

## Workshop 4: Education for Sustainable Development and Disaster Risk Reduction: Building Disaster-Resilient Societies

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### Introduction

The aim of the workshop was to stress the link and contribution of Disaster Risk Reduction Education (DRRE) to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by raising the audience's awareness of the mutually supportive nature of both concepts, as presented in the workshop background document. The session was divided into five parts: advocacy to policy-makers, capacity-building, formal education, non-formal education, and educational infrastructures. Each session was introduced and moderated by a facilitator, outlining key concerns and achievements as well as major challenges ahead, followed by a brainstorming discussion for each session.

### 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?

Disasters represent major obstacles to achieving UN Millennium Development Goal 1 for poverty reduction. Reducing disaster risks and their impact has thus gradually become an important development issue in its own right. Since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, disaster reduction has been recognised as an integral component of sustainable development (Agenda 21, Chapter 3). The relevance of the cross-sectoral nature of disaster risk reduction to achieving essential elements of sustainable development (poverty reduction, environmental protection) was reaffirmed in 2002 on the occasion of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The linkage between disaster risk education and sustainable development has also become more and more visible on other international agendas.<sup>5</sup>

The Hyogo Framework for Action's (2005-2015) Thematic Area 3 focuses on strengthening networks and promoting dialogue and cooperation among disaster experts, technical and scientific specialists, planners and other stakeholders to build an overall culture of safety and resilience through knowledge sharing and education. In particular, it promotes the integration of disaster risk reduction into formal, non-formal, informal education and training activities. In 2005, the then United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, emphasised: "Our biggest challenge in this new century is to take an idea that sounds abstract – sustainable development – and turn it into reality for all the world's people". To turn sustainable development into reality, education is an important process which can produce young professionals who can provide important tools and methodologies to supply expertise. For the enhancement of sustainable development, disaster risk reduction must become an integral part of education.

### Conference Objective 2: To Promote International Exchange on ESD

#### What can we learn from each other?

It was agreed that **advocacy and education** should focus on vulnerability reduction and how to build the resilience of communities and nations to disasters, focus on a specific local context and be locally internalised so as to achieve a long-term and sustainable culture of safety worldwide. The positive aspects of risks should also be taken into consideration whilst a cost-benefit analysis of DRRE and its impact should be developed. Advocacy should target appropriate agents for change, depending on actual needs and demands, and should have specific entry points, such as climate change processes to reach higher political commitment for disaster risk reduction. The major role played by the media in the area of education, information and experience-sharing was also strongly reaffirmed.

<sup>5</sup> WCESD Concept Note: Learning to live with risk- disaster risk reduction to encourage education for sustainable development, March 2009.



**Capacity-building** should assess the existing capacities, building on context-specific local knowledge and wisdom. It should contain practical examples and share experiences linked to disaster risk reduction implementation. There are specific means to enhance capacity-building programmes. While it is important to focus on a single coherent capacity-building strategy, context-specific approaches are also required. Thus, capacity-building needs a balanced mix of global and regional initiatives, as well as locally customised and blended learning programmes.

The session on **formal education** was introduced as an expanded notion of access to quality education for all. A three-tiered model of basic life skills and quality education was presented.

- Formal education, an ideal of the universal provision of education based on life skills for all children and audiences, as called for in international commitments. Quality interventions at this level are structured;
- Other curricula-based interventions are possible and are offered outside the formal school curricula;
- Interventions based on life skills depend on addressing the specific aspect of competing risks or the need for a target population.

The **non-formal education** section began with examples of vulnerability, development and the gap between knowledge and practice. Three key issues were pointed out as the core reasons for existing gaps in the sustainable development process. Firstly, the cause and effect relationship between disasters and development has been ignored. Secondly, disasters are usually seen in the context of emergency response, and thirdly, the concept of sustainable development seems to be overlooking the aspect of "Safety".

Finally, the **educational infrastructure** session highlighted the urgent need to ensure that all education community centres, schools, universities and all training and learning establishments offer a safe environment through proper school safety initiatives, should we wish to meet the objective of UNESCO's Education for All initiative of bringing all children to school by 2015. Experience of past disasters has shown that the resources spent on teaching students are squandered the day after a disaster, when all efforts are concentrated on finding the children under the collapsed infrastructures and piles of rubble. This destroys all sustainability efforts that were aimed at, in addition to wiping out the next generation of educated experts

who would have been the pillars of Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Development.

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

The Hyogo Framework for Action, adopted by 186 United Nations Member States, emphasizes education and public awareness as key priorities for action to achieve effective disaster risk reduction. Global and regional task forces have been set up and a UN thematic platform on knowledge and education led by UN focal points (UNICEF, UNESCO, UN ISDR) bringing together a wide range of partners, including governments, civil society and academic institutions, have taken pro-active roles in promoting the recognition of risk reduction education as a top priority of national education agendas. High level advocacy initiatives, policy guidelines as well as specific tools and methodologies including a Golden Library on Disaster Risk Education Materials have been developed to guide education policy-makers in integrating disaster risk reduction into the national education agenda, school curricula and higher education, and in implementing school safety initiatives.

### **Conference Objective 4: To Develop Strategies for the Way Ahead** **Where do we want to go from here?**

In conclusion, the workshop participants agreed that "Disaster Risk Reduction Education is one of the pillars for achieving ESD and should be considered as a priority area for action to implement the second half of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development". To achieve this goal, and to enhance the synergy between ESD and DRR education activities, policy advocacy, capacity-building, formal and non-formal education (including school as well as higher education in DRR), and safe educational infrastructures should represent key elements and entry points. In particular, specific emphasis should be given to localization and customization, respecting cultural aspects, traditional knowledge and wisdom. The visualisation and links to everyday life can be effective tools for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Education and ESD. The collaborative action programme of DRR and ESD should be included in the mid-term review of the HFA, followed by targeted outcomes by the end of ESD and the Hyogo Framework of Action. It was proposed that "Zero mortality of school children by preventable disasters by 2015" should be included in the ESD target.

Partnership-based local projects and their proper evaluation also need to be re-emphasised, and finally, DRR in ESD needs to have institutional and judicial arguments. To enhance the institutional base of DRR-ESD linkages, it is urged that the respective educational ministries and focal agencies should undertake and implement the Hyogo Framework for Action (Priority 3) as a key policy tool and one of the national education agenda's key priorities.

Finally, there is a clear understanding that there is no competition between agencies, concepts, ideas or between DRR and ESD. Both concepts are mutually supportive and collaboration of efforts between all shall allow to reach their respective objectives. After all, we are all striving to build a **sustainable** and **resilient** community in which we all can live with equal opportunities for survival. We all have the right to be aware of the risk we live in, thus Disaster Risk Reduction Education is a vital priority in the overall ESD context.

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