

**Acting Together as Networking NGOs and Individuals
Towards
the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development**

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Abstract

The Japan Council on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD-J) is a non-profit networking NGO founded to promote the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), which NGOs and the Japanese government jointly proposed at the 2002 Johannesburg Summit. Our aim is to tie up and enhance the educational activities of groups and individuals in Japan concerning various social issues—of health, gender, peace, human rights, multiculturalism, development, environment and other fields—for the successful implementation of the DESD with meaningful practices to realize a truly sustainable society.

For Sustainable Development (SD), a variety of issues, as mentioned above, need to be tackled together because they have complicated connections with each other, often sharing a related starting point. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) empowers us to face and solve such issues evident in the present world through a participatory learning process in each community. The sustainable future that we all aim for can be realized as we understand the larger picture and promote the cooperation of people across different fields and positions.

ESD-J hopes that the people of various countries and areas in the world establish a domestic ESD network and form an international ESD network with us. If citizens want to advocate ESD, then this network will help to evaluate activities and concretize goals.

Introduction

This presentation focuses on the work of ESD-J for the promotion of ESD and UNDESD to share experiences and ideas. ESD-J is involved in an ongoing process of cooperation with other organizations in the same field. ESD-J encourages NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region to establish a network to share each other's ESD experiences and develop ESD theories specific to the region.

Education Creates Our Future...

For SD, a variety of issues—including poverty, human rights violations, sexual prejudice, warfare, environmental destruction and many others—need to be tackled together because they have complicated connections with each other, often sharing the same root.

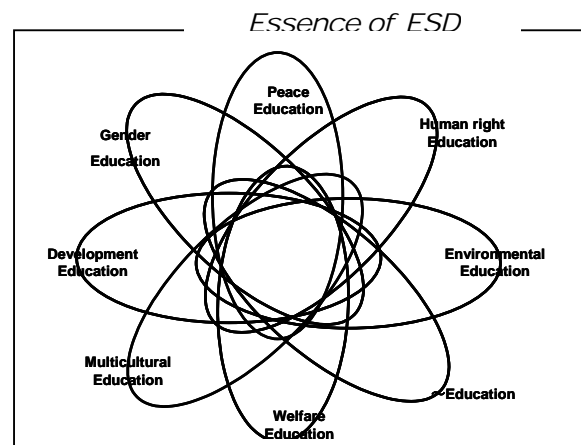
ESD empowers us to face and solve these issues through a 'participatory' learning process in each community.

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Various Approaches that Share the 'Essence' of ESD

Various educational attempts focusing on different social themes such as the environment, development, human rights, peace, gender, multiculturalism, social welfare and many others share a common purpose—to empower people to strive for a better, sustainable society.

To fulfill this purpose, these educational approaches target the development of certain similar abilities such as communication skills and multifaceted perspectives, promote learning through such processes as participation and consensus building, and share similar values including the pursuit of harmonious coexistence and respect for human dignity. This commonality of purpose, targets, processes, and values forms the essence of ESD.



The Mission of ESD-J

- To network with NGOs in Japan to promote cooperation in order to complement each other's activities for the creation of a sustainable society
- To play a role as a counterpart to the Japanese government by advocating policy proposals and collaborating in the policy implementation to realize substantive ESD in Japan and abroad
- To lay down a framework that enables NGOs in Japan to actively participate in a process to create a sustainable society through school and community education and community development activities
- To communicate with international partners as a Japanese contact point for DESD
- To develop a training scheme for NGO staff in Japan to promote their active international presence
- To create a framework that encourages Japanese NGOs to deliver project proposals to international bodies

Current Activities of ESD-J

ESD-J aims to encourage and support various organizations and individuals to work together for the successful DESD that starts in 2005. We currently run activities in four main areas: information sharing, including organizing seminars and publishing educational materials; domestic networking; policy advocacy; and international networking.

Information sharing—Developing and communicating ESD-related information

One of ESD-J's important activities is developing an interactive website for sharing ESD concepts and information. ESD-J also conducts workshops and seminars and publishes paper-based ESD reports and educational materials for sharing experiences nationwide.

Policy advocacy—Valuing participatory processes

ESD-J works to contribute to the development of the sound and comprehensive national DESD

implementation plan of Japan. ESD-J particularly proposes that the national plan should recognize the importance of a bottom-up and multi-partnership approach in planning and implementing ESD activities throughout the country.

ESD-J also looks at the DESD international planning and has submitted:

- Comments on the UNESCO draft framework of the DESD international implementation scheme (September, 2003) (See <http://www.esd-j.org/news/Requests%20from%20ESDJ.doc>)
- ESD-J's mission and activities to UNESCO in response to its request to express the commitment to UNDESD (February, 2004) (See <http://www.esd-j.org/news/dbfile002.doc>)

Domestic and international networking—Strengthening networks of ESD activists

Sharing experiences and knowledge among various groups of people is important in order to promote the success of ESD practices everywhere. To enable such information sharing, ESD-J calls for the establishment of a network of people in the Asia-Pacific and other regions of the world. As ESD should be based on and inherent to local culture and the social conditions of each community, ESD-J would like to meet grassroots activists and organizations of various communities in the world, no matter how small or how unsophisticated their activities are. By networking with as many people as possible, we aim to exchange our experiences and knowledge, aiming for more successful ESD implementation.

Conclusion

ESD-J plans to organize an international/Asia-Pacific networking conference in 2005 in Tokyo where we can share each other's ESD experiences and develop ESD theories of the Asia-Pacific. This will be our first step to build the international ESD network that will allow us to communicate with a wide variety of ESD activists and organizations in the future.