



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

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EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING

*Nadi, Fiji
26-27 September 2006*

SESSION SIX

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE PACIFIC

The attached paper, prepared by the Pacific Islands forum Secretariat, provides a brief overview of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the Pacific, summarizes the three initiatives in the Pacific to develop and use a regional framework for ESD, and discusses how the region could benefit from a common or coordinated approach and proposes recommendations for the Forum Education Ministers consideration.



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Agenda Item 6

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE PACIFIC

Purpose

To provide a brief overview of education for sustainable development in the Pacific; summarize the three initiatives in Pacific to develop and use a regional framework for ESD; and discuss how the region could benefit from a common approach to education for sustainable development.

Background

2. Sustainable development means different things to different persons, just as education for sustainable development has many different interpretations. A commonly accepted definition for sustainable development is 'development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs'. In the context of the Pacific, the notion of sustainable development would also include explicit recognition of the unique cultural, social and religious traditions, values and customs, something that is in line with the Forum Leaders' Vision for the region and the Pacific Plan.

3. In practical terms, how to achieve sustainable development though remains a challenge. Many different strategies have been suggested, including technological solutions, a change in consumption and production patterns and a change in decision-making process, moral values and life philosophies. Since the sum of the outcomes of people's actions and decisions determine the extent to which national sustainable development goal is achieved, to bring about sustainability, the ultimate target of education will need to be individuals, as agents of change.

4. Education for sustainable development in the Pacific, like elsewhere in the world, has generally been synonymous with environmental education and the focus has been to develop individual capacity. 'Capacity' according to the UNDP/GEF CDI, refers to the ability of individuals and institutions (thus, nations) to make and implement decisions and perform functions in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner. Capacity development has three dimensions: individual, institutional and systemic.

5. Experiences globally (UNESCO 2002) and in the Pacific suggest that education for sustainable development is about:

- encouraging lifelong learning of all, including early childhood, primary school, high school, tertiary institution, as well as officials at all levels of government, traditional leaders, and parliamentarians
- encouraging people to place ethics and moral value for living sustainability at the centre of society's concerns, emphasizing maintaining ecological integrity, the principles of social justice and equitable development (i.e. equity in opportunities), democracy and peace.
- empowering all citizen with appropriate knowledge, tools, skills and decision-making ability required to make informed decisions in the various roles they play in society, including, creative and innovative thinking, analytical and problem solving skills and making decisions based on evidence
- integrating knowledge from different disciplines and the integration of traditional and scientific knowledge and expertise to create understandings that are more integrated and contextualised to local situations, and using this understanding to find and implement appropriate solutions to their problems

6. For the Pacific to move towards a sustainable future, every citizen must change their values, thinking, and lifestyle, including consumption and production of goods and services. To create such a change, there is also a need to change the enabling environment that guide national decision-making processes and decisions of every agent of change in whatever role we play in society.

7. Teachers, too, must be empowered to understand not only the subject matter related to what comprises sustainable development, but also acquire new skills and tools for promoting change in their students. This would mean not only a change in their course curriculum but also enhancement of teachers' communication and pedagogic skills to teach for sustainable development, including the use of different communication formats, media and models. Training of teachers is, according to UNESCO-UNEP, the 'priority of priorities' for enhancing education for sustainability both in formal and non-formal setting.

8. While all citizens need to undergo social change and acquire new skills, the breadth and depth of these skills will differ depending on the role a person plays in society and the nature of decisions they are expected to make. Such differences would need to be reflected in any regional initiative on ESD and operationalised at the national level targeting the local needs within their social, economic, environmental and political context.

Regional frameworks for ESD

9. Currently, the region has three frameworks for education for sustainable development, at different stages of development:

- SPREP's *Education and Communication for a Sustainable Pacific: A Guiding Framework (2005-2007)*
- The *Pacific Framework for Education for Sustainable Development* that was coordinated by the UNESCO Office for the Pacific

- USP's conceptual framework for Education for Sustainable Development for mainstreaming ESD concepts into curriculum

10. SPREP's *Education and Communication for a Sustainable Pacific: A Guiding Framework (2005-2007)* targets environmental education of local communities as well as government officials (SPREP 2005; SPREP 2006). This is an updated version of SPREP's Action Strategy for Environmental Education and Training in the Pacific region, 1999-2003 which was developed involving over 170 participants from the region and had been endorsed by SPREP's Governing Council and Environment Ministers. The key role of SPREP's Framework, which was revised in the light of the UN Decade for SD is 'to support the development of annual action plans to focus on key priorities, whilst integrating education and communication requirements of existing environmental/ sustainable development programmes and/or initiatives' (p1). This Framework which outlines SPREP's program on environmental education and communication, targets the following three areas, each with specific objectives:

- formal education;
- communication; and capacity development, and
- partnerships and networking (for detail see Annex 1).

11. UNESCO, which has the UN mandate to implement the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (UNESD), too, developed a draft *Pacific Framework for Education for Sustainable Development*, for the purpose of responding to the UNESD. This draft framework has already been endorsed by the UNESCO National Commissions at their 2006 meeting in Hanoi and is to be the subject of discussion by education officials from the region and other stakeholders in a one day workshop held before this years Education Ministers Meeting. UNESCO proposes to submit the framework to Forum Education Ministers for endorsement.

12. UNESCO coordinated the development of a draft framework that articulates new thinking in its goal for Education for Sustainable Development for the Pacific, and provides a "strategic big picture views of actions required and complement other regional and national initiatives, particularly MDGs, Education of All, and Literacy Decade Initiatives". It includes three priority areas:

- Formal education initiatives for improved knowledge and understanding to implement sustainable development.
- Community-based activities and training for improved knowledge, understanding and skills to implement sustainable development
- Policy development and partnerships to implement ESD

13. USP has also independently developed a draft overarching conceptual framework for Education for Sustainable Development for mainstreaming ESD concepts into curriculum at all levels using all modalities (Koshy, Mataki et al. 2006). Mainstreaming ESD in USP is expected to involve 'the promotion of knowledge, skills, perspectives, culture and value systems based education by all sections of USP to assist PICS in their national SD aspirations' (p 4). It would cover all levels of training – basic education through PRIDE, undergraduate and post graduate training and research.

14. These three frameworks are at different stages of development and implementation, although each framework uses the same definition of ESD and is

aimed at assisting member countries in their national sustainable development aspirations. Each organization has, however, approached the challenge of increasing capacity to help achieve sustainable development from its own perspective and mandate.

15. All three target individuals for ESD, and all three need to be strengthened to also explicitly address institutional or systemic capacity development to meet the needs of member countries.

A Common Approach

16. A common approach and perhaps a single regional framework that combines and builds on these three similar but different ESD frameworks is necessary given the need for the Pacific to work together as a region. From the point of view of the Forum Secretariat, any such framework that carries the name of the Pacific should fully recognize existing Visions and Action Plans of the Pacific Leaders (i.e., the Pacific Plan and the Forum Basic Education Plan of Action). The implementation of these Pacific policy frameworks must clearly be a priority for any such Pacific ESD Framework as well.

17. Advantages of a common approach and a single regional framework are numerous for member countries as well as for development partners. They include:

- Requiring all the key partners and stakeholders to work together and to minimize duplication and overlaps;
- Providing a single overarching and comprehensive guiding document that can assist member countries to take a holistic, systematic and programmatic approach to develop and implement their own national ESD program of action linked to their national development goals; and
- Giving development partners a common Pacific-owned platform from which to better target, coordinate and appropriately sequence their capacity development assistance to member countries, either through regional mechanisms or bilaterally, thus increasing their aid effectiveness as articulated in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

18. Such an approach and framework could be coordinated through a CROP Working Group mechanism, similar to the manner in which the Forum Basic Education Plan of Action was developed and implemented and monitored.

19. Given the cross cutting nature of ESD, a combined CROP Sustainable Development Working Group, which deals with sustainable development issues, and Human Resource Development Working Group, which deals with education issues, could play the coordinating role. Both these working groups have key representatives from each of the CROP agencies, including USP, as well as NSAs and key development partners. The HRD Working Group also includes UNESCO. Thus a combined SDWG and HRDWG would have representatives of key regional organizations, NSA and UN agencies to take this initiative forward with active involvement of education officials and environment and resource managers from member countries, as well as training officers and technical staff from CROP agencies and NSA representatives and community members.

Recommendations

20. Forum Education Ministers, in noting the existence of three ESD-related regional initiatives and the need for close links to existing Pacific policy frameworks, may wish to:

- (a) Agree on the desirability of taking a coordinated approach to developing a Pacific Regional Framework for Education for Sustainable Development that is closely linked to the Forum Basic Education Plan of Action and the Pacific Plan; and
- (b) Endorse the proposed Pacific Education for Sustainable Development Framework coordinated by UNESCO as a Pacific response to the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development and as a starting point for developing a Pacific Regional Framework for ESD.

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