



## Partnerships for Education for Sustainable Development

The challenge of sustainable development requires partnerships among Governments, academic and scientific communities, teachers, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society, local communities and the media. In the area of education, information and awareness-raising, UNESCO has worked with partners to stress the indispensability of education at all levels for achieving sustainable futures and to strengthen international cooperation toward the development of innovative policies, programmes and practices of education for sustainable development (ESD).

### Benefits of Partnerships

Partnerships play a vital role in developing education for sustainability as they:

#### ***Refine the Concept and Application of Education for Sustainable Development***

Many international, regional, and national initiatives have contributed to a refined understanding of the concept and application of ESD. For example, UNESCO in partnership with Education International - the world's largest educator's federation - developed a multimedia teacher education programme, *Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future*.<sup>1</sup> As no single education programme can suit the needs of all users, this programme has been designed to facilitate translation in other languages and to be adapted to meet local, national and regional conditions in culturally appropriate ways. Kader Asmal, Minister of Education of South Africa, demonstrated its flexibility, launching the South African Version of the programme at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg.

#### ***Build on Existing Competence to Create Synergy***

Partnerships combine complementary knowledge, skills and resources to create synergy in ESD. UNESCO has developed partnerships with many UN agencies and other groups to refine curriculum on ESD including those with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the World Health Organisation (WHO), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to promote population education; the WHO to develop new approaches to health education; the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to advance education in rural areas and promote food security; the WHO and Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to combat HIV/AIDS; and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and NGOs to assist in the reconstruction of education in crisis and post-conflict situations.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***Demonstrate Commitment***

Partnerships demonstrate commitment through the development of unified approaches to ESD. Statements and guidelines in support of reorienting education towards sustainable development have been issued by regional councils of Ministers of Education and/or Environment in the European Union, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), Organisation of American States (OAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), among others. These regional statements demonstrate support at the highest levels and play a catalytic role in promoting policies, strategies and programmes of ESD at the local, national, and regional levels.

#### ***Ensure Implementation***

Partnerships, tied to Government commitments, can provide built-in mechanisms to ensure implementation. Following the 1992 Earth Summit, the Commission on Sustainable Development appointed UNESCO to be the Task Manager for Chapter 36 of Agenda 21, responsible for accelerating education reforms and coordinating stakeholder activities. Since this time, UNESCO has worked with Governments to develop policies and appropriate support structures, programmes and resources for ESD. Within Governments, education for sustainable development is of direct concern not only to Ministries of Education, but also to other Ministries such as Health, Environment, Natural Resources, Planning, Agriculture, and Commerce.

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<sup>1</sup> UNESCO (2002) *Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future* accessed online at [www.unesco.org/education/tlsf](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf).

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO Education for Sustainability: from Rio to Johannesburg: Lessons Learned from a Decade of Commitment (Geneva: UN, 2002:5)

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## Partnerships Forged at the WSSD

The 2002 WSSD convened in Johannesburg to review accomplishments and outcomes of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, and to adopt concrete measures and targets for better implementation of sustainable development action plans. The 2002 WSSD resulted in the launch of more than 300 voluntary partnerships between Governments, NGOs and the private sector to support efforts to implement sustainable development initiatives on a wide range of issues. During the Summit, UNESCO launched three partnership projects :

- *Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership*: between UNESCO and the world's largest university organizations: International Association of Universities, Copernicus Campus, Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future to integrate ESD in the curricula;
- *New Flagship Programme for Rural People*: between UNESCO, FAO, World Agro-forestry Centre of the CGIAR, International Plant Genetic Resources Institute, World Food Programme, the Governments of Egypt and San Marino and various NGOs to meet the educational needs of rural people; and the
- *International Marketing and Communications Initiative for Sustainable Development*: between UNESCO, J. Walter Thompson Advertising Company, the Canadian Federal Department of Industry and Environment, and York University.

Commitment at all levels will be key to successful partnerships for change and the achievement of the common goal of sustainable development.

## Looking Forward

Supporting efforts to promote development which is socially desirable, economically viable and ecologically sustainable, the UN General Assembly on December 20, 2002 adopted, by consensus, a resolution establishing a United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). The resolution designates the ten-year period as 2005-2014, and proclaims UNESCO as the lead agency to promote the Decade.

Success during the Decade will require commitment from and partnerships between UN agencies, Governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to a common, sustainable future. UNESCO will play a catalytic role in dialogue and consensus building to draft an international implementation scheme in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The objective of the implementation scheme is to provide recommendations for Governments on how to promote and improve the integration of ESD into their respective educational policies, strategies and plans at the appropriate levels.

During the Decade, UNESCO will work with UN agencies and key stakeholders to:

- Incorporate quantitative and qualitative ESD indicators into on-going monitoring and evaluation for Education for All (EFA) and the UN Literacy Decade (UNLD);
- Monitor the progress of activities undertaken by UN agencies, Governments and NGOs in observance of the Decade and facilitate implementation and follow-up;
- Evaluate the achievement of measurable results in realising the aims and objectives of the Decade, particularly with regard to the integration of ESD in educational policies and systems; and
- Make recommendations to further advance the promotion of ESD based on results and lessons learned from the Decade.

UNESCO also has substantive functions to perform during the Decade as an implementer of ESD. These include accelerating education reforms and coordinating activities of multiple stakeholders to implement quality ESD at international, regional, and country levels.

The international community has a vital role to play in achieving sustainable development. Various cooperative actions are needed on the part of Governments, the private sector, international agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders to translate partnerships from commitments into concrete and realistic actions.

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