



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

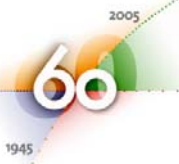
Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
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Education for Sustainable Development

For nearly 60 years, UNESCO has worked to promote and improve education. The Organization leads the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

UNESCO first demonstrated its concern for sustainable development in the Science Sector. Today, that goal is present in all UNESCO fields of competence – education, the social and human sciences, science, culture and communication. In December 2002, the United Nations General Assembly, through its Resolution 57/254, declared a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) and designated UNESCO as the lead agency.

The basic vision of the Decade is a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behaviours and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation. This translates into four objectives:

- facilitate networking, linkages, exchange and interaction among stakeholders in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD);
- foster an increased quality of teaching and learning in ESD;
- help countries to make progress towards and attain the Millennium Development Goals;
- provide countries with new opportunities to incorporate ESD into education reform efforts.

This vision is reinforced by the 2003 General Conference 32 C/Resolution 17 reaffirming UNESCO's support to the Earth Charter and recognizing it as an important ethical framework for sustainable development.

WHAT IS ESD?

- education that allows learners to acquire the skills, capacities, values and knowledge required to ensure sustainable development;



UN DESD logo

- education at all levels and in all social contexts (family, school, workplace, community);

- education that fosters responsible citizens and promotes democracy by allowing individuals and communities to enjoy their rights and fulfill their responsibilities;

- education for life-long learning;
- education that fosters the balanced development of the individual.

Throughout the Decade, ESD will contribute to enabling citizens to face the challenges of the present and future and leaders to make relevant decisions for a viable world.

As lead agency, UNESCO will be proactive, and all parts of the Organization will work together in an intersectoral manner to ensure the success of the Decade.

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Landmarks of UNESCO's involvement in sustainable development

In **1968**, UNESCO organized the first intergovernmental conference to reconcile environment and development. It led to UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme. It was a significant step in the process that resulted in the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, **1972**). A follow-up of this conference was the establishment of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

At the Rio Earth Summit in **1992**, UNESCO received the responsibility for implementing Chapter 35 (Science for sustainable development) and Chapter 36 (Promoting education, public awareness and training) of the Agenda 21 action programme.

The **2000** Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reaffirmed the international community's support of "development that is truly sustainable" and defined "respect for nature" as a fundamental value.

At the **2002** Johannesburg Summit, UNESCO reaffirmed its commitment to Agenda 21 and formed several partnerships, including the *Education for Rural People Flagship Initiative*, the *Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership*, and the *Educating for Sustainable Living with the Earth Charter* initiative.

UNESCO's efforts will aim to:

- catalyse new partnerships with the private sector, youth and media groups;
- encourage a research agenda on ESD, as well as monitoring and evaluation;
- serve as forum for bringing together key stakeholders, such as multinationals, faith-based institutions, youth associations, indigenous people, etc.;
- share good ESD practices;
- link Member States that have put in place ESD curricula, policies and research with those Member States requesting help.

UNESCO's role and, in fact, the task of Member States are defined by the four major thrusts of ESD: improving quality basic education; reorienting educational programmes; developing public understanding and awareness; and providing training. The DESD will be a success if we manage to take up the following challenges:

Go beyond environmental education to reach education for sustainable development. The concept of sustainable development has been closely related to environmental protection. The Decade is not limited to environmental education, but also

encompasses social and economic pillars. Developing adequate teaching approaches are, thus, an immediate challenge.

Learn from what already exists. Many countries have carried out ESD programmes or activities. Identifying these, evaluating the results, and disseminating information about them will allow for quicker integration of this new vision of education into national plans.

Mobilize the media. The media represents a powerful means of awareness-raising and dissemination. Making the media an ally for transmitting quality information to citizens is a pledge of success.

Establish partnerships and create synergies among initiatives and programmes. No institution, even at a global scale, can manage to achieve the goals of the DESD on its own. Only united, can we be sure to build a viable world for us and for generations to come.

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To Find Out More

The DESD website :
www.unesco.org/education/desd

UNESCO and Sustainable Development (Paris, UNESCO, 2005)

The DESD in brief (leaflet, UNESCO, 2005)

The New Courier, May 2005 issue

Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future education program:
www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/

The Earth Charter:
www.earthcharter.org