



December 4

7 am Vancouver, 10 am Toronto, 8:30 pm Delhi (please mind the time zone)

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/91765649184?pwd=Q1RRM3VqcDYzSFU1U1pMeVM4eXBiUT09>

#### **Flattening the Curve: Making a Difference through Mask-making**

**Dr. Shauna Butterwick**

This is a story of the power of taking action on a shared commitment to making a difference and the learning that underscored the project. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic the usefulness of wearing masks surfaced as one way to prevent the spread of the virus. A small group of women (and some of their male partners) came together in early April to explore the idea of providing home-made masks free of charge for home care and hospice workers who were not being provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Flatten the Curve Homemade Masks was born and within weeks, plans turned into action. A great deal of informal and nonformal learning occurred including conducting research on the efficacy of masks and choosing the best design, the recruitment of volunteer sewers, the securing of donations for materials, the making of sewing kits for sewers, the creation of a website (FTCmasks.org), and creating an instructional video. Using existing networks, the women found 60 volunteer sewers who made 3000 masks by mid-May. Six weeks from its start we'd reached and exceeded our original goal. An evaluation was conducted with the various players including those who received the masks, volunteer sewers, and members of the collective. Some changes were made to the design and further outreach to immigrant services took place. Now in its second phase, the goal is to make 2000 masks, including masks for children and youth, for distribution to incoming refugees and immigrants. Kits are being put together for families along with instructions translated into various languages. Funds were sought and secured. Shauna Butterwick is a semi-retired professor of Adult Education (UBC) whose teaching and research have focused on adult learning central to community-based and community led projects. Wanting to take action and follow COVID guidelines, she joined (virtually) a small group of local women, plus many volunteer sewers, to create Flatten the Curve, a home-made mask making project.

#### **Sewing for our lives: Women's enterprising and learning through making masks in India**

**Mansi Shah, Saira Baloch, Savitaben Patel**

Around the world, the demand for personal protective equipment (PPE), including face masks, surged with the realities of Covid19 and managing infection and spread in communities. Early in the pandemic, the sudden increase in global demand for PPE quickly diminished the supply. In India, a country of 1.3 billion people and a fragile health system, the pressing matter was PPE for frontline defense, and the response came from enterprising informal women workers. The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a national women's union supporting over 1.7 million women workers in the informal sector, collaborated with their members to respond to the impacts of COVID19 in their communities. Through learning new skills and teaching each other, women sewed and distributed masks in their communities. Women drew from their expertise in operating their micro-enterprises to meet the current needs. By April 12, 65,000 women had produced 20 million face-masks, by October they had produced 230 million face-masks. In this presentation Mansi Shah from SEWA will speak about the impact of Covid on informal workers and SEWA's approach. SEWA grassroots sisters and artisans, Saira Baloch and Savitaben Patel will share their learning as they applied and adapted their skills and expertise to turn mask-making into a sustainable business strategy to ensure that the livelihoods of artisans continued uninterrupted despite Covid. In India, women who are informal workers, began sewing facemasks for the lives of their families, communities, and themselves, simultaneously developing sustainable livelihoods. Translation will be provided.