

Sustainable Consumption and Production & ESD

ESD Programme, UNU-IAS



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-IAS
Institute of Advanced Studies

ABOUT SCP

To build a socially just economy and a more sustainable society, our consumption and production systems must also become more sustainable – not only in terms of market growth and resilience, but also in terms of productive non-market relations, ecosystem health, quality of life and the well-being of all involved. To build sustainable consumption and production (SCP) systems we need to redefine traditional relationships, such as the relationship between producers and consumers, regulators and those being regulated, and between those driving innovation in the markets and the market itself. We also need to develop the capacity and capabilities of all sectors of society - including business, government and the voluntary sector - to facilitate production of more sustainable products and services and to increase their knowledge of sustainability in all aspects of life.

SCP & ESD

Education for sustainable development (ESD) helps people develop the values, perspectives, knowledge, and skills needed to make smart, sustainable choices. ESD provides for long-term, systems thinking that can effectively deal with the complexities of SCP while building partnerships across traditional boundaries. It is this ability to promote learning through innovative, multi-stakeholder partnerships and across a variety of sectors that makes ESD key to developing the competencies and capabilities integral to SCP.

CASE STUDY SUMMARIES

The ESD Programme at UNU-IAS created a global network of more than 100 Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCE) worldwide. The RCEs provide a framework for strategic thinking and action on sustainability by creating diverse partnerships among educators, researchers, policymakers, scientists, youth, leaders within indigenous communities and throughout the public, private and non-governmental sectors.

Because of each RCE's diverse network of partners and their wealth of local knowledge and resources, they have the potential to transform current consumption and production systems. Globally, RCEs have launched a number of groundbreaking ESD initiatives that address some of the greatest challenges we face in moving to more sustainable consumption and production systems.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Restructuring the economy toward greener and more socially just societies lies, in large part, in the hands of the trained professionals working within that structure. Such professionals generally learn through a combination of formal education – such as elementary, secondary and post-secondary education – and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). To build SCP, it is therefore important that those education systems reflect the social and ecological goals of sustainability. TVET processes must consider developing local, place-based learning opportunities for students, exposing technical and vocational trainees to community needs and the characteristics of local ecosystems. Such an education depends heavily on the development of skills that go beyond technical competencies to include an understanding of the complexities of sustainability, the ability to effectively solve problems, and the ability to work with various sectors and stakeholders across the supply chain.

RCE Greater Western Sydney in Australia launched a multistakeholder project with local education partners using the Hawkesbury Riverfarm – 40 hectares of prime agricultural land on the Hawkesbury River – to develop sustainable TVET practices. The project gives pre-apprentice carpentry, electrical and plumbing students, under the supervision of their teachers, the opportunity to engage in community-based learning to gain key sustainable development skills. The project helped participants better understand historic, cultural and natural characterised of the Riverfarm site, and helped develop new learning strategies for regional sustainable development. Ultimately, the project creates new forms of professional education that fit into an agenda of green growth and sustainable market and non-market practices.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In both developed and developing countries, fostering entrepreneurship for sustainable development could improve livelihoods, reduce poverty and create more sustainable consumption and production systems overall. Educating current and potential entrepreneurs enables them to create viable alternatives to existing production and consumption systems that currently fail to adequately address sustainability issues, such as environmental deterioration along the supply chain and overall quality of life. Entrepreneurial education fosters innovation and helps entrepreneurs build better products, processes, and services. It is especially effective when it takes into account the social, economic and ecological complexities of development, the values of sustainability and a long-term perspective.



ACKNOWLEDGED BY



RCE Delhi, for example, helped develop a new crop of entrepreneurs among women living in poor urban areas of the region. Working with local partners and members of the community, RCE Delhi helped the women identify low cost resources that they could use to make products, such as bags and other handicrafts. They also helped the women identify potential markets and taught them about distributing their products most effectively. Overall, the program has been a success thanks to the opportunity the women were given to turn their learning into an innovative approach to creating a sustainable livelihood for themselves and their families.

INNOVATIONS FOR THE GREEN ECONOMY

Market prices of products and services generally do not reflect the environmental and social impact of those goods. Fundamental changes in societal norms and behaviors are required to truly transform consumption and production systems. What these systems would look like in a green economy is not yet clearly understood, nor can it be conceptualized universally for different regions. Building SCP in a green economy requires an understanding of the challenges of modern production and consumption systems, an environment that fosters cross-sectoral innovation and learning, and an institutional framework that promotes a transition to SCP. It also calls for a continuous, and systematically encouraged, process of learning and discovery of new forms of production and consumption.

RCE efforts focus specifically on these key elements of innovation and learning. The South African RCE in Makana and Rural Eastern Cape, for example, supports a Saturday market to strengthen local production and consumption while RCE Lucknow in India works to support local indigenous communities through productive livelihood activities. Both initiatives foster small-scale, low or no cost innovations that trigger new production and consumption relations toward local sustainable development. Education – which draws on the knowledge, history and resources of the communities involved – has a special role to play in sustaining such efforts. The governance of such innovative market processes through multistakeholder partnerships is equally important.

PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLES AND LIVELIHOODS

Sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods go far beyond specific choices individuals and households make for particular products and services; they encompass activity both within the market and outside of it. Overconsumption by the wealthy and underconsumption by those who struggle financially are examples, within the market, affecting lifestyle and livelihood. However, income generation and the assets that might lead to further income – be they financial, social, human or natural – are also a part of one's lifestyle and livelihood.

Learning is critical to any livelihood strategy, as it is at the root of the critical thinking, innovation and ethical decision-making necessary to identify and protect assets, and increase overall well-being. RCE Saskatchewan in Canada developed a strategy that would increase livelihood options for local individuals by

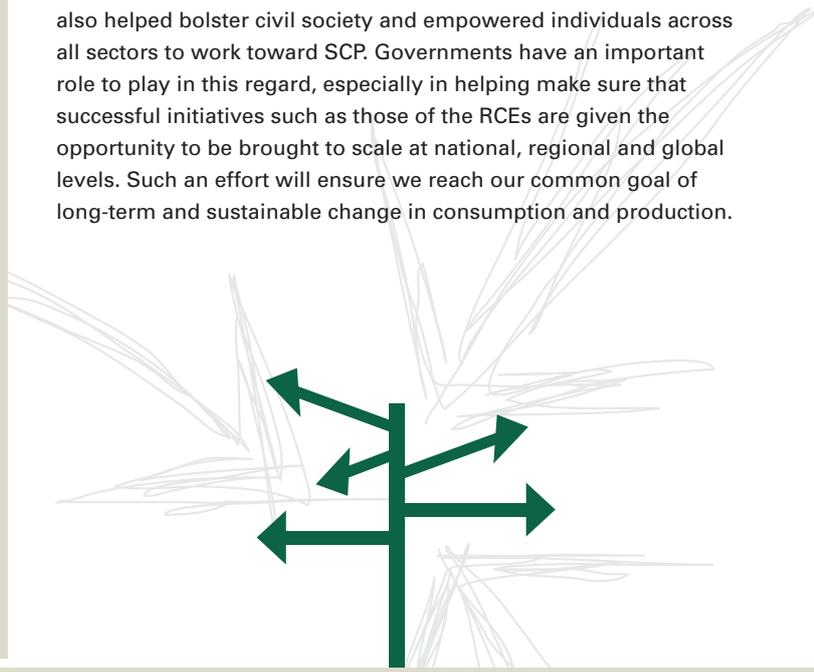
sharing and revaluing equipment within communities in the region. Through the Sharing Productive Capital Project people and organisations in the region volunteer capital, such as machines, tools and buildings. A software system tracks what assets are currently available. Participants in the project learn to value the shared goods highly and treat them with care, while learning also about their place in the wider consumption and production system. By turning individual assets into collective assets the project also helps open up new avenues for individuals and organisations in the region to earn income and increase their overall well-being.

POLICY RELEVANCE

One of the greatest challenges in developing SCP systems is creating a culture of sustainability among producers, consumers and within the wider society. Recent climate, resource and financial crises have underscored the critical importance of SCP. Yet SCP actions are still assigned predominantly to individual sectors or groups, such as producers, distributors, or consumers alone. Such an approach is often ineffective, as change doesn't generally take place on the wider systems level but stays within specific sectors.

Successful SCP requires an enabling policy environment that supports a system of education that would give all actors an opportunity to learn about ways to engage, partner, innovate, and – when necessary – redefine the entire system. Learning systems that bring resilience by generating multiple sustainability innovations are especially important in today's world, which is too often characterized by change, turbulence and economic, social and environmental upheaval. Innovations, in particular those around SCP, are best built on a strong foundation of local knowledge and resources, and with the full participation of local stakeholders.

The RCE network is built upon the principles of participation and local engagement and RCEs globally have innovated in ways that inspire new and diverse models of production and consumption, which are inclusive, resilient, and are built on the respective strengths of communities. The SCP initiatives of the RCEs have also helped bolster civil society and empowered individuals across all sectors to work toward SCP. Governments have an important role to play in this regard, especially in helping make sure that successful initiatives such as those of the RCEs are given the opportunity to be brought to scale at national, regional and global levels. Such an effort will ensure we reach our common goal of long-term and sustainable change in consumption and production.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

ESD Programme, UNU-IAS
Email: rceservicecentre@ias.unu.edu

UNU-IAS, 6F, International Organizations Center
Pacifico Yokohama
1-1-1 Minato Mirai, Nishi-ku
Yokohama 220-8502
JAPAN

Tel: +45-221-2300/2301
Fax: +45-221-2302
Website: www.ias.unu.edu/efsd