

Capacity Development and Training Workshop for African RCE Coordinators

7 – 9 September 2012, Rhodes University, South Africa

Summary Report

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Introduction

It has been acknowledged that Africa has the highest poverty, lowest carbon footprint and some of the highest biodiversity in the world. The RCE network provides an excellent opportunity to address sustainability issues, and at the same time strengthen the African resilience in the context of contributing to a low-carbon society. Various RCEs in Africa are involved in mobilising diverse actors to address sustainability issues through collaborative ESD activities. The activities range from organising environmental learning workshops for educators to enabling universities in Africa to connect with people and society needs. However, RCEs in Africa are faced with many challenges in their quest to involve communities and facilitate a networked approach to addressing sustainable development issues. These challenges range from poor network governance systems to inadequate funding for collaborative ESD projects. There is need to strengthen the capacities of RCEs in Africa to respond effectively to operational and sustainability challenges in their regions. It is against this backdrop that a capacity development and training workshop for RCE coordinators was held at Rhodes University, South Africa from 7-9 September 2012. Coordinators from a total of 13 RCEs and 4 potential ones participated in the event.

The workshop event which, the UNU-IAS facilitated in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community Regional Environmental Education Programme (SADC-REEP) and RCE Makana is part of a broader capacity development programme aimed at strengthening capabilities of RCEs to deliver ESD. The capacity development programme lays emphasis on participation, ownership and sharing of facilitation roles. Capacity issues are being considered from a systems perspective, with an appreciation of the dynamics and inter-relationships amongst stakeholders in a specific RCE. Capacity development is viewed as a reflexive and participatory process focusing on the importance of network relationships, dialogue, collaborative learning, systemic thinking and the role of multi-actors in enabling sustainability and social change in specific geographic regions and beyond.

Implementing Vision of ESD through Capacity Development

The United Nations, through its Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD, 2005 – 2014), identifies capacity development and training as one of the strategies for implementing the vision of ESD. The UNU-IAS is contributing to this strategy through its Regional Centres of Expertise (RCE) initiative. The RCE initiative is a response to the call of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) for partnerships on mobilising diverse stakeholders towards achieving sustainable development. Currently there are 101 Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development operating globally with 17 of the RCEs occurring in Africa. Each of the 17 RCEs has identified sustainable development issues to collaboratively address through environmental learning and research processes.

Since 2011, the UNU-IAS in collaboration with the SADC-REEP has been implementing a capacity development programme for African RCEs. Under this initiative, two workshops and the first African RCE continental meeting have been facilitated. In the first workshop which, was held in August 2011 and hosted by RCE Makana, four focal areas were identified as being central to

strengthening capacities of African RCEs to respond to sustainable development challenges in their regions. The four areas are on transformative learning, network governance, collaborative partnerships and research. In a follow-up workshop held in March 2012 and hosted by RCE KwaZulu Natal, a small team of RCE coordinators were engaged in writing course materials on the four focal areas (modules). The emerging course materials (modules) will form a comprehensive manual for use to enhance capabilities for ESD at the individual (RCE coordinators), organisational (RCE stakeholders) and network levels. Other than contributing to the implementation of DESD, the programme seeks to support the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) environment action plan. A key objective of the NEPAD action plan is to place Africa on a path of sustainable growth and development through eradicating poverty, building peace, and conserving the integrity and diversity of its ecosystems. This requires partnerships between Africa and the international community, as envisaged by UNU RCE initiative.



Workshop Objectives

The purpose of the Workshop was to deliberate and refine emerging capacity development modules with a view to equipping RCE coordinators with knowledge, skills and motivation to implement ESD better in their contexts. Specific objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Equip participants with motivation, tools, methodologies and skills to implement capacity development workshops in their RCEs using emerging course materials.
2. Strengthen capabilities of RCE coordinators to implement transformative ESD projects through networked governance mechanisms.

3. Identify opportunities for further development of African RCEs and explore possibilities for undertaking collaborative research projects.
4. Convene the second African RCE continental meeting, with a view to discussing ways of increasing visibility of African RCEs.

These objectives were realised through reflexive deliberations and presentations during the workshop and the second African RCE continental meeting. Fundamentals of the following modules were presented by course materials developers and deliberated during workshop sessions:

- *Module 1* – Transformative learning as an ESD goal (Caleb Mandikonza and David Ongare)
- *Module 2* – Collaboration, Partnerships and Networking in RCEs (Tichaona Pesanayi)
- *Module 3* – Governance and management in RCEs (Dick Kachilonda and David Manyatsi)
- *Module 4* – Community engaged research and development (Tsepo Mokuku and Abel)

Workshop Participants

Workshop participants were drawn from the 13 UNU acknowledged RCEs and 4 candidate RCEs as shown in the Table below.

Name of Participant	Country	RCE	E-Mail
1. Mr. Abdoul SY Hamidou	Senegal	Senegal	acapes@ornage.sn
2. Mr. Stephen Basirake	Uganda	Greater Mbarara	steveb@must.ac.ug
3. Mr. Basil Tibanyendera	Uganda	Greater Mbarara	basiltiba@yahoo.com
4. Dr Ayub Macharia Ndaruga	Kenya	Greater Nairobi	ayubmndaruga@yahoo.com
5. Mr. David Ong'are	Kenya	Greater Nairobi	dongare@nema.go.ke
6. Mr. Edward Misava Ombajo	Kenya	Kakamega	emisombajo@yahoo.com
7. Prof Kennedy Nyabuti Ondimu	Kenya	Mau Ecosystem Complex	knondimu@hotmail.com
8. Dr Sadiya Sani-Daura	Nigeria	Kano	sadiyasd@yahoo.com
9. Dr Abdul Husaini	Nigeria	Minna	abduhusaini@yahoo.com
10. Dr Tsepo Mokuku	Lesotho	Lesotho	tmmokuku@yahoo.com
11. Prof Heila Lotz-Sisitka	South Africa	Makana	h.lotz@ru.ac.za
12. Prof Rob O'Donoghue	South Africa	Makana	r.odonoghue@ru.ac.za
13. Mr. Aristides Baloi	Mozambique	Maputo	abaloi@hotmail.com
14. Mr. David Manyatsi	Swaziland	Swaziland	dmna@uniswa.sz
15. Dr Elsabe Julies	Namibia	Khmomas-Erongo	ejulies@unam.na
16. Mrs. Cecilia Mukundu	Zimbabwe	Harare (Candidate)	ctsopotsa@yahoo.co.uk
17. Mr. Joseph Nyakuromba	Zimbabwe	Mutare (Candidate)	joseph@haarlem-mutare.nl
18. Ms Victoria Ferdinand	Tanzania	Greater Dar-es-Salaam (Candidate)	vickywcst@gmail.com
19. Mrs. Mirriam Moonga	Zambia	Lusaka (Candidate)	mirriam.moonga@unza.zm
20. Mr. Caleb Mandikonza	South Africa	SADC-REEP	caleb@wessa.co.za
21. Mr. Tichaona Pesanayi	South Africa	SADC-REEP	tich@wessa.co.za
22. Mr. Dick Kachilonda	South Africa	SADC-REEP	dick@wessa.co.za
23. Dr Abel Atiti	Japan	UNU-IAS	atiti@ias.unu.edu

Workshop Sessions

The first two days (7 & 8 Sept) of the workshop focused on deliberating and refining capacity development modules that were recently designed by a team of RCE coordinators in partnership with UNU-IAS as highlighted below. The last day was used to convene the second African RCE

Continental Meeting in which strategies for advancing regional and global partnerships for ESD projects were discussed.

Day One

The participants were introduced to the workshop and welcomed to RCE Makana. Modules on collaboration (Module 2) and community engaged research (Module 4) were presented to the participants by the developers. The participants were introduced to key principles of collaboration and approaches to research. Each module presentation was followed by reflexive deliberations aimed at identifying gaps and suggesting improvements to the drafts. The following useful insights emerged from day one reflexive deliberations:

- There is need to document more stories on research and collaboration for sharing through the modules. There is evidence that there is a lot of growth in African RCEs and that they are able to work with little resources to achieve more ESD results.
- To use Ubuntu philosophy as an orienting framework for engaging RCEs in community engaged research and collaboration. The philosophy needs to be drawn upon from a practice-based perspective.
- Explain how to collaborate on an equal basis – the need to address power relationships within a partnership is fundamental.
- Make strong links between leadership and collaboration. More stories (case studies) on collaboration within RCEs are required. RCE Khomas-Erongo (Namibia) and RCE Kano to provide case stories.
- A focus on how influence systems and policy makers to enhance collaboration and community engaged research. Details on how to strengthen collaboration within RCEs need to be covered in the modules – e.g. undertaking a stakeholder analysis (social network analysis).
- Articulate the role of RCEs in setting an environmental agenda for a country with a view to making strong links between research and policy.
- Include cases on flagship research projects – e.g. from RCE Minna.
- Include aspects on application, dissemination and ownership of research findings in RCEs.
- Outline characteristics of community engaged research and make links to transformative learning practice. How can RCEs contribute to better and relevant community engaged research? Case study from RCE Mau Complex to provide an example.
- Introduce contemporary approaches to evaluation research.
- Need to address issue of language in communicating research findings – use of metaphors to translate technical language into local language.
- Forms of presenting research findings and ways of reaching out to the major stakeholders.

Day Two

After reflections on day one sessions, the participants were introduced to transformative learning (Module 1) and networked governance in RCEs (Module 3). In both cases, principles and structure of the modules were shared by the developers. This was followed by reflexive deliberations with a view to identify gaps and refine the modules further. The following points emerged from day two deliberations:

- Include strategies for fostering authentic relationships and transformative learning in the RCE manual
- Articulate various perspectives on learning and transformation. Discuss how transformation occurs in terms of sustainable development.

- Cover aspects of transformative learning and social aspects of transformative learning.
- Introduce aspects of Ubuntu philosophy as a framework of transformative learning.
- Provide case stories on transformative learning: change of sustainability state in RCEs.
- Introduce aspects of climate change (e.g. RCE Makana): what does climate change mean to RCE practice?
- Model on climate change: how can we transform so that we have little impact on resources?
- Evaluation of transformative learning processes.
- Evaluation research on networked governance.
- Provide more cases of RCE governance.

Day Three

Participants attended a panel presentation that highlighted outcomes of a two-week ESD leadership program that took place at Rhodes University as part of events towards the 30th anniversary of EEASA conference. Prof Lotz-Sisitka used the opportunity to share insights from the Planet Under Pressure March 26-29 Conference that was held in London. Planet under Pressure 2012 was the largest gathering of global change scientists leading up to the Rio+20 Conference. Click here for more details <http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net/>. RCEs have a role to play in finding solutions to the global sustainability challenge by undertaking research on both local and global environmental change. African RCEs have a huge potential to educate stakeholders on global environmental change. There is need to align RCE research work to that the relevant research areas of the Future Earth program (visit http://4dweb.proclim.ch/4dcgi/proclim/all/BuildCheckForm_ResArea).

Day three was also used to convene the second African RCE Continental Meeting with the following agenda:

1. Introductory remarks
2. Review of the previous minutes
3. Implementation of the capacity development modules
4. Collaborative research projects
5. Possible ESD Publications for 2013
6. The 2013 RCE Global conference preparation
7. Visibility of African RCEs
8. Coordination of African RCEs
9. Any Other Business

Workshop Outcomes

A key outcome of the workshop is the improved drafts of the four modules which will constitute a Course Manual for African RCEs. All the four modules will consist of the following:

- A core text to provide a broad overview and key concepts that are relevant to the module. The text will also include a number of reflective opportunities for engaging ideas in relation to the RCE context.
- Case studies to present opportunities to apply the key concepts to a real world context. The 'cases' are to provide a set of questions that may be applied to analyse specific sustainability challenges.
- Activities to broaden participation in collaborative ESD projects within an RCE.

RCE Panel Discussion at the 30th EEASA Conference

The three-day capacity development and training workshop for African RCE Coordinators was closely followed by the 30th Environmental Education for Southern Africa (EEASA) Annual Conference from 11 – 14 September. RCE coordinators from SADC countries remained behind to attend the Conference. UNU-IAS in collaboration with RCE Denmark presented a panel discussion on *'The role of RCEs in fostering transformative social learning and sustainability practices in Africa'*. The panel discussion was chaired by Dr Daniel Babikwa of National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA), Uganda. Abel introduced to the participants the background and growth of the global RCE network. Prof Rob O'Donoghue gave a brief overview of recent deliberations of African RCEs and emphasised the social learning aspects of RCEs. Prof Jeppe Læssøe, Coordinator of RCE Denmark talked on partnership building between African and European RCEs towards cross-boundary social learning. These introductions were followed by discussions and reflexive deliberations around the following questions:

1. To what extent are African RCEs contributing to social change and sustainability practices in the regions they serve?
2. What challenges face African RCEs in fostering a networked and action-oriented approach to social learning processes?
3. What are the potential interventions for strengthening capacities of African RCEs to effectively respond to contextual operational and sustainability challenges?
4. Where should we, as RCE actors and educators, focus our efforts after the end of the Decade in 2014?
5. How can we support and engage RCEs in collaborative research-based social learning processes and multi-stakeholder policy development in ESD?

The RCE panel discussion was attended by 22 EEASA delegates that included Professor Peter Blaze Corcoran from Florida Gulf University, USA who offered summative comments on the RCE discussion.



RCE panel discussion participants