UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development – Success Stories

The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005-2014) is a global initiative led by UNESCO. It aims at reorienting education worldwide: everyone should have the opportunity to acquire the values, competencies, skills and knowledge that are needed to contribute to sustainable development. Here are some achievements:

- China has designated 1,000 schools as experimental schools for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and has included ESD into the National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020).

- The Centre for Environment Education in India has run the campaign "CO2 Pick Right" on climate change and individual lifestyle choices in over 70,000 schools in India.

- Japan has included ESD into its national curriculum guidelines and promotes ESD through more than 300 UNESCO Associated Schools.

- More than 800 professionals from formal education from 42 countries in Asia and Africa have taken part in training programmes for ESD funded by Sweden and developed a 'change project' that they implement in their home institution.

- The Canadian province of Manitoba is reorienting its schools to address sustainable development. ESD is part of the mission statement of the Ministry of Education of Manitoba.

- Germany has designated over 2,500 projects as good ESD practice and official contributions to the DESD. The Parliament has unanimously supported the DESD.

- The first UNESCO World Conference on ESD in 2009 in Bonn, Germany, was attended by almost 50 ministers and vice-ministers and participants from almost 150 countries.

- Every university in Sweden is required by law to teach sustainable development.

- Almost 100 Regional Centres of Expertise, designated by the United Nations University, provide local networks for institutions and practitioners engaged in ESD.

- The YouthXchange initiative by UNESCO and UNEP promotes sustainable lifestyles through training workshops and joint projects in over 45 countries. The YouthXchange guidebook has been translated into 22 languages and distributed to over 400,000 young people.

- 79 out of 97 countries that responded to a UNESCO inquiry have put in place a national coordination body for ESD.

- 80 universities in 40 African countries worked together to integrate ESD into their teaching as part of UNEP's Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability in Africa initiative.

- Teacher education institutions from 60 countries work together to reorient teacher education to address sustainable development.

- Oman has integrated the values and principles of sustainable development into its curricula in primary and secondary education in subjects such as Life Skills, Science, and Social Studies.

- 11,000 school children from Chile, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador have participated in tsunami risk reduction and preparedness activities.

- The Environment Agency in the United Arab Emirates has introduced children to the need for environmental protection through the website Shaheen's World.

- Senegal has included ESD in indicators and programmes for literacy and non-formal education.

UNESCO supports these and other activities, and:

- Advises policy-makers on how to integrate ESD into education plans and curricula;

- Publishes material on ESD for decision-makers, teachers and students;

- Communicates good ESD practice in all areas of education;

- Brings together ESD practitioners from all world regions;

- Monitors progress in the implementation of the DESD;

- Is the voice of ESD in the United Nations.