

# Learning to Transform Oneself and Society

## Education for Sustainable Living

Policies and practices from around the world



Developing the ability to

- identify principles
- know oneself
- make critical, reflected decisions
- generate and implement new ideas
- solve conflicts
- be of service to others



Partnership for Education and Research  
about Responsible Living

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United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



UN Decade of Education for  
Sustainable Development

## Learning to transform oneself and society: Education for sustainable living

All around the world groups of informed, skilled and motivated people are striving to achieve more responsible ways of living. It is recognized that education is essential to achieve sustainable development for all. There is also a growing recognition that people everywhere need to acquire the knowledge and skills to change their consumption behavior and to become more creative and active citizens.

The question today is what policies and practices are needed to facilitate education for sustainable living and what lessons can be learned from the experiences already taking place in different countries.

This brochure is the second in a series which focus the formal education system as well as informal education and provides an overview of policies and practices from diverse countries to assist further action around the globe.



*“... when the world decides to act it can dramatically alter the trajectory of hazardous trends that threaten human well-being”*

U.N. Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner,  
commenting on statistics presented in the Global Environmental Outlook 5 report

## Education for sustainable living cannot be postponed

“Business as usual” is an option many now realize is no longer viable. Many social structures fail to meet the needs of the people. And even existing financial systems are being questioned as to their equity and efficiency. To meet the demands of a rapidly changing world, citizens are needed who have learned how to learn, to reflect, and to initiate, adapt to and evaluate change not only within themselves but also in society.

Some aspects of education for sustainable living can be found in present day curricula, classrooms and informal educational initiatives. However, on the conceptual level, understanding of sustainable consumption based on sustainable human development is often vague, lacking insight into the values and principles motivating human activity. Course content is often disconnected and without the necessary foundation of updated scientific data. Practical approaches to the themes—approaches which combine theory and research with the students’ everyday lives—are few and far between. Most importantly, schools seldom focus on learning which enables students to develop self-awareness and the ability to contribute to constructive change.

### How does education for sustainable living differ from existing educational programs?

Education for sustainable living consists of core life skills needed for all ages as well as specific environmental, consumer and civic skills for functioning in today’s global community. Education for sustainable living uses participatory, practical and personalized methods that also involve the local community.



Life skills which are needed include the ability to:

- **identify principles** which safeguard the basic values of integrity, honesty, compassion, and justice
- **know oneself** and cope with one’s emotions
- **make critical, reflected decisions** which take into consideration both short- and long term consequences, and the affects the decisions will have on others
- **generate and implement new ideas** which are socially and ecologically responsible
- **solve conflicts** peacefully and with empathy
- **be of service to others** by appreciating diversity and actively contributing to community development

The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014) led by UNESCO, endeavors to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all levels and types of education and learning. Education for sustainable living is one important part of education for sustainable development.

The Marrakech Process is a global multi-stakeholder process initiated in 2003, to promote sustainable patterns of consumption and production (SCP) and work towards a 'Global Framework for Action on SCP', the so-called 10-Year Framework of Programmes on SCP.



**Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC)** aims at providing knowledge, values and skills to enable individuals and social groups to become actors of change towards more sustainable consumption behaviors. The objective is to ensure that the basic needs of the global community are met, quality of life for all is improved, inefficient use of resources and environmental degradation are avoided. ESC is therefore about providing citizens with the appropriate information and knowledge on the environmental and social impacts of their daily choices, as well as workable solutions and alternatives. ESC integrates fundamental rights and freedoms including consumers' rights, and aims at empowering citizens for them to participate in the public debate and economy in an informed and ethical way.

Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption, UNEP 2010, p.11

### How can PERL assist?

As a key objective of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development, mainstreaming education for sustainable consumption, through policy-making and pilot projects can only be done with the support and cooperation of governments, regional and international organizations and civil society organizations. PERL (The Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living) is an international network of experts, researchers, teachers and policy-makers (from over 140 institutions in more than 50 countries) that are developing methods, materials and guidelines to implement education for sustainable living.

Knowing what other regions are doing often stimulates ideas about how to initiate or further develop policies and practices in one's own country. PERL's global network can provide information on a wide variety of initiatives in different countries and settings. The process of establishing a public dialog involving stakeholders, the educational sector and the government is often a demanding one. PERL can offer advice based on previous experiences. PERL also has experienced partners to assist with adapting approaches, methods and materials to local conditions



## What policies and practices are being used?

Countries have undertaken a variety of approaches to implement education for sustainable living. The examples shown in this brochure have been selected to cover different regions of the world. The following categories have been used to show policies and practices:

- **Personal development programs**
- **Creative arts**
- **Intergenerational activities**
- **Service oriented initiatives**
- **Grassroots campaigns**

## What can be learned from current experiences?

The examples presented in this brochure show that there are many ways to start implementing education for sustainable living. Lessons can be learned from what has worked but it is just as important to learn from what has not worked. Experience shows that four factors are particularly important:

- 1. Cultural and historical context:** What works in one country or location may not work in another. It is important to look at the factors that have shaped the educational situation that exists in a given place, and to look for strengths to help implement educational initiatives.
- 2. Collaboration between civil society, the educational sector and government:** Various initiatives may have different leaders, but collaboration between stakeholder groups is essential to ensure that progress is made.
- 3. Encouraging creativity:** Learning to recognize, develop and implement creative solutions is essential for stimulating innovation.
- 4. Monitoring of initiatives:** Periodic monitoring is necessary so that essential themes are not missed, to track implementation progress and to identify weaknesses that need to be addressed.



## • Personal development programs

Consumption is primarily about fulfilling basic needs—food, clothing, shelter, etc.—but it is also about identity creation, social relationships and status. Learning to recognize the drivers behind our consumption patterns and developing the strength of character to make critical, knowledge-based, socially responsible decisions about how we interact with the market are vital processes for the emergence of aware, independent and empathic individuals. Numerous programs for furthering responsible, sustainable living focus on values, personal development and positive social interaction.



### Worldwide

#### This is our Time<sup>1</sup>

*Time* seeks effective and innovative ways to enable young people from many different cultures and countries to meet each other in the virtual village, to interact and communicate “face to face” on current issues such as sustainable development, rights of the child, peace, the intercultural dialogue, tolerance and related topics of global concern. Books, the internet and the media show and teach us a lot about other countries and its peoples. But it is in meeting and interacting with the ‘locals’ a culture comes to life. Videoconferencing offers youth the unique opportunity to meet their peers through a live video-link between two or more schools. During a 24-hour learning marathon, schools from all time zones and both hemispheres are simultaneously

online. They take part in the intercultural interactive game ‘Unite the Nations’ through the videoconferences. *Time* enables youth not only to get to know each other, but also sets up and ‘broadcasts’ live debates. Unite the Nations challenges students to take a closer look at their own culture as well as foreign cultures.

### Latin America

#### The Earth Charter Initiative<sup>2</sup>

The Earth Charter courses contribute to integrating into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values and skills needed for a sustainable way of life. The content is extensive covering many diverse aspects of sustainable development. Some of the outcomes which the courses aim to achieve and which are directly related to personal development are:

- understanding interconnectedness, interdependence and systems thinking;
- respect earth and life in all its diversity and the treatment of all living beings with respect and consideration;

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.timeproject.org/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.earthcharter.org/](http://www.earthcharter.org/)

- care for community of life with understanding, compassion and love;
- contributing to the building of democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful;
- affirmation of gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustain development;
- upholding the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities;
- strengthening democratic institutions at all levels, and providing transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice;
- promotion of a culture of tolerance, non violence, and peace;
- universal responsibility (shared and differentiated responsibility).



Earth Charter courses and other activities have been held throughout Latin America especially in: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Peru, Trinidad And Tobago, and Venezuela.

## Egypt

### Walk for the Nile: Character Building for Environmental Awareness: <sup>3</sup>

The study of the impact of marketing trends on teens has led countries and international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), to call for regulating marketing practice in respect to children. International schools have reacted by providing character building programs which include projects aiming at raising awareness about the hazards of over-consumption from socio-psychological as well as from environmental and social perspective. One example of environmental campaigns in Egyptian schools are the campaigns conducted on school level by Hayah International Academy. The school involves multiple stakeholders in its initiatives, including parents, corporates/private sector, and public policy makers. The campaigns include the “Go Green” campaign but also the notable “Walk for a Cause” campaign which collected donations for preservation of the Nile water.

<sup>3</sup> [www.hayahacademy.com/home.aspx?ItemID=225013&RootID=2250](http://www.hayahacademy.com/home.aspx?ItemID=225013&RootID=2250)



## • Creative arts

The dilemmas connected to sustainable consumption are not new, only more serious and urgent. Music, art, drama and literature are important parts of the commercial world. They can also be a valuable part of the learning process as means of describing either dilemmas, information or suggested solutions. Classical literature, as well as modern literature, has dealt with the majority of ESC themes and reading and discussing relevant books, articles, short stories, poems, etc are important methods of learning about sustainable consumption.

### France

#### Association Pour la Terre <sup>4</sup>

The mission of the French nonprofit Association Pour la Terre is educating children and young people through music and musically related events related to sustainable development. Since 2001 it has focused on holding tree planting events for 6 to 12 year old children throughout the world, with environmental songs and art, in collaboration with major forest organizations such as the USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, and French ONF. Pour la Terre was requested to produce a CD of music for children and young people along with an accompanying school kit presenting each song and sustainable development in general. The kits were made available to children in over 7660 educational facilities in over 180 countries. Pour la Terre amassed the support and participation of major international artists – from STING, Santana, Mana, Yannick Noah, Youssou N’Dour, Stereophonics, the John Butler Trio and Raffi, to Maria Muldaur, Tokiko Kato, Buzy, Kitaro, the Doobie Brothers, Shana Morrison, Mickey3, Dand Earth Mama.



### Colombia

#### Women weavers of fique <sup>5</sup>

DESIS (Design for Social Innovation towards Sustainability) is a network of design labs, based in design schools and design-oriented universities, actively involved in promoting social innovation as part of the design profession and as a tool for sustainability, and for strengthening social fabric by involving students and the local communities. Santa Barbara town is located south-west of Medellín in Columbia. There, a community of women in the area has been involved in the production and transformation of fique (which

is made of the maguey tree leaves) as kind of art. The community is consolidating this community-based enterprise to become an autonomous and sustainable organization.

<sup>4</sup> [www.pourlaterre.org](http://www.pourlaterre.org)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.desis-network.org/content/upb-universidad-pontifica-bolivariana-desis-lab-columbia>



## • Intergenerational activities

Education for sustainable consumption is not only an activity for teachers and students alone. It is an important part of informal life-long learning and is carried out in the family, the local community and informal educational settings. It involves bridging gaps between generations by identifying common values, setting goals together and promoting interaction and cooperation at the community level. ESC respects diversity of culture and choice of lifestyle. ESC encourages listening to, learning from and caring for knowledge and ways of being which may be different from our own. ESC aims at finding viable solutions built on both innovation and traditional knowledge.



### Thailand

#### Eco-school <sup>6</sup>

The school strengthening for Sustainable Livelihood development. The conceptual framework of Eco-school was intended to construct knowledge management process focusing on problems based on local community with the collaboration between the students, teachers, schools, families and communities. The outcome from the activities created a set of a clear step knowledge which resolved the com-

munity's problems by similar practices. Management processes starts from creating the interaction in their community to acknowledge problems that occurred among various parties. When problems were recognized, the science education and social study were applied as a tool for analysis. Then, the details of the problems were studied. Troubleshooting process is a set of knowledge acquired from the synthesis. Such knowledge can be brought to rationally study the problems or any interesting issues. This interactive learning encourages learners to understand the problem, initiate problem solving process, create project plan, and implement the task. The PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) was primarily used as a tool in systematic working in order to effectively create learning skill.

<sup>6</sup> <http://enviroscope.iges.or.jp/modules/envirolib/view.php?docid=2660>

## Indonesia

### ADIWIYATA Program (on EE learning school/green school) <sup>7</sup>

The Ministry of Environment initiated the Adiwiyata program in 2006. The program structure is for schools to develop a learning model with content on the living environment, either integrated into the core curriculum or defined as special activities. The main goal of the project is to create good conditions for schools to become places of learning & awareness of citizens of schools (teachers, students & other workers), so in the future citizens of these schools can participate in charge of protect and manage the environment & sustainable development. Schools work together to conduct research and develop teaching materials on both global and local environmental issues. The learning approach is participatory and activity-based learning. And partnership building with local government, private companies and NGOs is encouraged. The program also has an award program for schools who have made major achievements in adoption of “green” curriculum, participation in community actions and improvements of school infrastructure.



## Japan

### Household Eco-account Book <sup>8</sup>

One of the specific areas of interest in Japan is the reduction of household CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. “Household Eco-account Book” projects can be identified promoting ESC on this interest. The project encourages families to track their resource usage and waste production and enables them to directly see their progress in reducing household CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This project was initially promoted by MOE in 1999 through the publication of guidelines, but it has been further implemented by local councils, electric companies, and corporate employers.

*“ Each and every one of us can make changes in the way we live our lives and become part of the solution [to climate change] ”*

*‘An Inconvenient Truth’ (2006)*

<sup>7</sup> <http://enviroscope.iges.or.jp/modules/envirolib/view.php?docid=2660>

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.env.go.jp/policy/edu/desd/39key\\_ideas\\_en-1.pdf](http://www.env.go.jp/policy/edu/desd/39key_ideas_en-1.pdf)

## • Service oriented initiatives

Education for sustainable consumption contributes to the integration of democratic ideals with the personal aspirations of the individual. It involves knowing about and being able to exercise the responsibilities of a citizen as well as the specific rights of a consumer. It includes learning how to help, share and be of assistance to others. ESC can be taught in part as community-involvement service projects. “There are many best practices that develop respect for a non-discriminatory, gender-sensitive world; act to achieve social solidarity and international understanding; learn to live sustainably; respect and protect the earth and its environment; adopt behaviors and practices that restrain and minimize our ecological footprint on the world around us – without depriving us of opportunities for development and fulfillment.”<sup>9</sup>

### Turkey

#### Kardelenler : Snowdrops<sup>10</sup>

As an NGO, Cagdas Yasami Destekleme Dernegi (CYDD) has been aware of the problems of the limited enrollment of girls as early as 1997 and has started a scholarship project for girls' education to motivate families with economic difficulties to send their daughters to school as well as to raise awareness about the importance of girls' education for gender equality. Until now, a total of 54,344 girls have benefited from this scholarship project. This umbrella scholarship project was supported by various corporate partners, media and individuals under various titles. “Snowdrops” is a project supported by Turkcell which is Turkey's leading GSM operator. “Daddy Send me to School” is a co-project with Dogan Media group and “I have a daughter in Anatolia who is going to be a teacher” is a project supported by individuals and also by various corporate partners as community-involvement service projects. The media and corporate partners also have done a lot of publicity in cooperation with CYDD to make public aware of the need to educate girls and also raise further funds for CYDD projects. The scholarship projects are producing a growing number of sub-projects, such as local tutoring programs, trips to other parts of the country, mentorship programs for self development to name a few.



<sup>9</sup> Combes B. The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005 – 2014 p.4

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.cydd.org.tr/projeler.asp>

## Germany

### Fair Trade International <sup>11</sup>

Fairtrade International is a global organization working to secure a better deal for farmers and workers in developing countries by coordinating Fairtrade at an international level. The FAIR-TRADE Mark offers informed consumers citizen a positive way to buy products in solidarity with those who produced them. Buying Fairtrade products helps producers to improve their lives and invest in their future. Fairtrade strives to protect workers' rights, enable fair and decent working conditions and ensure freedom from forced labour, including the elimination of exploitative child labor. It also facilitates coping with climate change and encourages sustainability. Thanks to the Fairtrade Premium paid to their community's Fairtrade cooperative, SCFCU, students in Ethiopia could go to school for example. In Tanzania, Kagera Cooperative Union (KCU) also uses part of the Fairtrade income to invest in the three schools for the children of the coffee farmer villages. By using the Fairtrade Premium they hired more teachers and offered pupils more nutritious school lunches.



- **Grassroots campaigns**

Sustainable consumption issues are complex and often controversial. Education for sustainable living seeks to help learners become conscious of civil society's power to initiate alternative ways of thinking and acting. It imparts the ability not only to envision alternative futures but to create reasonable paths of action leading to these. It encourages concrete actions.

## Republic Of Korea

### Green Shop Movement <sup>12</sup>

The first movement was started in the city of Gwacheon, Korea in 1992 for resource management and environmental protection by encouraging citizens' sustainable consumption pattern. It is noticeable that this movement was triggered by community members, not initiated by government, and resulted in opening a shop titled "Green Shop". The original aim of this shop was to encourage citizens' participation in exchanging daily life items which they did not use anymore but that were still in good condition for the purpose of practicing sustainable consumption in their daily life. This movement received a great response not only from the community members but also the local government as it showed how an ordinary citizen can incorporate new beliefs regarding consumption into practical behaviour. It is also notable that an education programme is provided to community members whenever Green Shops open in a new city or province in order to increase their awareness and knowledge towards sustainable consumption and enable them to take actual action. This expanded education-oriented activity indicates an evolution of the Green Shop goals over the last two decades from simple recycling or energy saving activities into creating a culture of sustainable community living. In addition, many of the reports and online dialogues on the Green Shop Movement web-site indicates communicating with and contributing to a local community as a key factor for achieving maintenance.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.fairtrade.net/>

<sup>12</sup> [http://greenshop.or.kr/sub01\\_1.html](http://greenshop.or.kr/sub01_1.html)

## Philippines

### Capacity 2015 <sup>13</sup>

The advent of environmentalism in the Philippines has elicited very encouraging responses from all stakeholders. In 2008, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed into law Republic Act 9512 or “An Act to Promote Environmental Awareness through Environmental Education and for Other Purposes” which aims in promoting environmental education through an Inter-agency and multi-sectoral effort through the help of the government agencies in the Philippines.

Through time the coalescing and networking for strengthened environment and sustainable development work has been expanding undertaking advocacy work and implementing projects at the grassroots level. The academe would not be left behind in these efforts. Thereby in a consultative forum among tertiary educators the formation of The Philippine Association of Tertiary Level Educational Institutions in Environmental Protection and Management (PATLEPAM) was proposed and conceived. In 2008, the Environmental Management Bureau – Department of Environment and Natural Resources (EMB) through the PATLEPAM embarked in Capacity 2015 project that documented good practices in the coco coir and seaweeds industry. The project aims to be a convergence initiative that will enhance the capacities of tripartite stakeholders ( micro entrepreneurs, local government units and academe) not part of the pilot sites to directly influence economic and environmental situation at the level of their communities. It will hope to provide a poverty alleviation model embodying real sustainable development where wealth and value creation is managed with an ecosystem view of target industries. The project would also like to prove that an optimal scenario is possible for micro, small and medium enterprises to achieve their maximum potential without harming the environment and degrading the natural resource base, at the same time, withstanding the onslaught of globalization.



*Education for Sustainable Consumption is a core theme of Education for Sustainable Development, and it is essential to train responsible citizens and consumers towards lifestyles based on economic and social justice, food security, ecological integrity, sustainable livelihoods, respect for all life forms and strong values that foster social cohesion, democracy and collective action.*

*UNESCO-DESD, Bonn Declaration, April 2009. UN DESD Strategy 2010-2014*

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.jeef.or.jp/EAST\\_ASIA/?resume=the-philippine-association-of-tertiary-level-educational-institutions-in-environmental-protection-and-management-patlepam](http://www.jeef.or.jp/EAST_ASIA/?resume=the-philippine-association-of-tertiary-level-educational-institutions-in-environmental-protection-and-management-patlepam)

Research shows that identity creation is strongly affected by advertisements and peer pressure. Developing self-confidence and the ability to make independent, reflected, critical choices are essential to being able to transform oneself and society.

The UNEP publication: *Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption* outlines the following central themes which contribute to education for sustainable consumption which is interdisciplinary and personalized: life quality, lifestyles, resource management, economics, consumer rights and responsibilities, information management, health and safety, change management and global awareness.

## The way forward

There are three levels of action that are important to further implement education for sustainable living:

- 1. Internationally:** It is hoped that a significant program on 'sustainable lifestyles and education' will be adopted and supported under the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production at the U.N. CSD2012 meeting in Rio in June 2012.
- 2. Nationally:** Countries can initiate national roundtables to bring stakeholders together to discuss education for sustainable living, to agree on recommendations and to form implementation plans. With the support of the Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea, PERL has helped UNEP coordinate a pilot project which researched education for sustainable living, held national roundtables and created strategies for implementation in Indonesia, Chile and Tanzania.
- 3. Locally:** Discussions about education for sustainable living must be stimulated and local projects and initiatives supported.



## Acknowledgements



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page Girl from Ethiopia going to school thanks to the Fairtrade Premium paid to SCFCU coffee cooperative. © Fairtrade Sweden / Linus Hallgren Fairtrade International[1]

PERL would like to sincerely thank the following:

**UNEP**, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics

**Ministry of Children, Identity and Social Inclusion**, Norway

**European Commission**, Directorate for Education and Culture, Erasmus Networks Program

The PERL project has been funded with the support of the European Commission and of the Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion. This material reflects the views only of the project, and the sponsors cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



## How to achieve education for sustainable living

*Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption* is a set of guidelines and recommendations published by UNEP which contains the following roadmap for achieving education for sustainable consumption.

1. **Ensure education institutions** reflect in their daily management the priorities given to sustainable development
2. **Include themes, topics, modules, courses and degrees** about education for sustainable consumption in established curriculum
3. **Encourage research** in education for sustainable consumption-related areas
4. **Strengthen connections** between researchers, lecturers, teacher trainers and socio-economic actors and stakeholders
5. **Enhance cooperation** between professionals from diverse disciplines in order to develop integrated approaches to education for sustainable consumption
6. **Facilitate teaching and teacher-training** which strengthens global, future-oriented, constructive perspectives within education for sustainable consumption
7. **Reward creative, critical, innovative thinking** related to education for sustainable consumption
8. **Ensure** that education for sustainable consumption respects the importance of indigenous knowledge and recognizes alternative lifestyles
9. **Foster intergenerational learning** as an integrated aspect of education for sustainable consumption
10. **Provide opportunities for practical application** of theoretical study through social involvement and community service.



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