

Workshop 12: ESD in North-South-South & South-South Partnerships and Development Cooperation

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Introduction

The purpose of the workshop was to facilitate and explore the role of North-South-South partnerships and development cooperation in strengthening Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). To facilitate the discussions four key areas were considered:

- 1) Mapping existing North-South and South-South partnerships,
- 2) Collating lessons learnt,
- 3) Recommendations and tools for strengthening partnerships,
- 4) Initiating new partnerships.

These key areas were guided by the four conference objectives. For continuity, all participants were encouraged to consider the aims, outputs and outcomes of the previous and up-coming conferences as captured in the UNESCO document: *Quality Equity and Sustainable Development: A holistic vision through UNESCO's four World Education Conferences 2008-2009*. At the end of the workshop the following key recommendations were extracted from the four areas of discussions.

Conference Objective 1: To Highlight the Essential Contribution of Education for Sustainable Development to All of Education and to Achieving Quality Education

Why is ESD relevant?

In discussing the relevance of Education for Sustainable Development in partnerships and networks, ESD was seen as a very good tool to address the issues relating to development cooperation in general. ESD was important seeing that the partners and networks tended to be multi-sectoral and multi-organisational, including participants from formal and non-formal education. The North-South-South partnerships were seen to be vital in contributing to the understanding and appreciation of multicultural diversity. They also provided a deeper understanding of the various contexts because they provided direct human communication. Part of the contribution by partnerships and networks was that they brought lessons and examples

that were embedded in real-life and real-time joint activities. From the discussions a number of partnerships and networks were identified.

Conference Objective 2: To Promote International Exchange on ESD What can we learn from each other?

In any partnership and collaboration, trust is very important! In discussing what we can learn from each other, it was reiterated that we need to remove the stereotyping of the North-South-South relationships which mainly reduces the partnerships to an exchange of money from North to South. We need to establish these relationships with an orientation of mutual benefits. In order to support that we need to appreciate the different understandings of ESD, acknowledge that just as there are disparities, there are also many similarities in what we see as sustainable development. Linked to the diversity above is the diversity in what we see as priority issues.

Well-designed partnerships and networks in ESD do provide an opportunity for inclusiveness in addressing a range of issues in an integrated and holistic way: these include water, peace, education, climate change etc.

We also have to look at the various constructs of partnerships, from non-formal networks to structured, funded cooperation. Currently there are non-formal but effective networks like the World Environmental Education Congress network that started in 2003. However, there are also formal, and sometimes bilateral arrangements which are project-based. An example is the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) / Southern African Development Community (SADC) cooperation on the Regional Environmental Education Programme. German GTZ through Inwent is starting a funded partnership project with India, South Africa and Mexico with the aim of training for better ESD mainstreaming. UN Universities supports the Regional Centres of Expertise; IUCN Commission on Education and Communication, and many others.



We should aim to connect different networks from different levels on different topics so as to create a suitable context of how to share resources in all world regions. These include institution to institution, programme to programme and various other combinations. Stakeholders have to work together at project level. It is important that we find means of making the networks and partnerships inclusive so that there is a grounded understanding of needs and therefore locally embedded solutions. Networks are very important tools (intergenerational partnerships etc.) for ESD and strengthening quality of education. It was recognised that NGOs tend to build bridges between the communities and the governments.

Conference Objective 3: To Carry out a Stock-taking of DESD Implementation **What have we achieved so far, what are the lessons learnt?**

Workshop participants emphasised that sustainable funding is required in order to not only set up partnerships but also to maintain them. Partnerships and networks that have worked well either need to be well resourced and can thus afford project-based interaction, or have energetic vibrant dedicated drivers who are either volunteers or paid by institutions. While the strong need for funding was central to the debates, it was also mentioned that in some cases it is possible to have effective networks that do not require intensive funding. Those usually work with different relevant media and tools like radio, Skype, Facebook, etc., to reach out to the larger public.

Another lesson learnt is that face-to-face networks and partnerships tend to work best, especially when they are project-based. There is a need to facilitate the creation of mechanisms for inclusion of all stakeholders in the creation of knowledge and design of programmes.

Workshop participants voiced some frustration over Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives (CSR); they were seen as no more than advertising. However, the one representative from the corporate sector present at the workshop also pointed to the fact that enterprises would often like to contribute but seldom know how, and are of course looking for well-grounded projects and programmes from credible institutions. Multi-national companies are more than interested to cooperate with the relevant players and are happy to provide funding.

The media were highlighted as another key partner in ESD. However, it was stressed that there is an enor-

mous lack of capacity in all types of media – print and electronic – regarding Sustainable Development topics and Education for Sustainable Development. Hence, there was a call for investment in media training and the establishment of respective partnerships with a view to effective engagement with ESD.

Finally, it was emphasised that there is a need to strength collaboration among young people worldwide.

Conference Objective 4: To Develop Strategies for the Way Ahead

Where do we want to go from here?

The way forward was divided into two parts: the commitment of the participants and recommendations for UNESCO.

Key Recommendations:

The recommendations were categorised into general and specific for UNESCO

General:

- We all seek funding for creating and maintaining North-South-South partnerships and networks for them to become sustainable;
- We all ensure that the benefits of North-South-South partnerships and networks are mutual and that there must be an interest from all the partners involved;
- We involve policy-makers and experts in projects and partnerships so that the lessons learnt and innovations may be mainstreamed;
- North-South-South partnerships, networks, and collaboration should be mainstreamed into the design of all ESD programmes and projects;
- We all make an effort to share information about what we do in our various North-South-South networks.

Specific to UNESCO

UNESCO should support the sustainability of partnerships and networks by:

- Establishing a portal with the database of the partnerships / networks working in ESD and making this database accessible;
- Raising awareness about the global compact in order to create opportunities for partners in the private sector.

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