

Education for Sustainable Development and the National Curriculum
Second Consultative Workshop on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)
January 5, 2006

Background

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 placed great emphasis on promoting sustainable development, especially through organisations working on environment and socioeconomic development. In this regard, recommendations of Agenda 21, chapter 36 of the Rio Conference stressed on reorienting Environmental Education (EE) to Education for Sustainable Development. The Follow-up of Rio in 2002, the *World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)* further stressed on promotion of ESD to encourage an educational process, which enables people to make decisions considering the future of ecology, society and economy. As an outcome of WSSD, the United Nations decided to dedicate 2005 – 2014 as the *Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)*. UNESCO was assigned to work as a lead agency to implement the initiatives/activities of DESD globally with the help of other stakeholders.

IUCN – The World Conservation Union endorsed the UN's decade as *an initiative that supports its mission and raises the profile of this work (IUCN Council's Statement on ESD)*. In line with this, IUCN Pakistan (IUCNP) decided to reorient its education initiatives on ESD. In this regard, the Education Programme of IUCNP undertook few initiatives in 2005. These include, launching of DESD in Pakistan together with the ESD Toolkit for teachers and trainers in Urdu, in collaboration with UNESCO. It is also working with two focus institutions Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE) Sindh and Indus Resource Centre (IRC) on the lines of ESD.

In order to plan initiatives to promote ESD in Pakistan, the Education Programme started its activities with a consultative workshop on June 23, 2005 in Karachi. The purpose was to gather opinions and ideas from educators and communicators working in the environment sector on promotion of ESD in the country. The workshop was very useful in bringing together these educators and communicators at one platform. This also resulted in formation of a group, *Communication and Education for Sustainable Development (CESD)*.

Later on, the Education Programme decided to convene another workshop with a larger group of stakeholders to share the updates on ESD and to discuss the way forward. This was also pertinent due to the increasing need for integrating ESD into the National Curriculum in the light of last workshop and current development. Therefore, it was decided to focus on this concept during the second consultative workshop. In order to get a greater clarity on the process of integration of ESD into the National Curriculum a representative from the Curriculum Wing (CW), Ministry of Education was invited to make a presentation on the Environment Education Promotion Project (EEP) in Schools and Colleges. EEP project is currently run by the Curriculum Wing in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, funded by the Swiss Development Agency. It is focussing on integration of EE into the National Curriculum, which will result in development of integrated textbooks. Currently, the project has undertaken situational analysis study to document the work undertaken for EE so far and also to suggest recommendations for project's initiatives. IUCNP is already in a process of advocacy with the CW for integration of ESD into EEP.

In this regard, the second consultative workshop was held on January 5, 2006 at Pearl Continental Hotel, Karachi in which about 50 educators and communicators from Pakistan participated. Besides discussions on the EEP project, the role of ESD for earth quake rehabilitation was also highlighted during the workshop. A presentation was made by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) Sindh on gathering opinions of the group to design the communication strategy for banning the use of plastic bags by the Government of Sindh.

Participants

Participants from key public sector and civil society organisations including the Curriculum Wing Ministry of Education, Provincial Institute of Teachers Education (PITE) Sindh, Bureau of Curriculum (BoC) Sindh and Balochistan, Textbook Board Punjab and Sindh, Institute for Education Research (IER), Peshawar University, Teachers' Resource Centre (TRC), WWF, Shirkat Gah, Institute for Educational Development (IED), Indus Resource Centre, Institute for Business Administration (IBA), Star Newspaper, Jang Group, Sindh TV, PTV, Radio Pakistan and NGORC attended the workshop.

Objectives

Bringing together educators and communicators working on environment and sustainable development from all over the country to:

- Gather their views and ideas on integrating ESD into the EEP Project of the Curriculum Wing, Ministry of Education;
- Discuss the role of ESD for rehabilitation of earthquake victims;
- Collect opinions on developing a communication strategy for banning the use of plastic bags by the Government of Sindh (GoS).

The Workshop

The workshop started with an inauguration ceremony that began by recitation of the verses from the Holy Quran. Mr. Mahmood Akhtar Cheema, Acting Country Representative, IUCNP welcomed the participants and set the context for the workshop by giving a brief account on ESD and IUCN's initiatives in this regard. Ms. Zohra Rehmat Ali, Coordinator Environmental Education Programme presented an overview of ESD, its historical background and recent developments in Pakistan. This was followed by a presentation on EEP Project of the Ministry of Education by Mr. Syed Mujtaba Hussain, National Coordinator EEP Project. The Chief Guest, Mr. Shamsul-Haq Memon, Secretary Environment and Alternate Energy Department, Sindh made a keynote address highlighting the role of ESD in developing a sustainable society. He dwelled upon the conceptual as well as practical implication of integrating ESD into the formal and non-formal education sectors. The inauguration ceremony was concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr. Hasan Akhtar Rizvi, Head, Education, Communication and Knowledge Management Group IUCNP.

After a short break, Mr. Hasan Rizvi initiated the core proceedings of the workshop by setting the context for the upcoming presentations and discussions. Mr. Abid Hussainy, Instructor and Ms. Sadaf Jehangir, M. Ed student, IED made a presentation on similarities and differences between EE and ESD. This was followed by a discussion in which the participants highlighted their view on these concepts based on their experiences. It was stressed that awareness raising for ESD was necessary to promote it into the formal and non-formal education sectors. Later on, recommendations were sought on integrating ESD into the EEP project (please see below).

Discussion was then focussed on educational needs in the earthquake affected areas and the role ESD could play in promoting sustainable rehabilitation process as well as life styles in these regions(please see the recommendations below). Lastly, Mr. Irfanullah Tunio, Deputy Coordinator, Resource Management, EPA made a presentation on pre- imposition campaign on banning the use of plastic bags in by the Government of Sindh (GoS) together with Mr. Mujtaba Baig, Assistant Director, Public Awareness, EPA. This led to a discussion on developing the communication strategy for the pre-imposition campaign. The workshop concluded with a brief update on CESD and its membership details for the newcomers.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Integration of ESD into EEP Project

- It was highlighted that the project needed to be slightly reoriented to integrate ESD, without changing its focus. One aspect of sustainable development i.e. perspectives on environment was already part of this project. The nexus between ecology, society and economy needed to be addressed in the recommendations of Situation Analysis Study (SAS) for curriculum and textbook development.
- The EEP project may get some useful insights from work done by other organisations, particularly some private schools who were already teaching environment through using books published by various local and international publishers.
- Participants laid importance on having a process based approach to teaching of ESD. They criticised individual activities (such as beach cleaning and poster competitions) which are only undertaken as one-off events and are mostly forgotten.
- It was brought to the notice of the group that the existing textbooks of science and social studies contained bits on environment; however it needed to be addressed in a holistic manner in every subject. It could be done through a spiral curriculum approach, whereby selected concepts are dealt at each level in all subjects. It was further highlighted that, occasionally incorrect information was provided in the textbooks, for example, description on global warming and green house effect was confused in science textbooks of secondary classes. This needs to be considered in the EEP Project.
- The project should focus on training of curriculum developers, textbook writers and teachers.
- It was suggested to focus on EE from classes I - IX and ESD in grade XI-XII. However this might not be very appropriate.
- It was pointed out that the project did not contain active involvement of students and common people in the teaching and learning process and also during the curriculum development processes, which was later rectified by the National Coordinator.
- Utilisation of inside cover page of textbooks and notebooks for disseminating messages/ slogans about environmental conservation and ESD would help to create awareness amongst students and parents.
- Participants suggested that this project should include key departments from the public sector beside environment such as training centres for agriculture and police department and key civil society institutions.
- It was stressed that ESD was the need of the time and should be part of the formal educational process. This was due to the fact that the value of the ecological system was established to an extent, however, it was time that people should see its linkages with gender, human rights, carrying capacity of natural resources, sustainable livelihoods, equity and population to move towards sustainability. It was the right time to focus on ESD in the project as curriculum and textbook development have not been initiated.
- Stress was laid on the role of individual responsibility in promoting sustainability in society. Also the role of education in developing the sense of individual responsibility was stressed.

ESD and Earthquake

- Participants particularly from BoC NWFP shared their experiences of working in the earthquake affected areas on stress management. It was highlighted that there was a need to equip the affected people with not only knowledge and skills on better management of their environment but also to provide them emotional support in order for them to overcome this trauma.
- It was suggested that thematic needs for affected areas should be identified. Broadly, preparedness, environment and policy context should be focussed to develop content for educational processes.
- It was highlighted that EEP project should focus on integrating themes of natural disasters preparedness and management into the curriculum and textbooks

- The group realised that educational processes in affected areas needed to focus on environmental management particularly waste management, forest conservation and environment-friendly building structures. In the long run ESD integration into the educational as well all capacity building initiatives for disaster management would be crucial as the current system of education was not aligned to address these issues. Linkages of environmental degradation/natural disasters with societal and economic impacts could be well knitted into such programmes. However, at present its importance against emergency relief measure seemed to be on a low profile.
- Suggestions were made to educate families and communities about ESD particularly mothers so that management of environment becomes an important component of child development.
- Some of environmental consideration such as conserving forests and sustainable use of mountains to obtain material such as soil, stones, concrete and minerals should be promoted to avoid devastating effects of natural disaster. It is now established that these effects became more severe in areas where environment was degraded, for example, landslides brought more disasters in deforested areas during the recent earthquake and the same was true for tsunami where mangroves and coral reef were destroyed.

Designing a Communication Strategy for Banning the Use of Plastic Bags in Sindh

- Participants suggested use of mobile service (door to door) to spread the message about hazards of plastic bags;
- Slogans/messages could be written on textbooks, notebooks and utility bills to increase awareness about hazards of plastic bags;
- Participants opined that while a command and control policy may work, it was necessary to provide incentives as they could positively reinforce the use of alternate measures. In this regard, electronic media could be instrumental for policy enforcement and raising awareness, particularly amongst illiterate populations;
- Stage plays, drama and other creative media should be involved in promoting awareness;
- There was a need to bring enthusiasm amongst people for change in practice, such as the one observed during the *chipko movement* in India where people became the barrier against authorities who were cutting trees.