UNESCO

Working Paper:

Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development

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Second Edition

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I. Introduction

This working paper for the Asia-Pacific Regional Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) serves to guide the implementation of ESD throughout the region. Socio-economic, environmental and cultural realities are not static; therefore, the Regional Strategy is an open document that is adaptable for revision to the changing needs of stakeholders throughout the Decade. It is important that the Strategy be used in conjunction with UNESCO's International Implementation Scheme, which provides more detailed background information and global directives for ESD. Using collaboration and networking as underlying key elements, the Strategy explores core issues for ESD; roles of stakeholders; and coordination, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the promotion and implementation of ESD efforts in the region. The Strategy has been drafted on the basis of various initiatives and events held with different stakeholder groups.

II. Core Issues for ESD in the Asia-Pacific Region

To assist in guiding the development of the Regional Strategy, UNESCO Bangkok, with the generous support of Japanese Funds-in-Trust, commissioned a Situational Analysis of ESD in the Asia-Pacific Region. To ensure equitable representation from each of the sub-regions, separate analyses were commissioned for South Asia, Central Asia, South-East Asia, North Asia and the Pacific. Individual country reports were also commissioned for Australia, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. The project team investigated core ESD issues that were identified by Situational Analysis researchers at a planning workshop in August 2004. It is important to highlight that these issues are not the only ESD issues; rather, they represent some of the key ESD priority areas for Asia-Pacific as prioritized by researchers from the region. These issues are outlined in the accompanying table.

Core ESD Issues in Asia-Pacific

Issues	Examples
Information and Awareness	Eco-media, media literacy, ICT
Knowledge Systems	Learning for local and indigenous knowledge, integrating traditional and modern technologies
Environmental Protection and Management	Biodiversity, climate change, natural resources, conservation
Peace and Equity	Conflict resolution, peace, equity, appropriate development, democracy
Local Context	Community development, empowerment
Transformation	Rural transformation, urbanization, sustainable habitat, water, sanitation, public infrastructure
Culture	Diversity and intercultural/interfaith understanding
Cross-Cutting Issues and Themes	Human rights, citizenship, gender equality, sustainable futures, holistic approaches, innovation, partnerships, sustainable production and consumption, governance
Health	HIV/AIDS, malaria
Environmental Education	Integrated pest management, environmental awareness, community recycling programmes
Engagement of Leaders	Professional training courses, executive education, partnerships, networking

The Situational Analysis endeavoured to discover to what extent countries in the region have integrated ESD policies, programmes and practices into both formal and non-formal educational settings at the grassroots, sub-national, national and sub-regional levels. Preliminary findings indicate that ESD is still predominantly conceptualized in the context of Environmental Education (EE) by many key stakeholders and decision-makers. Although much can be learned from the experience of successful EE initiatives, especially at the grassroots level, it is imperative that stakeholders understand the unique holistic and cross-cutting nature of ESD. Moving from EE to ESD will be a key challenge for the Decade. The Situational Analysis also indicates that the role of traditional values in ESD must be addressed by the Decade. The Analysis also illustrated the strong role that youth, rural and indigenous communities can play in ESD. Finally, the role of the UNESCO National Commissions in implementing ESD will be a crucial starting point to launch activities at the national level.

The Situational Analysis was not intended to be fully comprehensive; rather, the overall goal was to obtain a 'snapshot' of ESD in the region. Time constraints limited the depth and breadth of the Analysis. In addition, researcher's backgrounds and areas of specialization somewhat influenced the issues addressed in the study. Nevertheless, the Analysis and other key planning initiatives for the Decade will help to create and strengthen regional partnerships and networks on ESD, which are essential in facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences, encouraging future cooperation and strengthening regional coordination of ESD. This will allow agencies and organizations to better coordinate their ESD activities to generate programmes and initiatives that meaningfully contribute to the advancement of ESD in the region, rather than duplicating existing efforts. Sharing ownership for the Decade is crucial so that all stakeholders understand how they can support ESD and how ESD can support them.

III. Roles of Stakeholders

UNESCO's International Implementation Scheme for the Decade of ESD identified five key stakeholder groups: governments and intergovernmental bodies, media, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector. These groups have been further expanded in this Strategy to allow for consideration of a wider range of sub-groups.

Recommendations for engaging all stakeholders in ESD include:
- Advocacy through activities such as scenario-building (to help address long-term perspectives and uncertainties)
- Development of a shared information platform in which stakeholders can access resources (human, financial, etc...)
- Provision of incentives for engaging 'new' partners such as the private sector
- Promotion of action research by academia
- Provision of fora for dialogue amongst stakeholders at local, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels
- Development of communication strategies

It is important to emphasize that stakeholder partnerships must be developed between rural and urban stakeholders, and also between stakeholders of developed and less-developed nations. These types of partnerships will enable groups of stakeholders to learn from each other and support each other in their endeavours.

Governments / UNESCO National Commissions

Governments at all levels, including local, national and intergovernmental groups at the regional and international levels, have a significant role to play in contributing to the success of the DESD. Government functions at each level include:

- Policy-making and framework setting
- Promotion of public consultation and input
- National and international public campaigns
- Restructuring of educational systems to enable the implementation and operation-alization of ESD
- Initiation of demonstration/pilot projects in cooperation with relevant stakeholders

The involvement of the UNESCO National Commissions in the DESD is imperative. Although their roles differ from country to country, where possible, National Commissions should strive to play a coordinating role with other national government agencies, NGOs and other organizations. Mobilizing all relevant organizations in support of ESD, creating a common vision for the Decade, and disseminating ideas and activities for the Decade should become key tasks for National Commissions. The development of national mechanisms for the implementation of ESD is crucial and could be partly achieved through national strategy planning workshops – although it is important to recognize that planning alone is not enough. National launches for the Decade are also encouraged. The New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO has taken a leading role as a national focal point for the Decade. The Commission held a national launch for the Decade in March 2005, and has created a New Zealand Coordinating Committee for the UN DESD to plan and implement the national response to the Decade. The Committee is comprised of representatives from government, business and civil society who are committed to ESD. Initiation of this type of coordinating body is highly encouraged as a means to mobilize support and action for ESD at the national level.

Coordination must also be improved among governments/National Commissions on DESD issues. Such coordination might include the exchange of national experts and the training of teachers and government officials at the sub-regional level. Also, it is important for governments/National Commissions, the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific and UNESCO field offices to work together, communicate and share their expertise and resources to effectively promote the DESD within the region.

Governments/National Commissions are also encouraged to establish interlinkages between ESD, Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) and other relevant global initiatives. This could be achieved, for example, through initiatives such as creating EFA Weeks or a Forum on ESD, organizing national workshops and seminars, and disseminating good practices.

Capacity-building for ESD within government agencies is needed in many Asia-Pacific countries. This could be achieved through ESD training for government leaders, key decision-makers and implementers. Staff development activities for civil servants that utilize short courses in ESD offered by tertiary institutions could be useful in achieving this goal. Training on priority setting, planning, data collection, monitoring and evaluation is also important.

Local governments must also be given an active role in the Decade. Given their presence at the community level, local governments play a key role in improving the quality of people's daily lives through the delivery of public programmes and services. They are, therefore, well placed to work towards achieving sustainable development at the grassroots level.

Communities

A key objective of the Decade is to implement ESD activities and programmes at the community level. ESD must be integrated into all levels of society – local, national, regional and global – because sustainable development cannot be effectively pursued at only one level. The impact of sustainable development – and of unsustainable development – is

ultimately experienced most keenly at the local level, where livelihoods are enhanced or diminished and resources are regenerated or depleted. It is for this reason that ESD must be rooted at the local level – starting from and aiming to address grassroots realities.

There are several core elements of success for engaging communities in ESD. These include:

- Community participation in visioning, strategic planning and resourcing discussions

- Institutional arrangements such as partnerships, consensus-building, conflict resolution, transparency and accountability

- Cross-cutting elements such as capacity-building, gender sensitization and quality

- Research and documentation for influencing policy

It is essential to the success of ESD at the community level that coordination and networking be strengthened between different stakeholders such as women, youth, men, faith-based groups, cultural institutions, indigenous groups, schools, teachers and law makers. Gender equality and sensitivity are also important at all stages of community-based ESD initiatives. The experience of the Jal Sankalp (Pledge for Water) project in Gujarat, India illustrates the effectiveness of community engagement in ESD. This initiative was organized and implemented by a national level NGO, the Centre for Environment Education, and engages communities in a continuous dialogue that helps sustain water and sanitation systems. Innovative education and communication approaches, such as focus group meetings, street theatre and mobile information units, are used to create awareness and build capacity among all villagers to work with other stakeholders and take continuous action to improve their water and sanitation systems.

ESD initiatives must take into account local norms, values and culture. The incorporation of traditional knowledge in community-based initiatives is essential. Communities must be consulted about their wishes and needs for ESD through tools such as participatory action research. The creation of local knowledge bases would assist communities in getting access to information about sustainable development, which could inform community planning processes. To the extent possible, ESD should be incorporated into existing programmes and structures at the local level. These could include Community Learning Centres, distance learning models and mobile learning units. Governments should be encouraged to incorporate community ESD needs into existing programmes, such as national policy frameworks. The development of leadership capacity and critical leadership are important at all levels.

Private Sector

The participation of the private sector in ESD is essential for sustainable development. Local, national and multinational companies must actively engage in ESD. Limited information is available regarding the extent of ESD awareness or activities with the private sector in the Asia-Pacific region. There is a lack of case studies about industry ESD, and little discussion regarding this topic occurs compared to the formal education sector. There remains an inadequate body of knowledge about what effective ESD looks like within the business and industry sector.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many businesses want to be involved in ESD, especially in ongoing and vocational education. Long-term partnerships are essential in initiating and continuing the private sector's involvement in ESD. Involvement must be more substantial and systematic than arbitrary corporate donations. Partnerships must not be viewed as simply business-NGO. Other possibilities include business-government, business-business, and tripartite partnerships. Potential partners must learn to speak the language of business and view issues from a business perspective. Although businesses need some

type of return on their investment, it is important that partnerships are more than just writing a cheque. Rather, good partnerships must focus on improving the social and environmental responsibility of the private sector. Incentives could be provided through high-level recognition programmes that would, for example, provide soft incentives and UN recognition for corporate contributions to ESD.

Many of the initiatives undertaken by businesses and their partners in the area of sustainable development can contribute considerably to ESD. In particular, sustainable business models resulting in the improvement of the quality of local life, sustainable supply chain management, corporate social responsibility initiatives and involvement in local sustainable development initiatives could inform the educational practices of business schools and other training provided by companies, labour unions and other business-related organizations. There are some initiatives and organizations that could be useful in promoting ESD in the business community. The Global Compact, a voluntary international corporate citizenship network that encourages businesses to work collaboratively with other actors in achieving the Milenium Development Goals (MDGs), is one example. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the International Chamber of Commerce are also in positions to play an important role in engaging the private sector in ESD.

The private sector could structure their activities to support the Decade around four priority areas highlighted in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21: a) improving basic education, b) re-orienting existing education, c) improving public understanding and skills for sustainable living and d) promoting training. Capacity-building for sustainable development down the supply chain is also important.

Businesses have a key role to play in the protection of traditional knowledge through the development of capacity-building and education strategies to meet the requirements of relevant international conventions. Educating the workforce about the importance of traditional knowledge and the cultural context in which it is developed and practiced is a key challenge for the private sector. Some organizations have already developed outreach programmes to mitigate the cultural and environmental impact of their activities on local communities. These types of initiatives should be expanded throughout the Decade.

Some additional practical ideas for engaging the private sector in ESD include the creation of a regional level reference group to encourage business schools to further incorporate sustainable development issues into existing curricula. National-level reference groups could also be formed to build capacity within companies, among stakeholders and across the supply chain.

Formal Education Institutions

Time constraints and bureaucracy, among other factors, limit the adoption of ESD initiatives in the formal education sector. ESD should not be viewed as 'one more subject' to be added to an overcrowded curriculum, but as a holistic or 'whole school approach' where sustainable development is seen as a context for delivering existing aims of education and not as a competing priority. Policy makers have a crucial role to play in facilitating the re-orientation of education systems to accommodate and support this holistic approach. Financing implications of ESD initiatives must be considered, and the relative costs of different approaches to ESD curriculum and/or teacher education reforms must be examined. Conceptual frameworks for the incorporation of ESD into curriculum and teacher education should be developed for adaptation at the national and/or sub-regional levels.

School-based curriculum development and teacher education about ESD are essential, as are improvements to the conditions and quality of education in schools. A holistic approach to the incorporation of sustainable development principles into curriculum of all

subjects and into examinations at all levels is important so that every student can benefit. The Culture of Peace educational initiative in Viet Nam provides a good example of this type of approach. This scheme is aimed at promoting values, attitudes and behaviours that reflect a sense of values, human rights and respect towards life and people. The Culture of Peace concept is mainstreamed and integrated into existing curriculum in Viet Nam in order to: (i) develop in young people awareness of the earth as a shared home for all, (ii) recognize the mutual and interdependent relationships between nations, (iii) align instructional activities and daily community life with a view towards sustaining and keeping peace, (iv) raise awareness and provide students with skills and practices for environmental protection, and (v) increase understanding and respect for cultural differences.

Formal education must also recognize the differing perceptions of ESD and the different world-views that impact ESD. This could be achieved through the development of a resource kit to simply and clearly explain what ESD involves in terms of major content areas, skills, values and opportunities - considering these in the context of local/indigenous languages, conditions and world-views. A multi-media resource kit about ESD for in-service and pre-service teacher training, "Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future," was recently developed and is being translated and/or adapted in the Asia-Pacific region to suit individual country needs and technological capabilities. The kit consists of 25 training modules that address various core elements of ESD. In addition to resource kits, sharing best practices will also be important in helping stakeholders understand the meaning of ESD. A website could be developed to enable students, teachers and institutions to obtain and share information about ESD.

There is a need to acknowledge the value of higher education institutions in the development of human resources for ESD. Roles for higher education institutions may include educating future leaders about ESD, educating and training school teachers, and conducting action-oriented research for sustainable development. The development of a register of expertise and programmes currently available at higher education institutions in the region would help to connect stakeholders. The recently established UNEP-Tongji Institute for Environment and Sustainable Development in China provides one example of such a centre of expertise. It is also recommended that both Masters and Doctorate degrees in Sustainable Development be developed in the region, and several universities are already engaged in preliminary discussions towards this end. The creation of scholarships to encourage participation in such courses, especially in neglected areas such as the Pacific, must also be explored.

The re-orientation of existing programmes is essential to the success of ESD. Some existing programmes through which ESD could be promoted include the Asia-Pacific Programme for Educational Innovation and Development (APEID) for the development of ESD materials, the Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) and the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), for the coordination of future teacher training programmes that focus on ESD. It is also recommended that a Mobile Training Team be organized for DESD purposes.

Civil Society

Civil society has a significant role to play in the promotion and implementation of ESD and the Decade. The functions of civil society include:

- Public awareness-raising, advocacy, campaigns and lobbying
- Consultancy and input into policy transformation
- Delivery of ESD, primarily in non-formal settings
- Participatory learning and action
- Mediation between government agencies and people

Civil society organizations and NGOs are key stakeholders in the Decade because of their relationship with, and knowledge of, the grassroots level. These groups have thus far played significant roles in the Asia-Pacific region to promote sustainable development and ESD. Through directly engaging communities in ESD, civil society can be extremely effective in coordinating locally relevant and meaningful ESD initiatives. A local NGO, with the support of UNESCO, recently undertook a community empowerment project in Maichun, a rural village in northern India. Through Participatory Action Research, the NGO facilitated the process through which villagers identified the priorities and needs of their community to move towards greater sustainability. An action plan to improve the local environment was developed by the community and subsequently implemented, resulting in improvements to the lives of many villagers. Such a project would not have been possible without the involvement of the local NGO that understood the social-cultural, political and economic realities facing the community.

A significant challenge experienced by many NGOs, other civil society actors and local communities is a lack of capacity. Capacity-building could be achieved by training the trainers according to local needs and priorities. Such an activity would help facilitate ESD initiatives at the local level by creating a core group of people at the national level who can enable local communities and provide necessary information regarding ESD. All relevant actors must be trained, at all levels, on ESD concepts and approaches. There is a need to identify trainers, trainees and training methods. To remain effective in the long term, training needs to be systematic and ongoing.

In addition to capacity-building, funding for civil society organizations is also important. Multilateral and intergovernmental organizations could encourage governments, donor agencies and the private sector to re-orient funding for ESD to assist NGOs in planning, initiating and carrying out ESD-related initiatives. Private funding models could also be explored for this purpose.

Media

Media and advertising agencies are key stakeholders in promoting the broad public awareness and ownership required to ensure that ESD achieves a wide impact on a global scale. Only a groundswell of public opinion will result in an understanding of, and commitment to, the principles of sustainable development and engagement with educational and informational initiatives. Media organizations play an integral role in creating awareness and developing public ownership of the ESD vision. This ownership will result in a sense of social responsibility and a consciousness of how actions affect the lives of others. The media may also play a key role in the transformation process of moving from EE to ESD.

Implementing ESD requires widespread advocacy and a responsible media committed to encouraging informed and active citizens. The development of a high-level strategic communications strategy for ESD is encouraged and could be coordinated in the Asia-Pacific at the regional/sub-regional level. Structured training programmes, informational materials/tools and related activities that focus on the philosophical and practical coverage of sustainable development issues should also be made available to media professionals. Media owners, publishers, editors and practitioners should be sensitized on ESD through, for example, a high-level regional meeting for media chiefs hosted by organizations such as UNESCO. Linkages must also be established between the media and all stakeholders, including the private sector, NGOs, school systems, policy makers and faith-based advocates. In linking with the private sector, for instance, media coverage should focus on successful corporations that adhere to triple bottom line reporting (reporting that takes into account environmental and social factors) to persuade non-complying firms to meet financial, social and environmental accountability. A tie-in with NGOs, for example, could help journalists seek and reach the marginalized sections of society. Cooperation with advertising agencies to produce public service announcements that carry ESD messages

could also be useful. Champions for ESD, such as Nobel laureates, public figures and corporations, must be identified to enhance the visibility of ESD in the media.

In 2004, an international workshop in Okayama, Japan was convened to discuss the development of multimedia packages and information communication technology (ICT) tools to promote ESD. Participants included representatives from the media, UNESCO, NGOs and academic institutions. Sample articles and short messages on sustainable development were produced by participants. This workshop provides an excellent example of a starting point at which to engage the media and encourage further commitment to the Decade.

ICTs are critical to media involvement in ESD because they are a means of linking distant partners, storing data and sharing information and news. For those local communities without access to a wide range of ICTs, as is the case in many rural and isolated communities in the region, alternative communication methods must be considered. UNESCO's Small Islands Voice (SIV) initiative provides an example of such an alternative. SIV combines new information technology with more traditional forms of communication to provide an innovative and cost-effective communication system that allows people in small islands in the Pacific and other small island regions to raise issues at the local level and then debate these regionally and internationally. SIV aims to enhance discussion within and between small islands in an effort to highlight the challenges of small islands and to encourage individuals to actively participate in solving these problems.

Youth

The involvement of youth in ESD is critical, as youth are a major force in bringing about change and are the world's future decision-makers. Given this, there is a need to involve youth in planning, policy-making and decision-making for ESD. Initiatives at all levels should aim to strengthen partnerships with youth for ESD. Youth networks and action/research projects can also substantially contribute to ESD in the region. Many such networks already exist, such as the South Asian Youth Environment Network, and ESD could be incorporated into the agendas of these associations. There is great potential for youth and media to work together for ESD. Young Asia Television of Sri Lanka and Radio FM 100 MHz of Nepal provide interesting examples of media use by youth, and ESD should be integrated into such existing initiatives as much as possible. The development of a regional programme to involve the media in training young people on sustainable development issues could also be considered.

Government programmes and policies for youth are also important avenues for ESD integration. Many of these initiatives have already begun incorporating sustainable development concerns. For example, India's National Youth Policy (2003) places increased emphasis on environment and sustainable development issues and initiatives. Despite this progress, significant opportunities remain to further incorporate ESD into youth initiatives. Youth programmes require a clear strategy and institutional support. Higher education institutions must also play a greater role in providing opportunities for youth involvement in ESD.

International Agencies

Some of the challenges faced by international agencies in implementing the DESD include a mismatch of activities, both within countries and between sector-specific programmes and agencies; duplication of efforts; lack of coordination; and a lack of funds to implement ESD at the regional level.

For increased cooperation on ESD at the regional level, international agencies must consider incorporating ESD into existing programmes and activities, and strengthening

these initiatives, rather than creating new ones. Bilateral and multilateral donors must also become involved in the Decade – the UN should not be the only international actor involved. Bilateral and multilateral donors play important roles in influencing the direction of educational reforms in many countries. It is important to make these donors aware of ESD and encourage them to support ESD-related reforms. UNESCO could assist this process by prioritizing ESD in multilateral curriculum development projects and by requesting that its partners and relevant donor agencies include ESD in priority areas for funding.

To enhance cooperation, several initiatives are currently being organized by UNESCO's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education in cooperation with other UN agencies such as the United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations University, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, UN Development Programme and UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. These include the creation of an Asia-Pacific Regional UN Interagency Steering Committee for the DESD and an Asia-Pacific Regional Consultative Group for the DESD. The Steering Committee will be responsible for the coordination of ESD efforts among UN agencies in the region, and will undertake various ESD advocacy, communication and networking tasks. The Consultative Group will consist of experts representing stakeholder and geographic interests. This Group, to be selected by the Steering Committee, will perform knowledge management and research functions, in addition to activating networks and projects in support of ESD.

It is also recommended that ESD become more closely integrated with existing UN initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals, Education for All and the United Nations Literacy Decade. A regional website for sharing information on ESD events, contacts, institutions and experiences will be established and decentralized for content management purposes.

IV. Monitoring and Evaluation

There is no question that monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will be essential to all stakeholders at all levels in measuring the impact of the DESD. A key challenge for monitoring and evaluation will be the identification of suitable, relevant and measurable indicators at every level – local, national, regional and international – for each initiative and programme. In the context of media, for example, continuous monitoring of media output to identify coverage, quality, reach and impact is needed to measure the effectiveness of media involvement in ESD. Salient questions remain regarding what would be monitored and/or reported; how monitoring would feed back into planning for the Decade; who would be responsible for monitoring at different levels; how monitoring would occur and which mechanisms would be used; what the key goals for the DESD are; and how monitoring would account for varying cultural contexts.

Since there is an emphasis on integrating ESD concerns into existing networks and alliances, and through the creation of new partnerships, it will be necessary for each stakeholder group/ sector to establish its own objectives, outcomes and indicators within the implementation framework. Monitoring and evaluation results will be used in the assessment and re-orientation of programmes during the Decade in order to ensure ongoing relevance and effectiveness.

This is crucial since qualitative, as well as quantitative, evaluation methods will be necessary to track the Decade, as changes in values and behaviours cannot be captured solely in numerical data. In 2004, UNESCO and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) agreed to develop a joint proposal for a 3-year project that will engage stakeholders in selected Asia-Pacific countries in a process of defining ESD indicators. A national framework of indicators is to be constructed for use as a planning tool, for monitoring and for evaluation.