using questionnaires developed based on experience from the BCS's peacemaker initiative project. We conducted the analysis using SPSS version 26.

**Results:** Out of the total participants, 63% were women and 37% were men. Around 69% were Canadian citizens, and 92% were South Asian Bangladeshi, while 8% were from other South Asian backgrounds. A significant proportion of the participants (56.1%) had poor awareness about racism and discrimination (with a median score of 1 or 0). Only 46% demonstrated good awareness (with a median score of 2 or more). Men had a better awareness level (47%) compared to women (42%). Moreover, good awareness was observed among youth and individuals who had lived in Canada for more than ten years. Additionally, many respondents were not aware of the national racism strategy/policy. Only 43% would attempt to handle racism and discrimination calmly, while others would not take any initiative.

**Conclusion:** The survey found that many respondents lack awareness of racism and discrimination. Additionally, a significant proportion of respondents would not take any initiative to combat them.

Authors: Qazi Shafayetul Islam, Nasima Akter, Jannatul Islam  
Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS)



## DR. NASIMA AKTER

### SESSION CHAIR

Dr. Nasima Akter is an accomplished researcher and scholar in her own right. She has more than 26 years of progressive experience in community development & social work, project management, and research relating to environment, health, & development. She has more than 35 publications in peer-reviewed journals. She was the head of Environmental Research at BRAC, the largest development organization in the world, and taught at BRAC University, Bangladesh, and supervised the Master's thesis of international students at James P Grant School of Public Health at BRAC University, Bangladesh.

Since 2010, Dr. Nasima Akter has been serving as the Executive Director of Bangladesh-Canadian Community Services (BCS) located in Danforth Avenue, Toronto. Currently, she has been working on several community engagement projects such as the Education & Allyship Program; Fighting Misogyny; Peacemaker initiative: to combat Islamophobia & racism; Mental health & wellness; Vaccine engagement for South Asians; Youth Engagement programs; Senior support services; Inter-generational initiatives and more.

Dr. Akter holds a PhD in Environmental Technology & Management. She drafted the Hospital Waste Management Rules for the Government of Bangladesh and contributed to many more environmental policies of the country.



**Executive Director, BCS**  
**Past: Chair HSDNI**

# DAY 1

## SESSION-2: GOOD GOVERNANCE



# DR. SHAWNA NOVAK

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER



**Executive Director,  
The Canada International  
Scientific Exchange**

Dr. Shawna Novak is a global health practitioner working at the intersection of healthcare, social justice, and peacebuilding. As Executive Director of the Canada International Scientific Exchange Program (CISEPO), she takes a systems and equity-based approach to improving access to quality healthcare and fostering social cohesion. Her work extends to epidemic prevention and control, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, in her role as a clinical public health advisor with the Global Health Unit of the Canadian Red Cross.

She holds an MMSc in Global Health Delivery from Harvard Medical School and completed a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School. Shawna is an associate faculty member with Ariadne Labs at Harvard School of Public Health and teaches at Harvard Medical School and the University of Toronto. Her work has garnered support from organizations such as Ashoka Changemakers, United Way, the Fund for Innovation and Transformation (FIT), and Global Affairs Canada.

Shawna serves on the Board of Directors for the Women for Dignity and Development Foundation, the Canada Afghanistan Association of Health Professionals, the Save a Child's Heart Canada Medical Advisory Committee, the WHO Civil Society Advisory Commission, the WHO Migrant and Refugee Health Advisory Committee, and the Consortium for Universities in Global Health (CUGH) health workforce committee. She also serves as a consultant to the WHO in the MENA region.

## CULTIVATING RESILIENCE ACROSS BORDERS

The intersection of global health leadership, good governance, and climate change is critical for fostering resilient and sustainable societies. This keynote presentation will explore mechanisms for building sustainable and strong health systems and climate-resilient communities amid the escalating impacts of climate change. Drawing on CISEPO's "Cultivating Resilience Across Borders" initiative, which addresses significant gaps in healthcare accessibility within climate-affected regions, this session will highlight innovative strategies and collaborative efforts that bridge environmental and health challenges.

Initially piloted in the West Bank, the initiative developed a comprehensive training curriculum incorporating the Obstetric Volume Scanning Imaging Protocol (ObVSI) with point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS) and Teleguidance. This curriculum empowers community health workers (CHWs) and midwives with essential skills to deliver advanced maternal healthcare in resource-limited and conflict-affected settings. The success of this pilot has laid the groundwork for expanding the project to Nunavut, where Indigenous communities face direct and pervasive climate impacts, including threats to traditional food sources, new pathogen exposures, and destabilized health determinants.

This initiative exemplifies a transregional approach to knowledge exchange and capacity building by connecting the experiences and resilience strategies of communities in the West Bank and Nunavut. The focus on community-driven solutions and the integration of education and technology underscore the complex interplay between environmental factors and health outcomes. This bidirectional knowledge exchange contributes to global health literature and offers a replicable model for enhancing health and gender equity in climate-induced crises.

The presentation will use a health systems lens to explore governance frameworks and collaborative mechanisms underpinning the success of such initiatives, emphasizing the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches. It will also discuss the role of international partnerships and policy advocacy in supporting sustainable health systems resilient to climate change, providing actionable takeaways for practitioners.



## MD. IDRIS ALI

### PRESENTER

Md. Idris Ali is currently pursuing a PhD in Environmental Applied Science and Management at Toronto Metropolitan University. His research interests revolve around environmental quality, renewable energy, environmental economics, and globalization. He has made significant contributions to the field, with several publications in reputed Q1 journals.

**PhD Candidate, EnSciMan,  
Toronto Metropolitan  
University**

## QUALITY OF GOVERNANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY IN CANADA: INSIGHTS FROM COINTEGRATION AND COUNTERFACTUAL ANALYSIS

Given Canada's commitment to combat climate change by reducing emissions in alignment with international agreements, understanding the diverse factors influencing environmental quality is needed. As such, the current study examines the interplay between governance, economic growth, energy consumption, and foreign direct investment, and their collective impact on carbon emissions in Canada. This research seeks to inform evidence-based policy interventions for achieving climate mitigation goals. To achieve this objective, Canadian time series data from 1990 to 2022 are collected, and the dynamic autoregressive distributed lag (DARDL) approach is employed. The study's results suggest that while governance quality is linked to decreased carbon emissions, economic growth, energy consumption, and foreign direct investment are associated with increased emissions over the long term. Except for economic growth, all other factors also contribute to carbon emissions in the short run. Furthermore, counterfactual analysis is applied to investigate the impacts of ( $\pm$ ) 1% and ( $\pm$ ) 5% shocks from the explanatory to predicted variables. Additionally, the robustness of the findings derived from the DARDL estimation technique is examined using the Kernel-based Regularized Least Squares (KRLS) machine learning algorithm. In conclusion, the study discusses crucial policy implications based on the empirical findings, highlighting the importance of informed decision-making for effective climate action.

Authors: Md. Idris Ali and Dr. Brian Ceh, Toronto Metropolitan University



# HANIE FARD

## PRESENTER

Hanie is a PhD student at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University. She completed her B.S. degree in Law at the University of Tehran, Iran. Hanie pursued her M.S. in Sustainability Management to analyze climate change mitigation through legal and economic perspectives. Her PhD research interests lie in the area of climate change mitigation in the project-financing sector, from policy analysis to policy implementation. She examines the implementation challenges of climate policies to improve the outcomes of climate change mitigation policies in this sector.

**PhD Student at Osgoode Hall  
Law School**

## INVESTMENT TRIBUNALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION: FRIENDS OR FOES?

"One very simple truth about Global Warming is this, that it will spare nobody, however rich, mighty, and powerful we think we are". In the 21st century, the growing pace of foreign direct investments has scaled up the environmental problem of global warming to become planetary in scope and inter-generational in its implications. Undermining human rights related to living in a healthy environment is among the major consequences of emission-polluting transnational investment activities. Despite the integral role of environmentally risky investments in exacerbating the global warming problem, foreign investors' economic rights are enormously protected in international investment tribunals that often disregard the environmental responsibility of foreign investors.

In this proposal, I will focus my attention on the environmental aspect of the dispute settlement procedures offered in investment tribunals and will examine this central question: *the extent to which investment law could pave the path for host States to move towards environmental protection by the means of foreign direct investment versus, ironically, the granted opportunities of investment tribunals to foreign investors under investment law could contribute to the deterioration of the environment.*

I seek to understand the impeding role of investment tribunals concerning environmental protection. I will take a qualitative approach to answering this question by examining case law and scholarly commentary concerning the role of investment agreements in environmental protection; and then more specifically, by surveying additional relevant scholarly documents, cases, and commentary on the structure and general criticisms associated with investment tribunals.



## DR. BRYAN KOIVISTO

### SESSION CHAIR

Dr. Bryan D. Koivisto, Associate Professor, Toronto Metropolitan University After finishing his BSc at the University of Waterloo (2000), and PhD at the University of Victoria (2006), Dr. Koivisto held an NSERC PDF position at the University of Edinburgh investigating the utility of molecular machines for light harvesting (2006-2008). Bryan then joined the Institute for Sustainable Energy, Environment and Economy at the University of Calgary (2008-2011). There he continued to focus his research interests by investigating the conversion of light energy into solar fuels. In 2012, Bryan joined the Department of Chemistry and Biology at Toronto Metropolitan (formerly Ryerson) University (TMU). As an associate member of TMU's Centre for Urban Energy, Dr. Koivisto's work investigates the design of bio-inspired light-harvesting dyes for dye-sensitized solar cells. Since 2012, Bryan has established a vigorous research program to better appreciate the utility of organic dyes in light-harvesting and their applications to technology. Since receiving promotion to Associate Professor in 2014, Bryan has also embraced mentorship in scientific discovery and innovation and was the founding director for the deep tech incubator - Science Discovery Zone (SDZ) -2016-2019. More recently, (2021-2024) Bryan was the Graduate Program Director for the Environmental Applied Science and Management (EnSciMan) Program - TMU's pan-university PhD program centered around Environmental Sustainability.

**Prof. and Former Director, EnSciMan,  
and Principal Investigator, The Koivisto  
Group for Organic Renewable Energy  
(ORE) Research, Toronto Metropolitan  
University**

# DAY 2

**SESSION-3: PUBLIC HEALTH (ACCESS  
ALLIANCE MULTICULTURAL HEALTH &  
COMMUNITY SERVICES SESSION)**



**Founding Member, HSDNI and Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria and the Ontario Bar.**

## BARRISTER AYoola ODEYEMI

### INTRODUCTION OF HSDNI

Ayoola Odeyemi is a founding member of HSDNI at Memorial University. He has a history of working as a policy counsel. With over a decade of legal experience, Ayoola Odeyemi is an expert in Immigration and Refugee Law, International Law, Criminal Law, and Corporate Law. He is also a strong community and social services professional. Ayoola Odeyemi is dual-qualified as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria and the Ontario Bar.

Ayoola's vast experience in the different areas of practice has made him very adaptable and adept at finding outside-the-box solutions to his client's issues. Ayoola has appeared at the different levels of the Ontario Court system and the before tribunals like the Immigration Refugee Board. Ayoola has a passion for fighting for people with limited access to justice and does not pull any punches in fighting for his clients.



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**Executive Director, Access  
Alliance Multicultural Health &  
Community Services**

## AXELLE JANCZUR

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Axelle Janczur has been working in the not-for-profit sector in Toronto for over 30 years. With practice grounded in principles of access and equity, her interests include addressing systemic barriers to services and working with vulnerable communities to achieve change. She is an experienced trainer, public speaker, and a committed volunteer. With an MA in political science and an MBA from the Schulich School of Business, she has been working at Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services for the past 25 years as Executive Director and has led them through a transformative process, prioritizing capacity building to enhance services for immigrants and refugees, developing a community-based research agenda and advocating for improved access to the determinants of health for individuals and communities facing discrimination and marginalization. In her personal life, she lives with a recycling enthusiast and two rescue cats, is the mother to an extreme vegan fixed-gear cyclist and a feminist hiker/kayaker/singer of sad songs. She still gets up every morning, thankful to be working in a mission and values-based sector".

## THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL – WHAT DOES THIS REALLY LOOK LIKE FOR COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS?

"Think globally, act locally" urges people to consider the health of the entire planet and to take action in their own communities and cities. Within the context of community-based health organizations, what does this look like? An activist vision is critical at the governance level – this informs the processes and structures used to direct and manage an organization's operations and activities. It defines the division of power and establishes mechanisms to achieve accountability among stakeholders in relation to the goals and objectives of the organization. Within the context of an increasingly globalized world and a diverse population base, how can community-based organizations – operating within the parameters of local funders and other accountability frameworks – be responsive to critical issues facing our global community?



**Research and Evaluation  
Coordinator, Access Alliance  
Access Alliance Multicultural  
Health and Community  
Services**

## COURTNEY KUPKA

### PRESENTER

Courtney Kupka is a health program evaluation professional and a mixed-method community-based researcher focused on addressing health inequities using evaluation and research to support evidence-informed decision-making. She is a graduate of the Master of Health Evaluation program at the University of Waterloo with an Honours Bachelor's Degree in Biological Science (Minors in Neuroscience and Psychology) from the University of Guelph. Currently, she works within the Community-Based Research Department of Access Alliance supporting and implementing agency-wide evaluation and research projects. At a provincial level, with the Alliance for Healthier Communities, Courtney enjoys leading a health promotion community of practice.

Additionally, she volunteers with the Canadian Evaluation Society – Ontario Chapter to support and implement activities with the Membership Committee. In both these roles, she is focused on building the profile and competencies of Health Promoters and Evaluators across the province.

## PRACTICE-BASED MODEL FOR CONDUCTING COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Canadian Public Health Association defines public health as 'the organized effort of society to keep people healthy and prevent injury, illness and premature death.' Community health organizations play a key role in supporting and leading these efforts due to proximity and connectedness with community residents. At Access Alliance, community health needs and asset assessments are vital processes that identify and understand the community's strengths, assets, concerns, and priority service needs. By periodically conducting assessments with the communities we serve, we can continue our work as a change agent and facilitate improvements in the quality of life for residents. Furthermore, sharing the findings broadly enables leaders at our organization and others at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels to make evidence-informed decisions contributing to sustainable improvements so residents can achieve optimal health and well-being.

These assessments contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by generating community-level data on the key concepts. The information can be used for the improvement or development of programs and services and advocacy efforts, among others

## JANNATUL ISLAM (MAEP)

### PRESENTER

Mr. Jannatul is a Ph.D. candidate in EnSciMan at Toronto Metropolitan University and a community development worker. He is the co-founder of Toronto Bangla School which has been serving children for the last seven years to teach Mother Language and Culture to minimize the inter-generational gap. He founded Holistic Sustainable Development Network (HSDN) International which is striving for sustainability through collaboration and cooperation with like-minded individuals and organizations. Until now, HSDN International organized about 50 workshops and seminars and 8 international conferences. Moreover, this organization runs a journal named the Trajectory of Sustainable Development published 13 issues. Mr. Jannatul also registered a federal non-profit named PROYASHEE to establish a model eco-village for disadvantaged children and seniors who do not have anyone to take care of or care about.

Since he enrolled at Toronto Metropolitan University in September 2022, he became president of TMU Urban Water Student Leadership Committee, became a student member of the Centre for Studies in Food Security, and registered HSDN International as a student club in TMU to collaborate for sustainability.

**PhD Student, EnSciMan,  
Toronto Metropolitan  
University, Founder and  
Executive Director, HSDNI**

## FOOD SAFETY TRAINING IN BANGLADESH: A POLICY STUDY FOR A SAFE FOOD SYSTEM

Food safety in Bangladesh is critical due to its uncoordinated and inept regulations and the lack of persuasive measures in educating and controlling food safety issues. Finding and developing a practical model to address unsafe food is crucial. In fact, approximately 20% of people have been suffering from foodborne diseases in Bangladesh. This is alarming and requires urgent attention from stakeholders and policy to implement changes towards more sustainable food system environments and associated health and well-being. This aligns with the third goal of sustainable development goals (SDGs). For a sustainable food system, food production and services are interlinked. This doctoral project will investigate the current state of food safety in Bangladesh's restaurant industry in the capital city, Dhaka, and related implications for a sustainable, healthy food system. A major goal and contribution of this research is to inform the creation of a food safety stewardship plan. Further, the project will lay out a policy framework to address the food safety issues in Bangladesh for changes that can be replicable with similar socio-economic status countries in other parts of the world. Finally, the ultimate goal of this research is to produce a sustainable policy model that addresses food safety issues in Bangladesh while considering the implementation of food safety training and certification as a tool for sustainable food system change.



## DR. ROSANRA YOON

### DISCUSSANT

Rosanra (Rosie) Yoon's (she/her) research area focuses on health services implementation and evaluation with a particular focus on integrated care for people experiencing structural vulnerabilities, inequities, and marginalization. As an evaluation researcher, she supports the Mid-West Toronto Ontario Health Team in their implementation evaluation approaches to partnering with communities with low cancer screening to increase tailored approaches to community engagement. Yoon employs participatory and collaborative evaluation methods for system improvement that is community-embedded and centred on equity. Her clinical area of expertise is in the areas of substance use, concurrent mental health conditions, trauma, and gender-informed care.

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**Assistant Professor, Daphne  
Cockwell School Of Nursing, Faculty  
Of Community Services, Toronto  
Metropolitan University**



## DR. AKM ALAMGIR

### DISCUSSANT

Akm Alamgir earned a Ph.D. degree in evaluation, a Master's degree in epidemiology, and a Bachelor's in medicine. He is the Director of Knowledge & Learning at Access Alliance (Toronto), an Adjunct Professor at York University (Toronto), and an Academic Editor of the scientific journal PLOS One. He is a mixed-method community-based researcher on social determinants of health (ORCHID #0000-0003-4804-6609). He generates knowledge, creates learning materials, and builds the capacity of the stakeholders to utilize generated evidence to make a change. His funded research projects are on racism, refugees, youth mental health, and gender-based domestic violence. Along with over 50 publications, he wrote a post-secondary textbook on community medicine and public health. He reviews manuscripts submitted to the Journal of International Migration and Integration, PLOS One, and Health Promotion International. He was an "expert reviewer" of the Canadian government for the New Frontiers in Research Fund Transformation Competition applications. He worked as the Professor and Head of the Department of Community Medicine at Dhaka National Medical College, Bangladesh; and the Associate Dean of Health Sciences at the State University of Bangladesh.

**Director, Organizational Knowledge &  
Learning, Access Alliance MCHCS.  
Adjunct Professor, School of Social  
Work, Faculty of Liberal Arts &  
Professional Studies, York University,  
Academic Editor, PLOSOne  
Journals.**





**TDSB Trustee and Former  
Councillor, City of Toronto**

## NEETHAN SHAN

### SESSION CHAIR

Neethan Shan is currently the Executive Director of Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR) and the Vice Chair of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), representing Scarborough Centre as a Trustee.

Neethan was one of the two first Tamil Canadians to be elected to any public office in 2006. He was the first Tamil Canadian and the first person from a South Asian country to become a Toronto City Councillor. He was also the first person of colour and the youngest person to become the president of Ontario NDP. These are amongst the many firsts he has achieved through breaking barriers and paving the way for other racialized youth to follow. He is a former Toronto City Councillor. From 2006–2010, he also served as a York Region District School Board Trustee.

Neethan Shan began his career as a Youth Outreach Worker and then became a manager for youth programs in Malvern, where he developed and implemented over twenty programs in many different schools. He has served as a Math and Science teacher, and a college professor, and is the former Executive Director of CanTYD and the Council of Agencies Serving South Asians.

During his ten years as Executive Director of CASSA, Neethan advanced the health equity agenda for South Asian communities, undertook a campaign to make municipalities outside the GTA become more inclusive, spearheaded the campaign to establish an anti-racism directorate at the provincial level, and brought over 100 organizations from across Ontario under a solidarity umbrella to advance social and economic justice for all South Asians and all other equity deserving communities. Neethan's extensive involvement in the social services sector also includes work with Parent Action on Drugs, Malvern Community Coalition, Community Use of Schools Council, and Scarborough Youth Task Force, just to name a few organizations.

Neethan Shan has a distinguished human rights advocacy record, receiving many awards including the Race Relations Award from the Urban Alliance for Race Relations and the Vital People Award from the Toronto Community Foundation. As a Toronto City Councillor, Neethan was Toronto's Youth Equity Champion and Newcomer Advocate.

# DAY 2

## SESSION-4: FOOD INSECURITY

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## DR. MUSTAFA KOC

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Mustafa Koc is an emeritus professor of Sociology and the Director of the Centre for Studies in Food Security at Toronto Metropolitan University. He has also been affiliated with the graduate programs in Immigration and Settlement Studies, Environmental Applied Science and Management, and Policy Studies at TMU. His research and teaching interests involve food studies, food security, food policy, and the sociology of migration. Professor Koc was among the founders of the Centre for Studies in Food Security, Food Secure Canada, and the Canadian Association for Food Studies. He has also been involved in various national and global debates on globalization, food security, and peace. Prof. Koc received the Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award from the Canadian Association for Food Studies (2017).

**Professor, Department Of  
Sociology and Director,  
Centre for Studies in Food  
Security, Toronto  
Metropolitan University**

### FOOD INSECURITY, ARMED CONFLICT AND REFUGEES

Despite best efforts, food insecurity rates continue to rise among the most vulnerable groups recently. World Food. Among the often-cited sources of the rise in food insecurity are food price inflation, climate change, COVID-19, and the financialization of the agri-food sector. Koc underlines the importance of another factor, wars and the refugee problem as a major cause of food insecurity. Giving examples from ongoing armed unrest in the Middle East and Africa, Koc will discuss the impacts of armed conflict on food security.

# ALYSSA MOSGOPOULOS

## PRESENTER

Alyssa is a dedicated advocate for food security and is currently a Master of Science student at the University of Edinburgh, studying Global Food Security and Nutrition. Her mission is to strengthen under-served communities by addressing nutritional needs within the broader context of food security.

Alyssa has a vision of inclusivity and equity, where everyone has access to nourishing and sustainable food sources.



**Food Security Facilitator at  
Agincourt Community  
Services Association (ACSA)  
and Certified Nutritional  
Practitioner**

## NAVIGATING FOOD INSECURITY IN TORONTO: INTERVENTIONS TO NOURISH AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES

This presentation will focus on the current landscape of food insecurity and the food bank system within Toronto, Ontario. It will emphasize the impacts of community collaboration and grassroots initiatives. Drawing upon the context of Scarborough, this presentation will provide insights into the realities of food-insecure individuals and the diverse approaches undertaken towards the fight against household food insecurity. Community-based interventions that address the needs of individuals experiencing household food insecurity will be assessed and strategies will be compared to see which make the most impact on under-served communities.

Critical questions will be raised about the adequacy of current interventions and the need for broader systemic changes, such as policy reforms, improved food waste management systems, and poverty reduction strategies, to achieve a lasting transformation.

The future trajectory of research on community-based household food insecurity interventions will also be explored through the interplay between communities, policy frameworks, and ongoing innovation. Collaboratively as a group, we will discuss the ways in which we can have more sustainable food security and nutritional outcomes within our diverse communities in Toronto.





**Coordinator, Research and Programs at Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services**

# QAZI SHAFAYETUL ISLAM

## PRESENTER

He started his career as a research associate in the research and evaluation division (RED) of BRAC Bangladesh (one of the largest NGOs in the world). He worked for BRAC for ten years in public health and research and helped BRAC develop national-based programs like national TB control, national nutrition program, maternal and child health, non-communicable diseases, and other public health programs by researching and creating policies. He had research experience for 18 years in Nepal, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Canada. He is good at quantitative and qualitative research and applies them in different settings. He works with immigrants in Toronto and their challenges in resettling in Canada. He works as the coordinator for research and programs at Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services in Toronto and also works for the Dementia Care Home, Sprint Senior Care. He also supervises the students from universities and colleges.

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## CHALLENGES IN FOOD AND NUTRITION AMONG RECENTLY ARRIVED 60 SOUTH ASIAN BANGLADESHI REFUGEES IN TORONTO

**Introduction:** In 2023 and 2024, many refugees arrived in Canada, facing challenges such as access to food, housing, and adapting to Canadian culture. The Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS) in Toronto has been helping South Asian Bangladeshi refugees with information, application assistance, language interpretation, and limited food support. This study aims to identify the current food challenges faced by these refugees and create a tailored food program to meet their specific needs.

**Methods:** In a study in Toronto, 60 South Asian refugee claimants were interviewed to explore their social background, food challenges at home, and their expectations from local organizations. BCS provided \$50 food vouchers to the refugees. Face-to-face interviews and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were conducted to clarify the situation further. Frequency analysis was performed using SPSS version 26.

**Results:** The recipients of the food vouchers were South Asian Bangladeshi refugees, with 70% arriving in Canada as individuals. The mean age was 38.75 years, and they had been in Canada for an average of three months. Almost 92% of the recipients were men. They learned about the food vouchers through community members and neighbors. About 86.7% sometimes lacked sufficient food at home, and almost 52% couldn't afford to eat meat/fish, vegetables, and fruits daily.

75% were unaware of the Canadian food guide. 75% were registered with the food bank, but most found the received food insufficient. 83% of the recipients felt sad and depressed due to food shortages at home. The recipients shared food with an average of 2.8 persons and believed they could manage food with vouchers for seven days on average. 62.7% felt that a one-time food voucher did not meet their current food challenges and expected ethnic organizations to provide them with monthly food vouchers to overcome the current food and nutrition challenges among the refugees.

**Conclusions:** South Asian Bangladeshi refugees urgently need support to overcome food and nutrition challenges. Immediate community initiatives are crucial to ensure that every refugee has access to an adequate food supply. The government should provide funding to local organizations to address this pressing issue.

Authors: Qazi Shafayetul Islam and Dr. Nasima Akter, Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services (BCS)



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## DR. MD. MAHATAB UDDIN

### PRESENTER

Mahatab Uddin is a postdoctoral research scholar whose scholarship concerns the interfaces of law and sustainable development. He was an international mobility scholar of the Danish Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology as such he accomplished his PhD in Public International Law on Climate Change and Sustainable Development from Aarhus University, Denmark. He accomplished his MSc in Sustainable Development from Uppsala University and LLM in Intellectual Property Law from Stockholm University, Sweden. He is the sole author of the book *Climate Change Law, Technology Transfer, & Sustainable Development* (Routledge, 2022). He is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Guelph, Canada. Dr. Uddin also works as a private mediator and conflict resolution coach.

**Adjunct Faculty-CDE, School  
of Environmental Design and  
Rural Development, University  
Of Guelph**

### LEGAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF DEPLOYING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE

This study aims to identify artificial intelligence (AI) technologies that are applied in climate-smart agricultural practices and address ethical concerns of deploying those technologies from legal perspectives. As climate-smart agricultural AI, the study considers those AI-based technologies that are used for precision agriculture, monitoring peat lands, deforestation tracking, and improved forest management. The study utilized a systematic literature review approach to identify and analyze AI technologies employed in climate-smart agriculture and associated ethical and legal concerns. The study findings indicate several ethical concerns for deploying AI in climate-smart agricultural practices pertaining to data inaccuracy, other technical errors based on wrong recommendations or wrongful acts, data ownership and intellectual property issues, and economic issues resulting in digital division and privacy and security-related issues. In this study, the ethical concerns were further examined based on criminal law, tort law, privacy and data protection law, and intellectual property law. In this regard, the study finds that the current tort law pattern is more suitable than the criminal law pattern to address some major ethical concerns, such as data inaccuracy and other technical errors based on wrong recommendations or wrongful acts. Finally, the study recommends that at the global level, all countries need to fill up the current gap in international law on climate-smart agriculture by agreeing on a standard set of legal provisions and enhancing collaboration in innovation and deployment of climate-smart agricultural AI. It further recommends that at the local level, countries need to adopt suitable regulations addressing multi-stakeholder interests associated with the deployment of climate-smart agricultural AIs.

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**Associate Professor, School  
of Occupational and Public  
Health and Director of the  
Planetary Health Research  
Lab at Toronto Metropolitan  
University**

## DR. FATIH SEKERCIOGLU

### SESSION CHAIR

Professor Sekercioglu is an associate professor in the School of Occupational and Public Health and Director of the Planetary Health Research Lab. He also holds an adjunct assistant professor appointment at Western University's Schulich School of Medicine Dentistry. Before joining Toronto Metropolitan University in July 2019, He was a lecturer in the Department of Geography at Western University and an environmental health manager with the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

Dr. Sekercioglu was a Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI) Board of Certification examiner for ten years and was the CIPHI National Exam Panel member between 2012 and 2019. He was appointed the CIPHI Ontario Board of Certification Representative between May 2018 and July 2019. He was a board member of the Environmental Health Foundation of Canada between 2022 and 2024. He has been on the executive committee for the CIPHI Ontario Branch since 2022.