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# RCE Bulletin

O P I N I O N E D I T O R I A L

## Education for Sustainable Development: a major challenge in Asia and the Pacific

The Asia and Pacific region is vast and diverse – geographically, culturally, socially and economically. It is home to more than half of the world's population. While it has three of the most populous and largest countries in land area, it also has two of the least populated. The region has thirteen of the least developed countries, twelve landlocked countries, and seventeen small-island developing countries. More than 70 percent of the population lives on less than a dollar a day. By the year 2025, it is expected that the number of mega-cities will have risen to a score, and more than half of the population will live in these cities. The enormous growing population is expected to use more natural resources to achieve economic growth, while imperiling moral social values and degrading the environment.

The challenge facing Asia and the Pacific in Education for Sustainable Development is gargantuan. The concept is by far not generally well understood – not only to the citizenry at large but also to knowledge and development institutions. It is therefore imperative that the notion of Sustainable Development be inculcated in peoples' mind and embedded in their character. The lack of understanding on this moral imperative renders it necessary to widen and strengthen awareness campaigns in the region, especially with the involvement of youth who are the future leaders and agents of change.

Access to basic quality education, which is one of the main goals of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), is profoundly problematic in Asia and the Pacific. In the poorer countries of the region, there is a dearth of schools and scarcity of qualified teachers as well as lack of

essential school paraphernalia. Since access is already problematic *per se*, let alone quality of educational facilities and curricula at all levels, the task of introducing transformative education based on the notion of sustainability becomes a gigantic task, and achieving the goal remains extremely remote.

There are also problems within the government bureaucracy of many countries. More often than not, communication channels among relevant government agencies, not to mention other stakeholder institutions, are ineffective. This situation makes national efforts towards education reform rather disconcerted and uncoordinated. While some countries are attempting to address ESD in a concerted way, for example by way of integrating the notion into the national agenda via the national development plan, many countries if not most, remain passive. This phenomenon is expected, especially in lesser developed countries where the main national preoccupation is feeding the population, as well as securing peace and order, and providing shelter to the populace.

The aforementioned challenges are among the vital ones that need to be addressed. These challenges are presumably present in other parts of the world; but the situation might even be more prevalent taking Asia and the Pacific Region as a whole due the vastness and diversity in character of the countries in the region.

By Mario T. Tabucanon, Visiting Professor and Regional RCE Coordinator in Asia and the Pacific.

## ESD graduate course in China

Beijing Normal University, the core member organization of RCE Beijing, has initiated graduate classes in ESD last year. Twenty-nine graduate students – teachers and heads of primary and middle schools – will take six courses over two years on an introduction to sustainable development, ESD theories, implementation guide and activity design for ESD, evaluation, ESD practice in schools and school management, and curriculum based on ESD. Lessons are held every Saturday. A similar class has also started in the Changping district of Beijing, in cooperation with the Changping Education Committee, for 44 students.

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## RCE Lucknow organizes Environment Days



*Poster design competition for school students in Lucknow*

RCE Lucknow, as part of its ongoing activities to raise awareness on natural resource management issues, has organized 4 environment-related days for 15 schools in the city. Activities have ranged from poster creating competitions to quiz competitions, interactive sessions, open discussions and expert lectures. The programmes were held in collaboration with the schools' eco-clubs, the Science Centre, the Environment Department, the Lucknow Zoo and a local media partner.

The RCE also organized a state level capacity building programme for the State Department of Education, in which 180 master trainers from 65 districts participated. The focus of the training programme was the orientation of trainers towards ESD issues to ensure a safe environment at school. Issues such as health and sanitation, disaster management in schools, adolescent education, quality education and overall well-being of school children were discussed. The

four-day training programme was organized in five batches over February and March.

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## Networking among Asian ESD NGOs

Since its establishment in 2003, the Japan Council on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD-J) has called for developing ESD NGO networks throughout the Asia-Pacific countries. The Council has now initiated a 3-year project, Asia Good ESD Practice Project (AGEPP) (2006-2008), funded by the Toyota Environmental Activities Grant Program. ESD-J and 6 NGOs from China, India, Indonesia, Korea, Nepal and the Philippines, have been researching ESD case studies deeply rooted in Asian communities and the ones collected so far have been published online in English, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean and Nepali. In April 2007, the ESD-J held the second AGEPP meeting in Korea with the participation of those NGOs looking for better ways of introducing good practices on ESD.

**For more information**

**On ESD-J :** <http://www.esd-j.org/en>

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## R&D at the RCE East Midlands

RCE East Midlands' partnership has now grown to about 40 organizations. Six working groups have now met covering all levels of formal education (schools, further and higher education) as well as the non-formal/ informal education of youth, adults and business employees.

The higher education and schools groups have organized well-attended conferences, while the higher education group have developed a large funding bid with all the 10 regional universities to research and develop corporate social responsibility through their campus management, curriculum development and community links. The schools group have obtained government funding to develop case studies on sustainable schools. The further education group have also obtained funding to map regional activity in the 28 further education colleges and the nine adult education services in the region, as well as help develop a model for regional support across the country.

Full report at [www.rceem.org.uk](http://www.rceem.org.uk)

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## ESD actions in Greater Sendai

RCE Greater Sendai in Japan, has designated June and October as ESD months for the region and introduced various activities for the public. Activities will be implemented by local governments, citizens, schools and businesses and include;

- A workshop on creating a sustainable rural mountain area, to be held at Kurihara City on 2 June
- Workshop "Sustainable Future Project" to be held in Sendai City on 16 June
- An Environmental Education Promotion Meeting in Kesenuma City on 18 June
- Citizens' Forum on Technology for Environmental Co-existence, and Forum on Living Organisms in Rice Fields, to be held at Osaki City on 1 July
- Forum on Education for International Understanding to be held at the Miyagi University of Education on 11 July

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*The Greater Sendai RCE Steering Committee*



## Activities of RCE Penang

The first RCE Penang round-table on "Deteriorating World Ecosystem: Mainstreaming Awareness and Building Network for Local Collaborative Actions" was held late last year to explore potential local and regional activities related to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

In April this year, RCE Penang together with the Centre for Education, Training and Research in Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CETREE) hosted a 2-day workshop on the Logical Framework Approach (LFA). Participants learnt ways to use the LFA in sustainability-related projects,

particularly on identifying ESD indicators, university-community partnerships, creating sustainable universities and on developing ESD curricula.

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## RCE Barcelona's Visions for Change

"21 Visions for Change" is one of RCE Barcelona's first initiatives to explore competencies, motivations and aspirations of leading agents for change working in Barcelona. Twenty-one sustainability entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds, working in different sectors were interviewed and their reflections on sustainability and education have been published and presented as one of the City Council's Environmental Education Guides late last year.

A course on Strategic Management for Sustainable Universities was organized in Peru last year for 45 University rectors, Vice-Rectors, deans and staff. One of the criteria to obtain a diploma from the course was to implement concrete strategies or actions within the participants' institutions within 3 months of finishing the course. 65% of participants achieved this. The course was organized by UPC, a focal organization of RCE Barcelona, in collaboration with Foro Ciudades para la Vida, a Peruvian NGO.

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## Environmental Technology Fair in Incheon

The Incheon Environmental Technology Fair 2007, hosted by Incheon Regional Environmental Technology Development Centre, was held for three days in April. Over a hundred environment-related companies and organizations participated in the fair. A scientific symposium and forum on the environment was held and new environmental technologies introduced. Numbering over ten thousand, visitors included researchers, officials, NGOs, citizens and students.

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## RCE launched in Saskatchewan

A 2-day public event was held on March 1 and 2 to launch the RCE Saskatchewan in Canada. Dignitaries and speakers including the Premier of the Province, the Lt. Governor, cabinet ministers, mayors of the three cities of the RCE – Regina, Craik and Saskatoon, and the Secretary General of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO were among the people who attended the ceremony held at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum in Regina.

“RCE Saskatchewan will create a unique opportunity to move the province along the path towards sustainability,” said Prof. Jon Gillies, Director of the Centre for Sustainable Communities at the University of Regina, on the occasion.

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## RCE Bogor launched

The launch ceremony of RCE Bogor, Indonesia, was held on 6 February at the SEAMEO BIOTROP Campus, which acts as the host of the RCE’s Secretariat. Since its launch, the RCE has held several stakeholders’ meetings. A pilot project for the cleaning and greening of the SEAMEO BIOTROP Campus has also been initiated.

In other activities, 26 participants from government agencies, private enterprises, and the farming community attended an agribusiness workshop focusing on floriculture, held on 1 May. Thirteen school teachers from different levels participated in a training event on organic farming in school gardens on 10 May 2007.

Upcoming activities of the RCE include training in managing a digital library for schools and universities, and a workshop for high school biology teachers in ESD curriculum design.

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## Launching seminar of RCE Curitiba

RCE Curitiba, Brazil, was launched on 27 March with the participation of local authorities and ‘triple propeller’ representatives (university, industry and government). The event included a visit to the Science Park, one of the RCE’s partners. Meetings of the steering

committee have been held following the event and the RCE introduced to the local community at an Ideas Fair at the University of Londrina. RCE Curitiba-Paraná will have an exhibit at the “Olympiad of Knowledge”, to be held in parallel to the Innovation Fair and the National Metalmechanics Exhibition in October. Later this year, the RCE will also co-ordinate the Scientific Committee in a pre-event geared towards the ECO-Iguaçu-2008 international forum to be held in Foz do Iguaçu City.

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## Greater Sudbury launches RCE initiative

The City of Greater Sudbury took the first steps to deliver on its designation earlier this year as an RCE. A few weeks ago, over 150 area residents—representing community, professional and business organizations; health and environmental groups; educational institutions and governments—took part in day-long discussions aimed at making Greater Sudbury a more sustainable community.

The ideas collected during the session will be reviewed in June by a group of community leaders drawn from the city’s economic, social and environmental sectors that will be prioritizing a series of proposals aimed at addressing the community’s four priority areas: (1) active living and healthy lifestyles, (2) the natural environment, (3) civic engagement and social capital, and (4) economic growth.

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*RCE launch in the City of Greater Sudbury*



### Call for contributions to new magazine

RCE Barcelona invites contributions to its magazine **Education and Sustainability**, started this year to promote good practice in learning for sustainability. The magazine will be published twice a year in English, Spanish and Catalan.

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### Leadership Programme

Bangkok, Thailand, 22-27 July 2007

Applications are invited for a 5-day intensive programme targeted at future business leaders who want to engage in developing private sector strategies for sustainable development. The event is co-organized by UNU-IAS.

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### Second international RCE Conference

Penang, Malaysia, 7-8 August 2007

The conference is organized by UNU-IAS in its role as the RCE Global Service Centre. Representatives from RCEs are invited to participate and present their activities, achievements and plans. Other relevant issues for RCEs will also be discussed.

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### World Innovation Forum

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 10-12 August 2007

The Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education will host the forum in collaboration with the Universiti Sains Malaysia and RCE Penang. Latest issues on technological, sociological and research trends on innovation for sustainable development will be discussed.

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### International RCE Forum

Beijing, China, 15 – 18 August 2007

This event, organized by RCE Beijing, aims to share information and experiences of RCEs and to identify major challenges that RCEs face.

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### Conference on Sustainable City Development

Malmö, Sweden, 12-14 September 2007

Registration is now open for the conference which will include 18 workshops and 10 study tours. The conference is aimed at those working with sustainable urban development in private sector, universities and

public bodies in Europe.

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### ECO-Iguaçu-2008 Forum

Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil, May 2008

RCE Curitiba-Paraná and the Municipality of Foz do Iguaçu – Paraná State invite RCE representatives to participate in the ECO-Iguaçu-2008 Forum – the First World Forum for Cities Sustainability, and to interact with Ministers and State Secretaries for the Environment from all over the world.

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