

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Launching Ceremony of the Decade of ESD and A Toolkit on ESD



September 29, 2005

Education, Communication & Knowledge Management Group, IUCNP
and UNESCO, Pakistan

Acknowledgement

This report has been prepared by Ms. Reem Nazim, Consultant Environmental Education Programme, IUCN Pakistan (IUCNP). We would like to thank all those who extended their support towards making this launch ceremony a success.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Chief Guest Mr. Malik Amin Aslam, Federal Minister of State for Environment and the Key Note Speaker Mr. Sajid Hassan, Federal Secretary for Education for their presence and support. Special thanks to Mr. Jorge Sequeira, Country Representative, UNESCO Pakistan and Mr. Hasan Abdi Keynan, Programme Specialist (Education), UNESCO Pakistan for their collaboration and support for this event. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Mr. Abdul Latif Rao, Country Representative, IUCN Pakistan for his presence and support during the ceremony.

Our thanks to Mr. Hasan Akhter Rizvi, Head Education, Communication and Knowledge Management Group (ECK) and Ms. Zohra Rehmat Ali, Coordinator Environmental Education Programme, ECK Group for making the presentation at the ceremony. We would also like to thank the Communication and Administration Team of IUCN Islamabad Office for their logistical support for the event. Our thanks to thank Mr. Azhar Saeed for designing the layout of the ESD Toolkit and Mr. George Sadiq for his administrative support.

Finally, we appreciate the cooperation, enthusiasm and presence of all the participants in the ceremony.

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Launching Ceremony of the Decade of ESD and ESD Toolkit

1. Background

IUCN - The World Conservation Union seeks to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. In Pakistan, the Union fulfils this mission by empowering communities to participate in the implementation of the National Conservation Strategy as well as sub strategies at the provincial level.

Due to the increasing recognition of the concept of Education for Sustainable Development after the Rio Summit in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, the United Nations decided to dedicate 2005-2014 as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). This was done to develop the capacity of professionals and general public at large, and decision makers in particular, to promote sustainable life styles through the integration of sustainable development components into the national development plans.

IUCN has endorsed DESD as it supports its mission and raises the profile of its work. In collaboration with UNESCO, IUCNP decided to launch the decade of ESD in Pakistan. On the eve of September 29, 2005 a landmark ceremony was organised to launch the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) and the ESD Toolkit at the UN office in Islamabad. ESD Toolkit is a pioneer document on ESD in the National Language. The toolkit is a joint publication of IUCN Pakistan and UNESCO Pakistan, which will be used to train a variety of target audience through trainers, community organisers and teachers. Besides these initiatives, both the organisations have also joined hands for the implementation of decade's goals and objectives in Pakistan during the coming years.

Participants: Almost 70 people participated in the launching ceremony including representatives from the Government departments, civil society organizations/ NGOs, public and private educational institutions and donor agencies.

Venue: UNDP Conference Room, Saudi Pak Towers, Islamabad.

Duration: Two hours

Date: September 29, 2005

1.2 Objectives of the Ceremony

- To launch the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) in Pakistan
- To launch the Toolkit on Education for Sustainable Development, translated, adapted and published jointly by IUCNP and UNESCO;
- To advocate for and create awareness among people about the role of ESD in promoting sustainable lifestyles through its integration into formal and non formal learning processes.

3. The Programme

The ceremony began with the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran. The recitation was followed by a welcome note by Mr. Abdul Latif Rao, Country Representative, IUCN Pakistan. He provided the participants with the background of DESD and the growing importance of ESD in both formal and non-formal educational sectors. He also highlighted the initiatives, which IUCN Pakistan has undertaken in this regard and laid a great stress on the need of partnership building for attaining national objectives in ESD.

A documentary on the DESD was viewed by the audience. The documentary was developed by The Centre for Environment Education in collaboration with UNESCO. The documentary was followed by remarks of Mr. Jorge Sequeira, Country Representative, and UNESCO. He highlighted UNESCO's current and future initiatives for DESD and also elaborated the strategies to be followed by UNESCO for implementing and monitoring various initiatives for this decade. However, according to him, there were no cut-and-dried ESD models to be adopted and replicated in a country like Pakistan. In one of his concluding remarks, he underlined the need for coordinated action by multiple stakeholders, averring that no single agency could achieve the objectives of ESD.

The ESD toolkit was formally launched by the Chief Guest Mr. Malik Amin Aslam, Minister of State for Environment. This was followed by a presentation on the basic concepts of ESD and its applications in the formal and non-formal education sectors was then made by Mr. Hasan Akhter Rizvi and Ms. Zohra Rehmat Ali of the Education, Communication and Knowledge Management Programme of IUCN Pakistan. They explained that ESD was a relatively new concept, which encompassed the whole gamut of human activity covering the ecological, social and economic dimensions. Ms. Rehmat Ali pointed out that ESD would go beyond schooling to include people of all ages for a process of life long learning and incorporated educational facets of environment, human rights, health, population, gender and equity. The presenters also came up with workable suggestions for carrying out national and local initiatives for ESD. In this regard, an example of District Badin Education Plan was highlighted in which concerns of ESD were integrated. In this manner, it was the first local education plan in Pakistan which had integrated ESD perspectives, developed by the District Government with the technical assistance of IUCN Pakistan.

The Federal Secretary of Education, Mr. Sajid Hasan pledged his Ministry's full support for ESD. He also underlined the importance of locally relevant teaching and learning processes in the implementation of ESD.

The Chief Guest, Minister of State for Environment, Mr. Malik Amin Aslam, in his keynote address underlined the importance of education in meeting the challenges of sustainable development in Pakistan. However, according to him, unlearning the ways impeding sustainable development was even more important than learning how to live sustainably. The Minister remarked that to date, the quality in education was lacking due to the non-implementation of education plans and he hoped that the UN Decade, with its focus on Education for Sustainable Development would support to bring about a positive change. He also highlighted some educational projects of the Ministry of Environment, especially the one in collaboration with the Ministry of Education for promotion of environmental concepts in the curricula of classes I to XII. In his opinion, the ESD toolkit would play an important role in achieving the goals of ESD decade in Pakistan.

The ceremony concluded with a vote of thanks by Mr. Hassan Abdi Keynan, Programme Specialist (Education) from UNESCO Pakistan.

4. The Way Ahead

It was decided that IUCNP and UNESCO would join hands in implementation of DESD's objectives in Pakistan in the coming years. Initially a national workshop would be organised jointly by IUCNP and UNESCO to advocate and built capacity of stakeholders through detailed discussion on ESD and its related themes such as formal and non formal education, media, sustainable livelihoods and governance. This workshop would also support in developing long term implementation plan for ESD in Pakistan through wider consultation from stakeholders. In addition, master training programmes could be initiated based on ESD Toolkit. Furthermore, implementation of the Five Year-District Education Plan Badin integrated with ESD concerns would provide replicable examples and lessons learnt for such initiatives at the local and national levels.

5. Reflections

1. There was a growing interest in the audience in learning more about the concept of ESD. Particularly the journalists and the academicians were eager to discuss this concept with the presenter after the ceremony
2. The government has shown interest and commitment to promote sustainable development approaches in Pakistan through ESD.
3. Joint collaboration between UNESCO and IUCNP for promotion of ESD will go a long way to implement the objectives of DESD in Pakistan
4. Launching of the Decade of ESD and ESD Toolkit in Pakistan is a big achievement. However, this will only be proved useful when all stakeholders will join hands in advocacy and capacity building for ESD to promote sustainable life styles in our country.