

**10<sup>th</sup> Global RCE Conference**  
Yogyakarta, Indonesia



**Session 3: Strategic Discussion Part II**  
**Contributions from RCEs for GAP/SDGs**

13:00-14:30, Wednesday, 23 November 2016

Moderator: Mario Tabucanon, UNU-IAS

Panellists:

- Saroj Srisai, Head of Environment Division, ASEAN Secretariat
- Monika MacDevette, Deputy Director of the Ecosystem's Division, UNEP
- Ushio Miura, Programme Specialist and Team Leader for Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship, Section for Educational Innovation and Skills Development, UNESCO Bangkok
- Naoya Tsukamoto, ESD Project Director, United Nations University – Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS)
- Dzul kifli Razak, Immediate Past President, International Association of Universities (IAU)

The Global Action Programme (GAP) 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 RCE actions towards contributing to implementation of GAP cuts across priority areas even though the global RCE network is a recognized partner particularly in accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level. Also, in the context of the 2030 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important to translate global goals and targets into national policies and local actions. While SDGs are global in scope, implementations are local in action. In both GAP and SDG implementations, RCEs can and should make meaningful contributions in bridging the gap between learning and development through ESD.

The objective of the session was to answer the following overarching question:

***From the respective organizations' perspectives and beyond, how can the RCEs be effective instruments in their aspirations and actions toward contributing to GAP and SDGs?***

Panellists and participants were invited to address how RCEs can be engaged with mobilizing education and learning to accelerate progress towards sustainable development and in the implementation of SDGs and achievement of targets. With this aim in mind panellists addressed the following topics:

- RCE contributions to GAP five priority areas. <http://en.unesco.org/gap/priority-action-areas>
- RCE contributions to SDG 4, especially 4.7 – “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge, and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through ESD and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality promotion of

a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development”.

- RCE contributions to other Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs 1-3, 5-17.  
<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>
- One potential initiative where RCEs could collaborate with the respective organization.

Mario Tabucanon: When we speak about transformation we have to have a direction to where, meaning a sense of the destination. This session is about transformation towards GAP and SDGs. GAP has five priority areas with area 5 being local solutions, but as RCEs, we are also able to contribute in many other areas. UNESCO's report at the end of the Decade on ESD showed that education and sustainability sectors are not converging enough. So we ask how can RCEs be of more importance? We will address these issues with the panellists which are partners of RCEs rather than RCEs themselves. We would like to hear from them how RCEs can be used as instruments to achieve their goals.

ASEAN: RCEs' contribution to ASEAN explicitly means access to ten governments – the ASEAN Member States (AMS). I am responsible for ASEAN's cooperation in environment. As we all know, if we continue at this pace the supply and demand will not meet. The ASEAN system works on the basis of consensus among AMS and dialogue partners' countries, thus addressing SDG 17 on global partnership for sustainable development. Our answer would probably be a large list of unfocused things in terms of what RCEs can do for ASEAN. Currently we have a lot of youth programmes, at the national or regional levels. Here, two sectors could work together to make mainstream programmes in the educational system. It is essential to focus on Youth as a platform, thereby advancing policy.

UNEP: We, as UNEP, were instrumental in integrating the component of the environment into the SDGs. If one looks at the guiding principles of the SDGs it is really the integrated approach that allows UNEP to play a major role and in this sense having the opportunity to work with RCEs. By working together – we could take an intergenerational approach that is needed to ensure that we are not going to burden the next generation. One specific example in particular, is the environmental education and training programme from UNEP. In collaboration with the Global Universities Partnership on Environment for Sustainability (GUPES) we could ask RCEs to get involved. We need to make sure our policy makers also develop the necessary capacities in sustainability. Building tools and training materials together with RCEs would be another possibility. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are another opportunity where we UNEP could tap into the RCE expertise. As suggested by ASEAN we need to strengthen the belief that youth can contribute to society meaningfully. UNEP can also play a role in GAP implementation in collaboration with RCEs.

UNESCO Bangkok: As a regional office of education UNESCO covers 48 countries. Building on the words from Monika MacDevette (UNEP) I would like to go more in depth in terms of SDG learning. It has to be more participatory, specifically for the target 4.7 learning is to be, to do, to know, to live together. How can we bring RCEs in more to implement Sustainable Development and

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)? Here GAP gives plenty of guidance. RCEs can contribute in most areas, RCEs can be especially effective in the whole community area.

Mario Tabucanon: When going into SDG 4.7 and even further into the indicator levels, it becomes more visible where and how RCEs can engage specifically.

UNU-IAS: We have a general idea that includes three steps: (1) increasing the number of RCEs from originally seven to now 149, (2) we have better networks and are very active such as in events and networking, where there is plenty of opportunity to exchange information and become more productive. The next (3) phase is now to contribute to the international agenda. We are in a good position to do so, it will be beneficial to raise our profiles nationally and internationally. This can be done, by close cooperation with national governments and internationally via the RCE Secretariat that can help RCEs to raise their profiles in particularly on sectoral issues such as biodiversity and climate change. In order to realize this, we need to raise the level of communication by providing annual reports and by providing tangible solutions through the RCE Secretariat. For example, in the case of biodiversity, what helps is the documentation of local knowledge. Through tangible actions we can contribute as a network and as individual RCEs to the international agenda.

Mario Tabucanon: RCEs are a flagship movement of the United Nations University (UNU).

IAU: The International Association of Universities (IAU) has taken the whole institution approach to advance the agenda. This approach is part of the GAP and has been integrated in the SDGs too. How do RCEs contribute to Sustainable Development? You all work very hard with the communities and your strength is that you understand what the communities are all about. This engagement is something the RCEs are very well endowed with. You understand the deeper meaning of the issues at hand and can take these issues forward by making it into a proposal as a joint proposal thereby finding sponsors and funders. We can be the person that speaks for the community. After we understand where the funds come from, one can take it to a different level where policy decisions are being taken. Immediate policy recommendation, formation, implementation and evaluation follow thereafter. Later and most importantly the empowerment of communities to become practitioners of knowledge is to be embedded.

#### **Questions and comments from the floor:**

RCE Oldenburg Muensterland: Naoya Tsukamoto mentioned wise words that we have nothing to lose, but what can we gain from being in the network, apart from being appreciate partners?

Naoya Tsukamoto: The level of relations with governments differ between RCEs. Every national government is working hard at developing national SDG plans. RCEs have a very good position to be recognised as strategic partners to develop these plans, which will make it easy for you as RCEs to work effectively on the ground. Another benefit is for the network. You will gain additional partners in this international family, namely the RCE network itself. The network only has one major supporter (Ministry of Environment Japan, MoEJ), so if we manage to raise our profile or could get more partners, other funders or supporters may come on board.

RCE Kano: most of RCEs here do not have a UNU outlet. Most of us have EU, UNEP or UNESCO regional offices. We have tried very hard to link to these regional offices, but have found it difficult to communicate with these offices. Our greatest asset is our expertise which we are happy to share in order to collaborate widely. This is why most of us are here for things we cannot do nationally or at home.

UNEP: At UNEP we work with goal oriented programmes so we do not have local offices in all countries. Generally, when we are cooperating, we are bound by the deliverables that have been defined very specifically at the beginning. Often there are expectations of engagement that involve money of some sort. We depend very much on the supporters that give us funds and hence bound us to the outcomes defined. Fundamental agreements are needed in order to work together.

UNESCO: Often also regional offices may not have their focus on ESD. However, a more systematic approach on how collaborations are done is important.

UNU-IAS: We have worked in government for many years and are lucky to work with many different organisations. Often international large organisations cannot solve individual problems, but they can provide platforms for solution providers. We need the support and coordination.

**Mario Tabucanon summarised the session:**

ASEAN mentioned that when advancing policy, RCEs can get involved. The ASEAN Secretariat can open doors regionally but the implementation is always on the country level. Apart from the ASEAN countries they also have dialogue partners. UNEP, on the other hand, has a wide range of possibilities for engagement, especially with respect to GAP, one example would be partnering with universities in MOCC development. 80% of RCEs in the world are led by universities. UNESCO has the National Commission of each country so again there are possibilities for RCEs to engage. UNU-IAS promotes the movement and can help in making international relations and raise RCEs' profiles. IAU showed by using the whole institution approach how much of the GAP implementation can be done.