

## Education for Sustainable Development as a learning principle for all

In 1992 the United Nations proclaimed the decade 2005-2014 the World Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). From 31 March to 2 April 2009, 900 delegates from 150 countries met at the World Conference Center in Bonn, Germany, to conduct a mid-term evaluation.

In her opening speech Graça Machel, renowned international advocate for women's and children's rights and former Minister of Education and Culture in Mozambique, pointed out that all measures for education must now be taken with due regard to the reasons for the international financial crisis: the reckless pursuit of profit while valuing material resources above people. The discussion of values was thus the focus of the conference.

Director-General of UNESCO Koichiro Matsuura defined three main topics for the participants of the conference:

1. The importance of partnership (multi-stakeholder partnership). Closely linked to the idea of sustainability is the concept of interdependence, which demands that people work together to overcome shared problems.
2. The key role of teachers and educators as the cornerstone of effective Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) programmes. They need to be supported not only by institutions, but also by the community and society.
3. A broad understanding of the ESD approach, not limited to particular topics or curriculum content, but offer-

ing a broader vision of the purposes and objectives of education. This also includes the awareness that "each of us is an agent of change in ESD".

### A call for action

The final declaration of the conference reflects the perception of the participants and is a call for action:

- Investment in ESD is an investment in the future and can be a life-saving measure, especially in post conflict and least developed countries. It similarly emphasises pre-school learning, education for rural people and adult literacy.
- ESD helps societies to address different priorities and issues, inter alia water, energy, climate change, disaster and risk reduction, loss of biodiversity, food crises, health risks, social vulnerability and insecurity. It is critical for the development of new economic thinking.
- ESD contributes to creating resilient, healthy and sustainable societies through a systematic and integrated approach. Linked to people's different needs and specific living con-

ditions, ESD provides skills to find solutions and draws on practices and knowledge embedded in local cultures as well as in new ideas and technologies. This is certainly also of importance for agricultural technical training, although it was not a specific topic at the conference.

- Action must be undertaken at policy and practical level in member states. It is necessary to:
  - promote ESD's contribution to all education and to achieving quality education with particular regard to fostering the links between ESD and Education for All (EFA);
  - increase public awareness and understanding of ESD through the contribution of media;
  - mobilise adequate resources and funding in favour of ESD;
  - reorient education and training systems to address sustainability concerns through coherent policies at national and local level.
- ESD issues should be supported by using an integrated and systematic approach in formal as well as in non-formal and informal education, through effective pedagogical

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### Principles of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

- ESD is a concern for everybody
- ESD is a long-term continuing process influencing processes of change in society
- ESD is a cross-curricular task and has an integrating function
- ESD aims at improving the environment of people
- ESD creates individual, social and economic perspectives
- ESD demands global responsibility

(Source: German national action plan, World Decade of Education for Sustainable Development)

## International exchange of good practices

In the afternoon of the second day of the conference all participants had the chance to participate in project-based workshops in four categories. As can be seen from the titles of the workshops, ESD is a broad approach comprising all levels of formal and non-formal education:

### 1. Relevance of ESD to key sustainable development challenges

Themes were inter alia:

- Water as a source of life
- Biological diversity and ESD
- Learning sustainability in forests and nature

### 2. Building partnerships to promote ESD

- From research to action: implementing ESD in higher education
- ESD and the socio-economic dimensions: a challenge in changing behaviours and consumption patterns
- How to approach global justice: different methods and instruments for enhancing global competences and understanding

### 3. Capacity development for ESD

- ESD and ITC: multimedia learning
- Non-formal education for sustainable development through experiential learning
- Non-formal education for sustainable development at visitor centres, exhibitions and nature experience activities

### 4. ESD and the teaching-learning process

- UNESCO associated schools working towards ESD
- ESD in life and work, House of NICA (sustainability within chemical vocational training)
- Starting strong: ESD in early childhood

*In the workshop "How to achieve global justice" Welthungerhilfe presented its education project "WeltFrühstück/ World breakfast" as a "door opener" for understanding the right to food for all.*

Photo: Regina Riepe



approaches, teacher training, teaching practice, curricula and learning materials, and also by recognising the significant contribution of non-formal education and informal learning as well as vocational and workplace learning.

- The participants encourage the mobilisation of adequate funding in support of the recommendations contained in this declaration.

## A lifelong learning process

At the Round Table after the Conference on 3 April the participants came to the conclusion that ESD means opening up the educational system to the community. ESD in education (rural and urban) may help to fulfil MDGs more quickly. The principle of ESD should also be integrated in firm policy. ESD is a continuous process. It should begin

in pre-schools and go on in a lifelong learning process. Education is a matter of head, hand and heart. It needs to be given space.

Examples of good practices of ESD in all fields of education were to be found at the different international stalls of the participants. They had all put a great deal of effort into the vividness of their education material, especially for the indigenous peoples in their countries.

## Zusammenfassung

„Bildung für alle“ mit „Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung“ zu verknüpfen ist ein erklärtes Ziel der Fachleute, die sich vom 31. März bis 2. April 2009 im World Conference Center in Bonn, Deutschland, getroffen haben. Anlass war die Halbzeit der Weltdekade „Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung“, die 1992 auf der Konferenz der Vereinten Nationen für Umwelt und Entwicklung in Rio de Janeiro für 2005–2014 ausgerufen wurde. Auf der Bonner Konferenz zogen 900 Delegierte aus 150 Ländern eine Zwischenbilanz. Dabei kamen sie zu dem Schluss, dass

eine qualitativ angemessene Bildung, die den heutigen Anforderungen der globalisierten Welt gerecht werden will, ohne die Prinzipien der Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung nicht mehr auskommen kann.

## Resumen

Relacionar las dos iniciativas "Educación para todos" y "Educación para el desarrollo sostenible" se convirtió en el objetivo declarado de los expertos que se reunieron del 31 de marzo al 2 de abril de 2009 en el World Conference Center de Bonn, Alemania. El evento se llevó a cabo con ocasión de encontrarnos a

medio camino en la década mundial de la "Educación para el desarrollo sostenible", que fue proclamada para el decenio 2005-2014 en la Conferencia de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente y el Desarrollo de 1992. En la conferencia de Bonn, los 900 delegados provenientes de 150 países hicieron un balance parcial de lo logrado. La conclusión fue que una educación de calidad apropiada – que responda a las exigencias actuales del mundo globalizado – ya no puede alcanzarse sin tomar en cuenta los principios de la educación para el desarrollo sostenible.