



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



# Education for Sustainable Development

**BUILDING A BETTER,  
FAIRER WORLD FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**



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# WHAT IS... EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Education for Sustainable Development allows every human being to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future.

Education for Sustainable Development means including key sustainable development issues into teaching and learning; for example, climate change, disaster risk reduction, biodiversity, poverty reduction, and sustainable consumption. It also requires participatory teaching and learning methods that motivate and empower learners to change their behaviour and take action for sustainable development. Education for Sustainable Development consequently promotes competencies like critical thinking, imagining future scenarios and making decisions in a collaborative way.

Education for Sustainable Development requires far-reaching changes in the way education is often practised today.

UNESCO is the lead agency for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).



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# EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT...



## ... MAKES EDUCATION RELEVANT

Education for Sustainable Development equips learners with the knowledge, skills and values to address social, environmental and economic challenges of the 21st century.



## ... TRANSFORMS EDUCATION

Education for Sustainable Development uses innovative, learner-centred teaching and learning styles. It empowers students and makes them agents in the educational process, from early childhood to old age. It promotes learning beyond the boundaries of educational institutions.



## ... PROMOTES EQUITY AND RESPECT

Education for Sustainable Development helps learners understand the situation, the outlook and the needs of people who live in other parts of the world or belong to another generation.



## ... HELPS ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

175 million children are likely to be affected by disasters related to climate change within the next decade. Education for Sustainable Development prepares learners to adapt to the impact of climate change and empowers them to address its causes.



## ... BUILDS GREEN SOCIETIES

Education for Sustainable Development equips students with skills for green jobs that help preserve or restore the quality of the environment, and improve human well-being and social equity. It motivates learners to choose sustainable lifestyles.

# GOOD PRACTICES

The **Young Masters Programme on Sustainable Development**, run by a Swedish foundation, is a free global internet-based education network. Secondary students and their teachers from all over the world use online teaching material to develop a thorough understanding of sustainability issues. They create virtual classrooms, exchange ideas and discuss results. Students also develop their own local sustainability projects. A group of Indonesian students has helped poor urban families in Surabaya to collect old newspapers, which were then recycled into braided baskets and sold. The girls have created their own brand "Selbi" and the idea has spread to other deprived areas.

([www.goymp.org](http://www.goymp.org))

The **Paryavaran Mitra programme** of the Indian Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) and ArcelorMittal helps pupils aged 11-15 in 20,000 schools across India to become "Friends of the Environment". Paryavaran Mitra schools provide support, time and space for students and teachers for learning by doing in five thematic areas: water and sanitation, energy, waste management, biodiversity and greening, and culture and heritage.

([www.paryavaranmitra.in](http://www.paryavaranmitra.in))





Ministerio de Educación

The **Sierra Gorda Earth Center Roberto Ruiz Obregón**, within the Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve in Mexico, organizes courses and workshops for those who work for natural protected areas. It offers an online diploma course adapting the UNESCO “Teaching and Learning for a Sustainable Future” programme to local needs .

([www.unesco.org/education/tlsf](http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf);  
[www.sierragorda.net/cursos-talleres/diplomado.php](http://www.sierragorda.net/cursos-talleres/diplomado.php))

**Asian RICE project:** The “Regional Initiative for Cooperation for ESD Promotion through rice” of the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO brings together schools and communities in the Asia-Pacific region around the theme of rice. The project links UNESCO Associated Schools and their local communities who address global sustainability through the theme of rice within and outside the curriculum. The schools share activities and experiences on the project website.

([www.accu.or.jp/jp/en](http://www.accu.or.jp/jp/en))

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## WHAT POLICY-MAKERS CAN DO<sup>1</sup>

- ◆ Incorporate the teaching of sustainable development issues, such as poverty reduction and climate change, as well as participative teaching and learning methods into education at all levels, from early childhood to higher education;
- ◆ Train teachers and trainers in sustainability issues and how to integrate them into their daily teaching practice;
- ◆ Ensure that updated and new curricula incorporate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development;
- ◆ Include sustainable development into the training of leaders in business, industry and the public services;
- ◆ Encourage research on Education for Sustainable Development to strengthen its evidence base;
- ◆ Support exchange activities on Education for Sustainable Development, such as fellowships for study;
- ◆ Advocate for Education for Sustainable Development at national and international events.

## WHAT EDUCATORS CAN DO

- ◆ Address sustainable development issues such as climate change and poverty reduction in the classroom;
- ◆ Use participatory teaching methods such as project-oriented learning and role plays to motivate learners to take action for sustainable development;
- ◆ Encourage learners to organize and participate in activities and projects in favour of sustainable development in their communities;
- ◆ Explain the link between concepts in school curricula and sustainable development at the global and the local level.



## UNESCO'S CONTRIBUTION

As lead agency for the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, UNESCO:

- 💧 Organizes capacity development workshops for policymakers on how to integrate Education for Sustainable Development into education plans and curricula;
- 💧 Provides teachers with tools on Education for Sustainable Development, such as the UNESCO Education for Sustainable Development Sourcebook;
- 💧 Establishes Education for Sustainable Development partnerships and networks to promote exchange between practitioners and experts from all world regions;
- 💧 Provides easy access to hundreds of resources on Climate Change Education through a web clearinghouse;
- 💧 Shares with policy-makers, educators and civil society good examples of Education for Sustainable Development practice;
- 💧 Monitors progress on Education for Sustainable Development in countries around the world;
- 💧 Advocates for the relevance of Education for Sustainable Development at the international level, such as at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development and in its follow-up;
- 💧 Coordinates the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which will culminate in the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in 2014 in Japan.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the Bonn Declaration of the UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (2009) and other documents.



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## SELECTED RESOURCES

UNESCO's website provides up-to-date information and access to key resources, including:

- 💧 Education for Sustainable Development Lens: A Policy and Practice Review Tool
- 💧 Education for Sustainable Development Sourcebook
- 💧 Climate Change Starter's Guidebook: An Issues Guide for Education Planners and Practitioners
- 💧 Education for Sustainable Development: Good Practices in Addressing Biodiversity

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[www.unesco.org/education/desd](http://www.unesco.org/education/desd)

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