



RCE Project Trends during the Global Action Programme on ESD (2015-2019)

Dr. Philip Vaughter and Dr. Fumiko Noguchi



REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXPERTISE
ON EDUCATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ACKNOWLEDGED BY



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-IAS

Institute for the Advanced Study
of Sustainability

SUPPORTED BY



Ministry of the Environment

Introduction

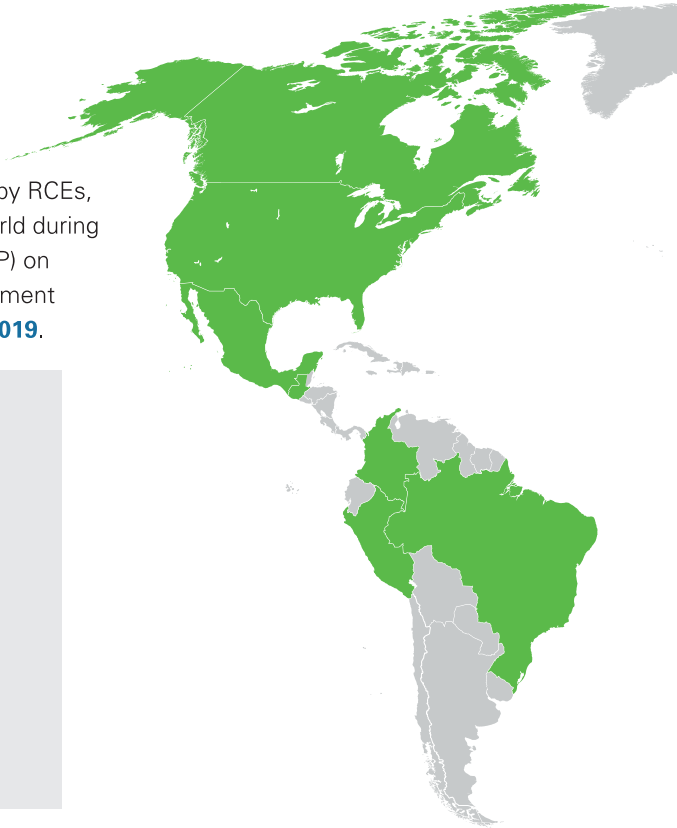
A total of **479** projects conducted by RCEs, across **46** countries across the world during the Global Action Programme (GAP) on Education for Sustainable Development were analysed between **2015** to **2019**.

479

Projects conducted

46

Countries across the world



SDGs

As all RCE activities are focused around education, all projects were tied to **SDG 4 (Quality Education)**, specifically **Target 4.7** on Education for Sustainable Development.

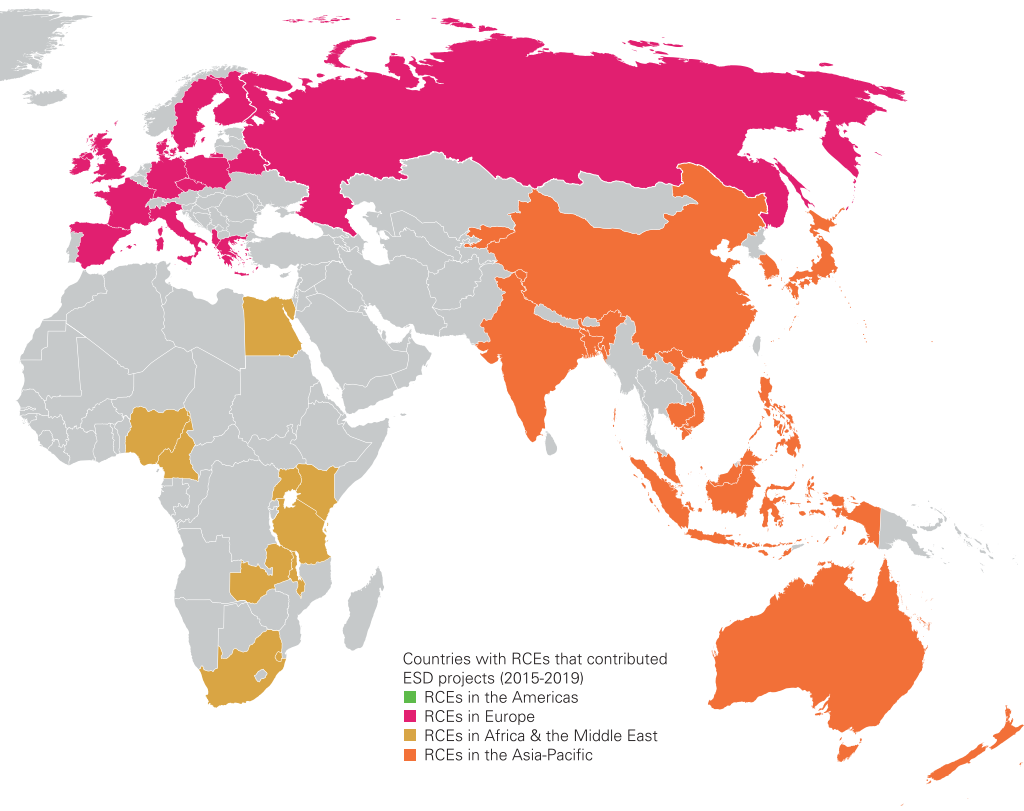
The ESD initiatives created by RCEs during the GAP span the full 17 SDGs, however they particularly focused on:

SDG 13 (Climate Action);

SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production); and

SDG 15 (Life on Land).





Target Audience

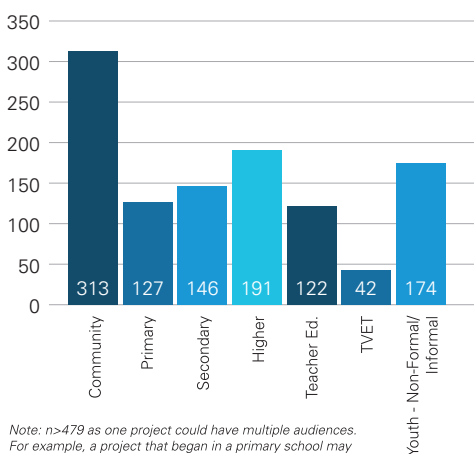
RCE projects were conducted in a wide range of educational settings, targeting a variety of audiences including non-formal/informal community and youth education, as well as formal school systems across primary, secondary, and higher education.

65% had a community education component

40% had a higher education component

36% had a non-formal/informal youth education component

RCE projects of Global RCE Network by level of educational setting (2015-2019)



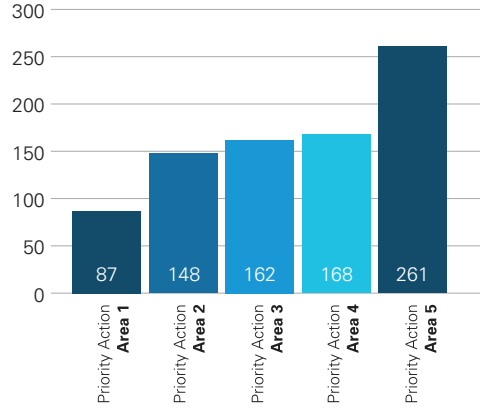
Note: n>479 as one project could have multiple audiences. For example, a project that began in a primary school may have a second phase where the students then educate the community.

GAP Priority Action Areas

Over half (**54%**) of RCE projects in the Global RCE Network conducted over the period of the **Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD**, had a focus on **GAP Priority Action Area #5 – Accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level.**

(Note: n>479 as one project could target multiple Priority Action Areas. For example, a project that had a teacher-training component – Priority Action Area 3 – could also have a community education component – Priority Action Area 5).

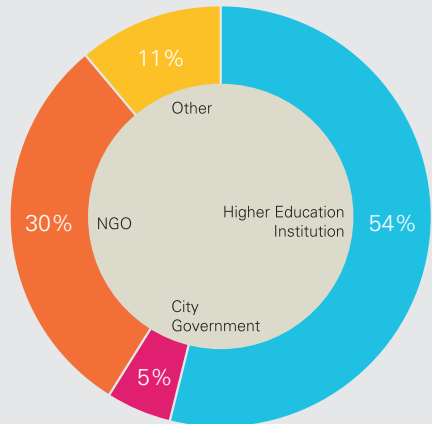
RCE projects of Global RCE Network by GAP Priority Action Area (2015-2019)



Leading Institution

In the majority of projects, **54% of RCE projects were led by higher education institutions.**

RCE projects of Global RCE Network by leading institution (2015-2019)



Themes

RCE projects were conducted across a wide range of themes:

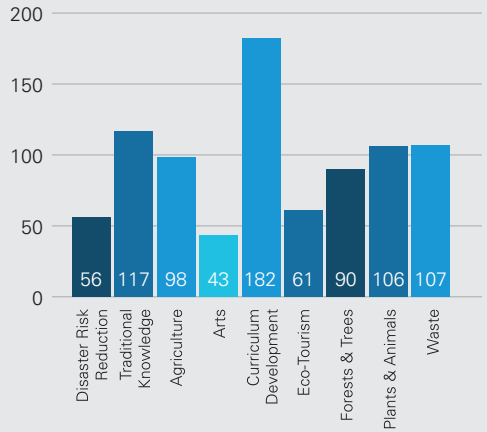
38%

of RCE projects had a curriculum component, therefore other educators could take the project and adapt it to their own classes and communities

29%

of RCE projects had a traditional knowledge component, where knowledge from Indigenous peoples was incorporated into the learning

RCE projects of the Global RCE Network by thematic tag(s) of the project (2015-2019)



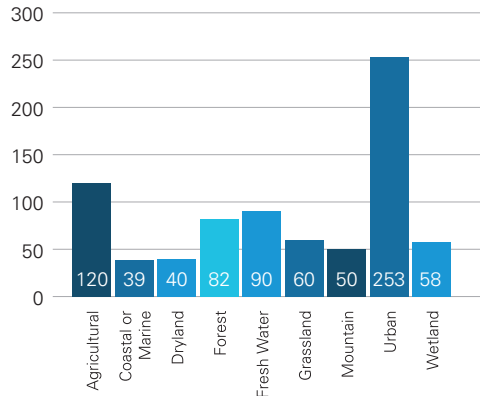
(Note: n>479 as one project could include multiple thematic tags. For example, a project that had a traditional knowledge component could also be focused on the conservation and care of certain animal and plant species).

Ecosystem

The majority of RCE projects had an **urban** environment setting. However, RCE projects also took place in other environments, such as **agricultural, fresh water**, and **forest** environments.

(Note: n>479 as one project could include multiple ecosystem settings. For example, a project that was taught in an urban setting might have also brought learners to a wetlands setting to show the link between freshwater supply and demand for human populations).

RCE projects of Global RCE Network by eco-system setting (2015-2019)



Americas

During the GAP, RCEs in the Americas worked on a total of **163** projects from across **7** countries in the region.

163

Projects

7

Countries in the region

SDGs

The ESD initiatives in this region were particularly focused on **SDG 11** (Sustainable Cities and Communities), **SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production) and **SDG 3** (Good Health and Well-Being).



Target Audience

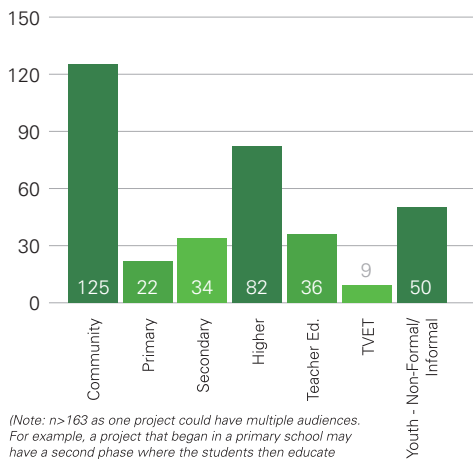
RCE projects were conducted in a wide range of educational settings, targeting a variety of audiences including non-formal/informal community and youth education, as well as formal school systems across primary, secondary, and higher education.

77% had a community education component

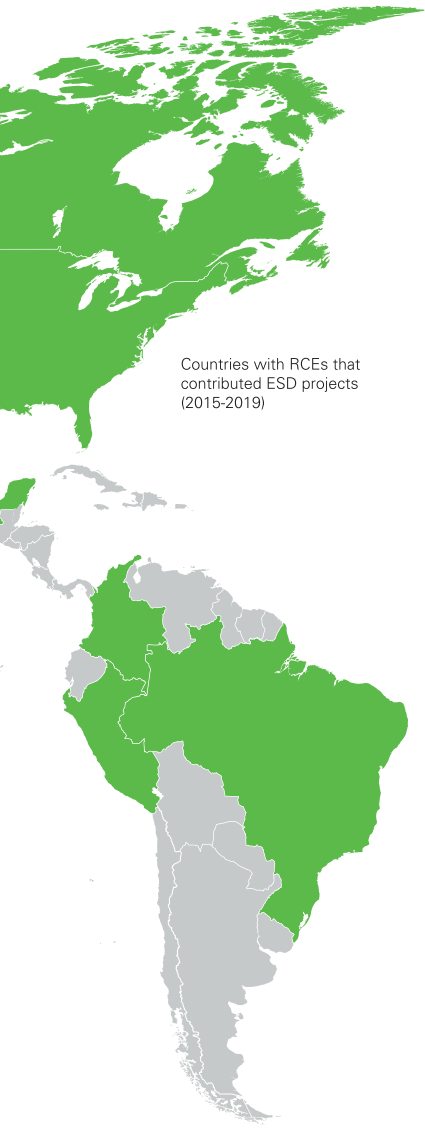
50% had a higher education component

31% had a non-formal/informal youth education component

RCE projects of the Americas by level of educational setting (2015-2019)



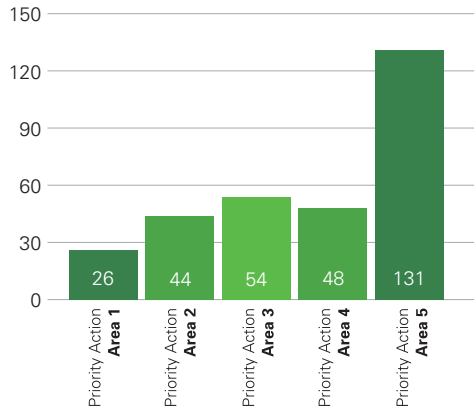
(Note: n>163 as one project could have multiple audiences. For example, a project that began in a primary school may have a second phase where the students then educate the community).



GAP Priority Action Areas

80% of RCE projects in the Americas during the GAP had a focus on **GAP Priority Action Area #5 – Accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level.**

RCE projects of the Americas by GAP Priority Action Area (2015-2019)

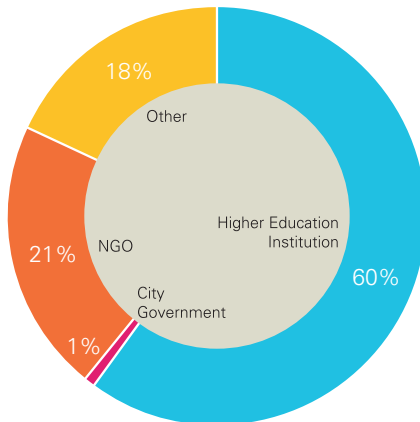


(Note: n > 163 as one project could target multiple Priority Action Areas. For example, a project that had a teacher-training component – Priority Action Area 3 – could also have a community education component – Priority Action Area 5).

Leading Institution

Over half (**60%**) of RCE projects in the Americas during the GAP were led by **higher education institutions.**

RCE projects of the Americas by leading institution (2015-2019)



Europe

Within Europe, a total of **70** projects across **16** countries in Europe were analysed from RCEs in this region of the world between 2015 and 2019.

70

Projects

16

Countries in the region

SDGs

The ESD initiatives in this region were particularly focused on **SDG 13** (Climate Action), **SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production) and **SDG 15** (Life on Land).



Target Audience

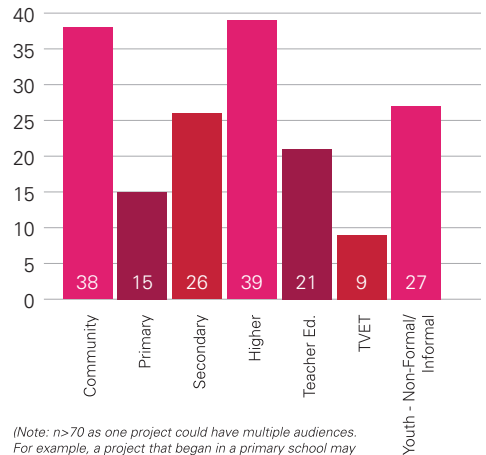
RCE projects were conducted in a wide range of educational settings, targeting a variety of audiences including non-formal/informal community and youth education, as well as formal school systems across primary, secondary, and higher education. Europe was the one region of the world where the majority of RCE projects were conducted in higher education settings, not community settings.

56% had a higher education component

54% had a community education component

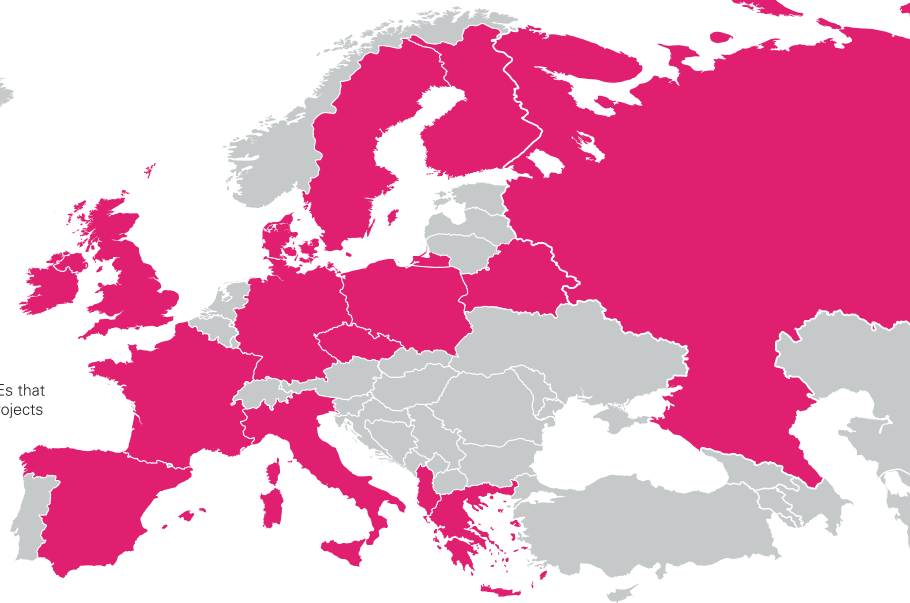
39% had a non-formal/informal youth education component

RCE projects of Europe by level of educational setting (2015-2019)



(Note: n>70 as one project could have multiple audiences. For example, a project that began in a primary school may have a second phase where the students then educate the community).

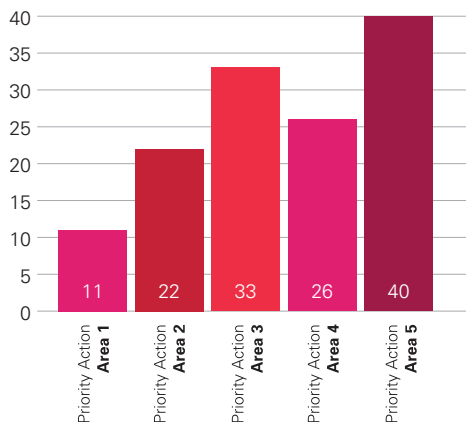
Countries with RCEs that contributed ESD projects (2015-2019)



GAP Priority Action Areas

While community education (**GAP Priority Action Area 5 – Accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level**) still played a predominant role in the European RCEs during the GAP, nearly half (**47%**) of RCE projects in Europe during the GAP had a focus on **GAP Priority Action Area #3 – Teacher Training**.

RCE projects of Europe by GAP Priority Action Area (2015-2019)

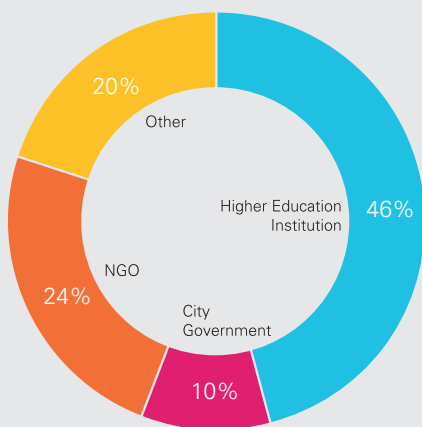


(Note: n>70 as one project could target multiple Priority Action Areas. For example, a project that had a teacher-training component – Priority Action Area 3 – could also have a community education component – Priority Action Area 5).

Leading Institution

Less than half (**46%**) of RCE projects in Europe during the GAP were led by **higher education institutions**. However, **10%** of RCE projects were led by **city governments**.

RCE projects of Europe by leading institution (2015-2019)



Asia-Pacific

167 Projects
13 Countries in the region

During the GAP, RCEs in the Asia-Pacific worked on a total of **167** projects across **13** countries in the region, with **66** from **Malaysia**, **34** from **India** and **20** from **Australia**.

SDGs

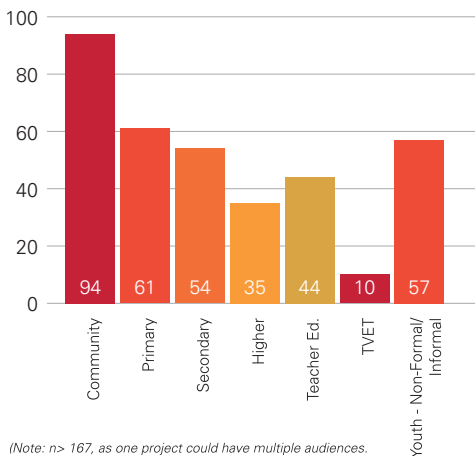
The ESD initiatives in this region were particularly focused on **SDG 12** (Responsible Consumption and Production), **SDG 13** (Climate Action), and **SDG 6** (Clean Water and Sanitation).



Target Audience

RCE projects were conducted in a wide range of educational settings, targeting diverse audiences including non-formal and informal local communities, schools, and youth education.

RCE projects of the Asia-Pacific by level of educational setting (2015-2019)



(Note: n> 167, as one project could have multiple audiences. Some activities may have been conducted by connecting different educational modes and settings, overarching formal, non-formal education and informal education through action-oriented activities, and connecting school, university and community organisations.)

27% had a community education component

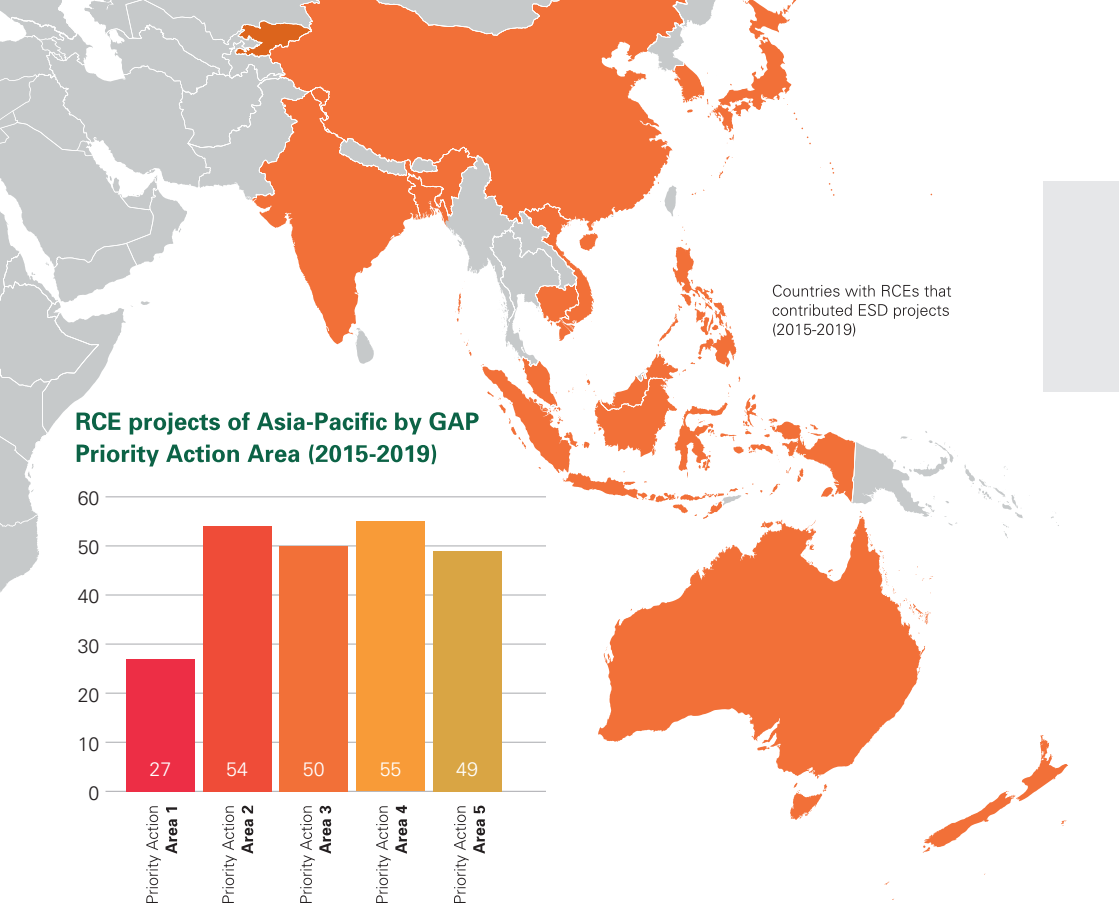
32% had a primary and secondary education component

16% had a non-formal/informal youth component

These activities are often conducted by connecting different educational modes and settings such as formal education and local community development.

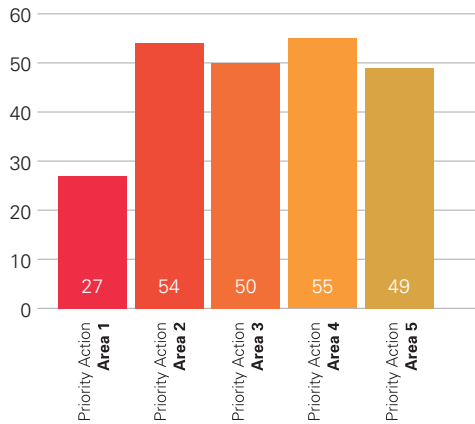
GAP Priority Action Areas

RCEs in the Asia-Pacific had a focus on **GAP Priority Action Areas 2-5** evenly, around **20%** each. This indicates RCEs in this region take a community-based approach to their activities linking different educational settings and working with diverse stakeholders.



Countries with RCEs that contributed ESD projects (2015-2019)

RCE projects of Asia-Pacific by GAP Priority Action Area (2015-2019)



(Note: n>167 as one project could target multiple Priority Action Areas. For example, a project that had a teacher-training component – Priority Action Area 3 – could also have a community education component – Priority Action Area 5).

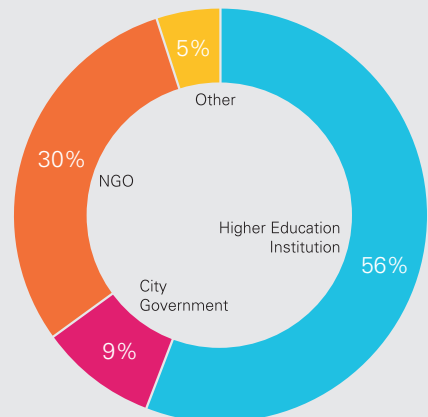
Leading Institution

Over half (56%) of RCE projects during the GAP were led by higher education institutions (this indicates higher education in this region is a key actor for ESD within local communities).

Youth is a key target audience – Combining formal, informal and non-formal education projects shows that over half (**53%**) of RCE projects during the GAP generally had a youth focus.

9% of RCE activities in the Asia-Pacific were implemented by city governments.

RCE projects of Asia-Pacific by leading institution (2015-2019)



Africa & Middle East

Within the region of Africa & the Middle East, a total of **79** projects across **10** countries were analysed, with **29** from Nigeria and **18** from Kenya.

79

Projects

10

Countries in the region

SDGs

The ESD initiatives in this region were particularly focused on **SDG 13** (Climate Action), **SDG 15** (Life on Land), and **SDG 1** (No Poverty). **SDG 15** and **SDG 1** characterise the sustainability challenges in Africa, including desertification and deforestation that closely link to both causes and results of poverty.



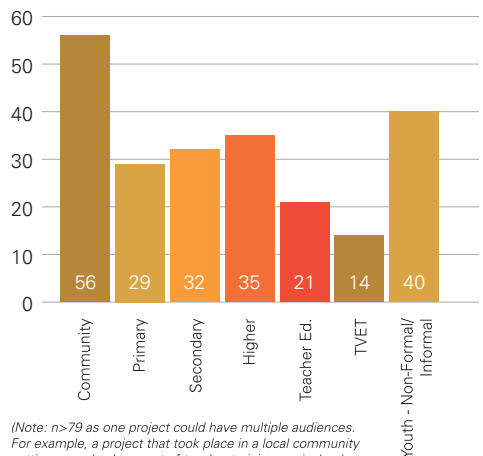
Target Audience

RCE projects were conducted in a wide range of educational settings, targeting diverse audiences including non-formal/informal education and local community development activities, schools, universities, TVET, teacher education and youth education. This is a similar pattern to the Asia-Pacific region.

25% had a community education component

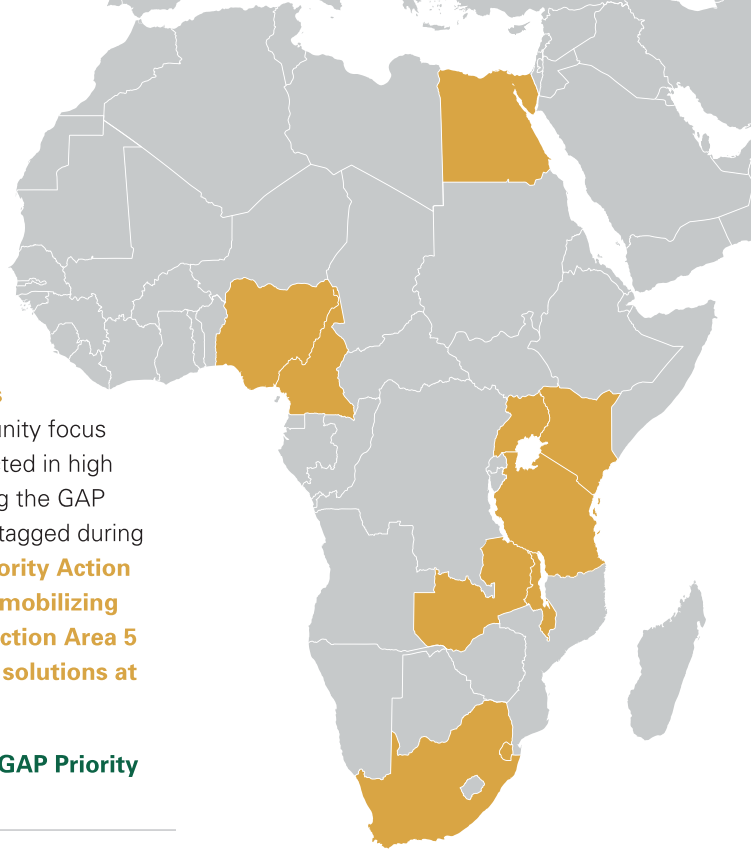
There is a **strong youth focus** (combining formal, non-formal and informal education projects shows that over half (**57%**) of RCE projects during the GAP generally had a youth focus).

RCE projects of Africa by level of educational setting (2015-2019)



(Note: n>79 as one project could have multiple audiences. For example, a project that took place in a local community setting may also be a part of teacher-training curriculum).

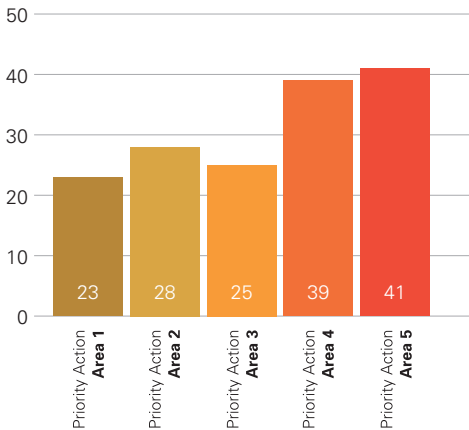
Countries with RCEs that contributed ESD projects (2015-2019)



GAP Priority Action Areas

The youth and local community focus in this region are also reflected in high concentration when viewing the GAP Priority Action Areas RCEs tagged during the GAP, including **GAP Priority Action Area 4 (Empowering and mobilizing youth)** and **GAP Priority Action Area 5 (Accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level)**.

RCE Projects of Africa by GAP Priority Action Area (2015-2019)

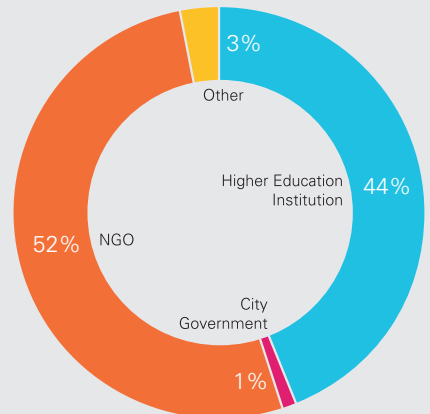


(Note: n>79 as one project could target multiple Priority Action Areas. For example, a project that had a teacher-training component – Priority Action Area 3 – could also have a community education component – Priority Action Area 5).

Leading Institution

52% of RCE projects during the GAP were led by NGOs, with higher education institutions the second major leading organisation in RCEs in this region (**44%**).

RCE projects of Africa by leading institution (2015-2019)



GAP Priority Action Areas

Priority Action Area 1	Advancing policy
Priority Action Area 2	Transforming learning and training environments
Priority Action Area 3	Building capacities of educators and trainers
Priority Action Area 4	Empowering and mobilizing youth
Priority Action Area 5	Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level

Conclusions

- **The Role of Higher Education in ESD Initiatives:** The data shows that higher education institutions took a lead in many ESD activities by linking curriculum to solutions for the sustainability challenges within local communities, and by mobilising diverse stakeholders for implementation.
- **Regional activity patterns are unique,** as each region, country, and city are influenced by socio-cultural, economic and environmental challenges that are unique to their context. However, some activity patterns are similar – most RCE projects linked formal to non-formal education.
- **The majority of RCE projects focused on Climate Action (SDG 13),** indicating the urgent necessity of community-based learning and actions for mitigation and adaptation of this global challenge.
- Not only was **youth a key target audience** that was prioritised in over half of RCE projects, they were also some of the most active participants of the projects – from planning through to implementation. The governance to facilitate the proactive participation and learning of youths is key to the success of ESD moving forward in implementing local solutions to global sustainability challenges.

The projects conducted by RCEs throughout the **Global Action Programme (GAP)** on ESD have highlighted the areas and initiatives undertaken for transformative learning at the local level in pursuit of sustainable development, by utilising the sustainable development capacities, expertise, and resources found within the Global RCE Network.

Acknowledgements

This document should be cited as:

RCE Project Trends during the
Global Action Programme on ESD (2015–2019)
UNU-IAS, Tokyo, Japan, 2020

Authors:

Dr. Philip Vaughter,
Research Fellow, UNU-IAS

Dr. Fumiko Noguchi,
Research Fellow, UNU-IAS

Technical editing and coordination:

Nancy Pham,
Communications Coordinator, UNU-IAS

Design and layout:

Fraser Biscomb

© United Nations University Institute for the
Advanced Study of Sustainability 2020

Published by:

United Nations University, Institute for the
Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)
5-53-70, Jingumae, Shibuya
Tokyo 150-8925, Japan

Email: rceservicecentre@unu.edu

Web: <https://www.rcenetwork.org/portal/>

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNU-IAS concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

The contributing authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of the facts contained in this document and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNU or UNU-IAS and do not commit either the University or the Institute.

To learn more about the ESD Projects conducted by RCEs, as well as the Global RCE Network, please visit –

<https://www.rcenetwork.org/portal>