

**Session 6-2: Thematic Discussion - Policy Support**

13:00-15:00, Thursday, 24 November 2016

Moderator: Mario Tabucanon (UNU-IAS)

Facilitator: Carolina Lopez (Candidate Borderlands Mexico-USA)

The Global Action Programme on ESD focuses on *five priority action areas* - advancing policy, transforming learning and training environments, building capacities of educators and trainers, empowering and mobilizing youth, and accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level. Advancing policy, in particular, entails mainstreaming ESD in both education and sustainable development policies to create an enabling environment for ESD and to bring about systemic change which can only happen if relevant policies were coherent and designed by policymakers in a multi-stakeholder fashion.

**Objective**

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important to translate global goals and targets into national policies and local actions. The *objective* of the *Policy Support session* is to *brainstorm and share ideas on how RCEs can contribute to enabling policy environment for mobilizing education and learning for sustainable development and scaling up ESD actions, and to discuss initiatives and practices that support policy makers in the context of GAP and SDGs*. Discussants were invited to address *how RCEs can be engaged with supporting policymakers in mainstreaming ESD into policy making processes, education policy, sustainable development policy, and international multilateral cooperation agreements*. Participants should give an overview of their policy research and share their experiences. Finally, participants were asked to recommend actions for the RCE community.

**Policy Planning to Implementation**

Participants were introduced to the simple policy making model that showed the process from policy making to policy implementation in order to identify where RCEs can find entry points. Gaps were usually found at the agenda setting and the implementation stages. The agenda setting could be related to a global agenda, to national development plans, and then be translated into local policy actions. The issue definition was often influenced by our values, viewpoints and what most consider a governmental responsibility. So here the question was: what are the values of the community and the different countries and organizations? Setting the agenda was very much dependent on the context.

**Policy formulation**

Here different governments have different processes. It is the stage where formal plans are developed and governments decide on policy adoption. Adoption may occur through multi-stakeholder consultations, at various levels of government, may be reformative or incremental and often proposals were not always enacted.

Here RCEs could be consulted for technical advice. One good example was RCE Saskatchewan, the example is a feature in the [RCE 10 year publication](#). Policy evaluation may provide feedback and measure its outcomes. Realistically there was a separation of power, hence policy formulation also meant building relationships.

**In the context of GAP/SDGs how can RCEs be engaged in policy making and policy implementation processes?**

Carolina Lopez (RCE Borderlands USA/Mexico) highlighted her project 'Living Lab for Sustainable Development'. She explained that the way they work on the ground was academic and service oriented. When a problem was identified for example by the community they made it into an education issue. They always tried to *understand the historical and personal context of the issue at hand*. This can be done via a research approach to define objectives in collaboration with community members and reevaluate the outcomes with the objectives defined. There were recurring 'green feedback loops'. They created workshops and communicated. It was built on the approach to create. Of utmost importance was to get on the legislative path in time. You can speak up. Research conducted with collaborative actors, including the lay public and local authorities, as well as the research rejoined to fulfill the policy cycle. During policy formation one can no longer be present, there RCEs needed to step back.

During *policy implementation* a well-thought approach was needed to maximize the benefits. It was really important how one would approach the policy makers here. **YES! THIS IS CRUCIAL!** It was better not being critical, but constructive as RCEs could do the evaluation for them, so as to maximize the overall benefits. From the evaluation one could write policy impact studies or policy briefs.

Carolina then introduced [The Sustainability Approximation Model \(SAM\)](#) – a model that could be used as a policy instrument and as a framework for Corporate Social Responsibility. They had been asked by the public administration to talk about it. The model allows policy makers to see how impact is distributed in a very simple visual way. It was basically a computer generated summary of the impacts of new businesses. RCE Candidate Borderlands Mexico/USA often use SAM worksheets where policymakers brainstorm with simple pencil and paper tools, the software is actually the second option to this.

Mario Tabucanon explained that depending on the position of the policy in the diagram one

could see the feasibility, so if not feasible one would have to redraw the decision space to meet all dimensions in the middle. It was extremely simple. The Sustainability Approximation Model allows decision makers to quickly notice how the impact of a proposed policy is distributed through the sustainability variables, taking into consideration the interrelation that exists between humanity, economy and environment, while seeking to achieve and maintain a sustainable balance among them. He went on to add that RCEs needed to add policy implementation, evaluation, and recommendation to their multistakeholder engagement.

#### Participants' Questions:

IGES: It would be interesting to hear of one good example of policy dialogue.

Margaret Fleming (RCE East Midlands): Much of this were aspects of post truth. A basic structure to influence and to look specifically at how these models can be used. International recommendations would then have to be scaled down or adapted nationally. How can we use these models for this purpose?

RCE Borderlands member: Lobbying was absolute key, as there were always groups one needed to reach out to. One could also influence via civic action. In Mexico they can influence via many different groups.

Carolina Lopez: There were different ways, even if it was just an email to the legislator. But more importantly one needed to make the voices were heard and timing was important. Election cycles was one timing issue. Things were often heard though the people. All this did not take into account the power of lobbyists.

Mario Tabucanon: RCEs needed to also intervene with political parties.

RCE Espoo: Different political parties were invited to their seminars to make them aware of the issues.

#### **How can RCEs get their voices heard and gain access to the policy process?**

After the discussion, small groups were formed to address interactively:

##### Group 1:

1. Approach legislative bodies in the country specific context legislation (US: no voice, Canada: voice can be ignored, France: cooperation with ministers in for example curriculum development, Indonesia: government regulation on strategic environmental assessment like impact assessment but for policy.
2. Identify issues
3. Identify stakeholders, then involve them the process to assess impact.
4. Make policy recommendations with stakeholders choosing the best policy options, considering the communities' needs, the environment, social aspects and the economy. Policymakers must know the risks of any enterprise to the environment both

long and short term.

#### Group 2:

The discussion had been separated into developed and developing countries. In Japan for example the problem of sustainability and ESD was well understood. Point of access in Japan came through municipalities and electoral offices. In Netherlands people usually proposed ideas to the government. In Thailand science and local knowledge were combined through a consultation process and then propositions made to the government. The point of access came then through provincial senators and ministries.

#### Group 3:

Denmark was very good in understanding the local needs and conducting research. Here it was important to look for collaborations with organizations that can then tackle like-minded topics. RCEs needed to know from translational organizations such as the UN, when the international timelines for working on ESD issues were and when one could receive support from these organizations.

### **How can we work towards the normalization of SD friendly policies at the local, national and global levels?**

Netherlands: In a project there were two options, one can either go on their own or find collaborators, but more importantly it was to get to individuals with power and competence on board for example Members of Parliament. We have to keep catching up with these people, also on the personal level. At some point the project is then accepted for screening in Parliament, this could take up to six months, but one may get funding for up to 10 million. Euros. In Holland the people cannot influence too much, one had to go directly to the government.

ASEAN: If RCEs could bring the SDGs down to the local level, that would be a useful model. Local projects can serve as examples which can then be used in policy implementation. For example, the ASEAN Environmental Education Action Plan (AEEAP) (in 10 countries) had identified RCEs as policy instruments of implementation.

RCE Yogyakarta (Indonesia): The reason why many of us have the same issue at different levels was that similar issues translate across levels. The Indonesian Ministry of Education had asked RCE Yogyakarta to develop a community based ESD action plan. This action plan was then drafted during the Asia Pacific RCE meeting held in Yogyakarta in January 2011.

Final words by Mario Tabucanon and Carolina Lopez: These were our humble inputs on how RCEs could influence policy processes as we tried to touch all of you and open your minds to the policy implementation cycle. A way forward is for RCEs to further develop closer

relationships with policymakers and politicians and find opportunities for access to the policymaking and implementation cycle. RCEs can learn from each other on how RCE interventions can be effective and valuable. One concrete opportunity is through IPBES where the RCE network is a recognized partner particularly in capacity building on assessment and policy support tools.