

MOUNTAIN PARTNERSHIP EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

DISCUSSION PAPER

The following Discussion Paper puts forward draft ideas for the members of the Education Initiative of the Mountain Partnership to consider as they work toward defining priority actions, activities and roles and responsibilities regarding education and sustainable mountain development and explore potential synergies among members to seek innovative ways to strengthen existing communication and information channels and create new working mechanisms.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Education Initiative of the Mountain Partnership will be guided by the principles set forth in Agenda 21 and further explained and reinforced by other international agreements, declarations and policy platforms, specifically the Millennium Development goals, the WSSD Plan of Implementation, the 2002 Tokyo Declaration for the International Year of Mountains and the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit Platform.

As stated in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21, “Basic education is the underpinning for environment and development education. All countries should strive for universal access to education, and achieve primary education for at least 80% of all girls and boys through formal schooling or non-formal education. Adult illiteracy should be cut to at least 1990 level and literacy level of women brought into line with those of men” (Keating, 1993). Combining this with the goal of Chapter 13 of Agenda 21 in generating and strengthening knowledge about the ecology and sustainable development of mountain ecosystems provides a global framework to address the challenges posed by education and sustainable mountain development.

Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals states that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

WSSD Plan of Implementation

The Plan of Implementation from the World Summit on Sustainable Development requires actions at all levels to mobilize national and international support for applied research and capacity-building, provide financial and technical assistance for the effective implementation of the sustainable development of mountain ecosystems in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and address the poverty among people living in mountains through concrete plans, projects and programmes, with sufficient support from all stakeholders, taking into account the spirit of the International Year of Mountains, 2002.

2002 Tokyo Declaration for the International Year of Mountains

The 2002 Tokyo Declaration for the International Year of Mountains states that capacity-building and education targeted at all levels and segments of mountain populations and minorities traditionally dependent on mountain resources must be further strengthened so as to counteract the looming marginalization of mountain dwellers. The declaration also highlights

the need to explore new approaches to mountain issues, for instance, by identifying hotspots and creating and discovering successful approaches applicable to different problems and contexts of sustainable mountain development.

Bishkek Platform

The Bishkek Platform addresses education in the context of capacity development. It states that capacity development at all levels is essential to improve the competence of mountain stakeholders and to enhance understanding of mountain processes, problems, needs, opportunities and assets. This should involve all sectors of education, NGOs, governments, decision-makers and international agencies. The Platform further recognizes that the physical nature of mountain regions hinders access in many ways. In particular, it calls upon governments to use information and communications technologies to bring benefits to mountain people.

IDEAS FOR CONSIDERATION

The global agreements and frameworks on education provide a broad foundation for the work of the Initiative. Building on this mandate, a recent brainstorming meeting between representatives from UNEP, FAO, UNU, the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic and the Mountain Institute identified general themes and additional ideas for consideration by the members of the Education Initiative.

Policy, capacity building and education for sustainable development emerged as important themes to consider. Education that develops an understanding of mountain issues and an appreciation of mountain environments and cultures for people living outside mountains was also suggested as a theme since much of the political and economic influences profoundly affecting mountain regions, such as government regulation, tourism and commercial extraction industries, lies in centers of power outside mountains. In addition, reference was made to a thematic paper¹ on the role of culture, education and science for sustainable mountain development that was prepared for the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit in 2002. The thematic paper addresses some key issues affecting education and sustainable mountain development which could help facilitate and prioritize the work of the Mountain Partnership including:

- Primary school education and the role of the education of the teachers
- Secondary school (college) education
- Tertiary (university) education
- Capacity Development
- Modern information and communication technologies
- Distance learning and open universities
- Gender challenges
- Educational programmes and mountain cultures

Capacity-building²

¹ The thematic paper “The Role of Culture, Education and Science for Sustainable Mountain Development” was prepared by Dr. Bruno Messerli of the University of Bern and Dr. Edwin Bernbaum of the Mountain Institute, in collaboration with a broad-based alliance of organizations and individuals. The complete paper is attached as an annex to this position paper.

² The discussion on capacity building and capacity development is based on the contribution from Libor Jansky of the United Nations University.

Capacity-building and education targeted at all levels and segments of mountain populations and minorities traditionally dependent on mountain resources must be further strengthened so as to counteract the looming marginalization of mountain dwellers. The following immediate and long-term policy suggestions should be considered:

1. Strengthening of knowledge about the ecology & sustainable development of mountain ecosystems – more research and monitoring to identify the knowledge gap, needs & constraints
2. Capacity development for mountain populations and minorities to counteract marginalization
3. Maintenance and development of cultural diversity
4. Holistic & interdisciplinary management schemes for environmental conservation and sustainable development
5. Dissemination of more realistic and accurate information through the mass media
6. Greater attention to urban aspects of mountain issues
7. Empowerment of local communities, especially women
8. More attention to conflicts and resulting destruction of mountain ecosystems and livelihoods
9. Promoting integrated watershed development and alternative livelihoods opportunities

Capacity Development

Capacity development is the process whereby a community equips itself to undertake the necessary functions of governance and service provision in a sustainable fashion. The process of capacity development begins with knowledge and information sharing and learning. The objective of any capacity development effort is to develop human potential to directly address any deterioration of human security and development conditions. In considering capacity development and education, it is necessary to recognize that the mountain people world-wide, who are among the poorest of the poor, are extremely rich in environmental understanding. Their opinions and experiences need to be combined with scientific knowledge before a better understanding of mountain processes can be obtained. Cultural diversity, which is a prevailing feature of mountain life, must be considered as complementary to biodiversity if sustainable mountain development is to be achieved.

In addition to gathering and sharing more and better data and information worldwide, there is an urgent need to strengthen capacity in developing country mountain regions, such as in the areas of meteorology, hydrology, ecology and soil sciences. Firmer links to the human sciences - anthropology, social science and human geography also need to be established. It is important to provide assistance to help participate in research, in order to increase the individual's and group's capacity to contribute to the extension and application of relevant knowledge within interdisciplinary approaches. It is suggested that future research focus, among other subjects, on (1) coexistence between peoples having different cultures, languages and social systems, (2) maintenance of peace and security, (3) human rights, (4) economic and social changes, (5) the proper use of both human and natural resources, (6) application of the results of science and technology in the interest of development of mountain regions, and (7) human values related to improvement of quality of life.

Education for Sustainable Development

Education for sustainable development is a dynamic concept that utilizes all aspects of public awareness, education and training to create or enhance an understanding of the linkages

among the issues of sustainable development and to develop the knowledge, skills, perspectives and values which will empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating and enjoying a sustainable future.

GLOBAL PROGRAMS AND CONCEPTS FOR EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN DEVELOPMENT

Education Network for Mountains (Kyrgyz Republic)³

Education Network for Mountains aims to establish an education network focusing on education, science, cultural heritage preservation and environmental safety. The project is hosted by the National Centre for Mountains of the Kyrgyz Republic. The main tasks of the Network will be to enhance awareness among mountain populations of innovative ways to achieve sustainable development, focusing on conservation of natural resources, the preservation of cultural heritage, the development of science and applied studies to suit local conditions, environmental safety and the promotion exchange of experience between mountain countries.

Education for Rural People (FAO/UNESCO)

Education for Rural People is a partnership within the Alliance Against Hunger and Education for All (EFA) initiatives. This new flagship is a call for a collaborative action to increase the coordination of efforts targeting the educational needs of rural people. The partnership is open to members committed to working separately and together to promote and facilitate a quality basic Education for rural people.

The partnership seeks to address rural-urban disparities, which are a serious concern to governments and the international community as a whole. About 70 per cent of the poor live in rural areas. Despite the fact that education is a basic right in itself and an essential prerequisite for reducing poverty, improving the living conditions of rural people and building a food-secure world, children's access to education in rural areas is still much lower than in urban areas, adult illiteracy is much higher and the quality of education is poorer. The flagship's seeks to build awareness on the importance of education for rural people as a crucial step to achieve the Millennium goals of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and achieving universal primary education, overcome the urban/rural education gap, increase access to basic education for rural people, improve the quality of basic education in rural areas and foster the national capacity to plan and implement basic education plans to address the learning needs of rural people.

Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UNESCO)

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) aims to promote education as a basis for a more sustainable human society and to integrate sustainable development into education systems at all levels. The decade will also strengthen international cooperation towards the development and sharing of innovative education for sustainable development programmes, practices and policies. Specific objects and targets for many stakeholders will be developed in the International Implementation Scheme.

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) is an

³ The Education Network for Mountains was established in pursuance of the Bishkek Mountain Platform and was endorsed in principal during a working group meeting consisting of representatives from UNEP, SDC (Switzerland), APMN (France), GTZ (Germany), UNU, Aga Khan Development Network and representatives from the Governments of Peru and Kyrgyzstan that was held in Geneva 20 November 2003. The project proposal is attached as an annex to this concept paper.

opportunity to put the human element at the forefront of efforts to facilitate the plan. The understandings, values, commitments and skills outlined above, that only education can provide, will support the more technical elements of the plan, reminding everyone – children, youth, adults – that the sustainable development agenda is in fact an agenda for all of us. It is about the way we live our lives, the way we respect the lives of others – far and near, present and future – and our attitudes to the world around us.

Sustainable development requires a holistic approach: Education for sustainable development has connections with other programmes and concerns in education. It is not a new programme but a call for a process to re-orient educational policies, programmes and practices so that education plays its part in building the capacities of all members of society to work together to build a sustainable future. Thus, the focus of DESD activities will be advocacy, communication, demonstration projects and networking directed at facilitating all educators to include sustainable development concerns and goals in their own programmes.

Regional Centers of Expertise (UNU)

The establishment of regional centers of expertise on education for sustainable development (RCEs) is a concept to strengthen the collaboration for Education for Sustainable Development among sub-national, regional and local institutions. The centers would be venues for the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences to raise awareness and facilitate cooperation between different levels of both formal and non-formal education at regional and local levels. In addition they would assist in developing and implementing sustainable development programs in all sectors and facilitating effective management of resources. RCEs and their networking would create global learning space, which is one of the major outcomes of DESD.

The Mountain Institute (TMI)

The Mountain Institute is an international non-profit organization dedicated to conserving high priority mountain eco-systems; increasing environmentally and culturally sustainable livelihoods and equity for mountain communities; and to promoting understanding and support for mountain issues through advocacy, education and outreach within both upstream and downstream communities. Founded in 1972, TMI is based in Washington, DC, and has offices and community-based programs in the Andean, Appalachian, Himalayan, and other mountain ranges around the world. In addition to these regional programs, TMI has two global initiatives---the Sacred Mountains Program and its Research & Education Program, which monitors, evaluates, and disseminates results of all TMI projects and their impacts.

TMI's Sacred Mountains Program works to promote the protection of sacred sites, to include the spiritual and cultural significance of mountains in environmental and sustainable use policies, to develop innovative educational and research programs, to encourage respect for the values and traditions of cultures that revere mountains, and to encourage people to develop their own reasons for valuing and protecting the natural environment. The program has projects in the United States developing interpretive and educational materials with National Parks and in the Himalayas and Central Asia developing community-based conservation activities and sustainable livelihoods grounded in cultural values placed on natural features of mountain environments.

Regional Education Programs of Carpathian Convention

Environment and School Network Initiative operates in 25 countries and develops strategies of bringing educational and environmental experts together.

NEXT STEPS

This initial set of ideas and programs is intended to facilitate the discussion of the members of the Education Initiative by providing a few concrete areas of action based on existing activities that could provide a promising foundation for further action, or which address an obvious gap. The aim is to assist members prioritize the ideas in terms of interest and willingness to take action, or to suggest other potential areas for focus. The eventual output would be proposals and recommendations for activities that the Initiative would take forward immediately, with an indication of who takes responsibility for which activities. The Second Meeting of the Mountain Partnership in Cusco will be an important opportunity to take this process forward.

2002 Tokyo Declaration for the International Year of Mountains

<http://www.unu.edu/mountains2002/declaration.html>

The Bishkek Mountain Platform

<http://mountains.unep.ch/mtn/platformtext.html>

Johannesburg Plan of Implementation

http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/POIChapter4.htm

UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG)

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>