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## **ACHIEVING THE 2030 SDGS IN THE DRC - Goal 4: Free quality education for all**

**by Jean Kasereka Lutswamba, Coordinator of Schools of the Baptist Community in Central Africa (CBCA), Democratic Republic of the Congo**

### **General country context**

Located in Central Africa and a former Belgian colony, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is the second largest country in Africa with a surface area of 2,345.410 km<sup>2</sup> and a population estimated at over 95 million. Potentially rich with its natural resources, the country nevertheless is classified among the poorest countries in the world and has experienced recurrent wars since its independence in 1960. With this multi-faceted crisis situation, the DRC is faced with several challenges at all levels, political, economic, and social. Like all other sectors of life in the DRC, the education sector has not been spared.

According to a report by the DRC's Ministry of Social and Family Affairs, this crisis affects all aspects of the education system, ranging from management of infrastructure and resources to school enrolment, resulting in particular from a lack of programming, weak institutional capacities, and poor governance (Ministry of Social and Family Affairs, 2000). However, the DRC, like other sub-Saharan African countries, has subscribed to the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. In the education sector, efforts have been made here and there to meet the need for quality education for all. However, there is still a long way to go for the country to reach the objectives that have been set. Below, an account is given of the challenges facing free basic education decreed by the President in the efforts to implement the 2030 SDGs.

### **The challenges of free basic education in the DRC**

As of the 2019-2020 school year, the President of the DRC has decreed free primary education. As to be expected, the decision was welcomed by the population because it aims to relieve the burden on parents by materialising Article 43 of the country's constitution, which stipulates in its Paragraph 5 that "Primary education is compulsory and free in public schools". Similarly, the decision seems to be partly in line with SDG 4.6, which enshrines inclusive access to quality education: "Ensuring equal access to quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning opportunities". However, the two years of implementing the measure have revealed enormous challenges in terms of teacher support, school infrastructure and, ultimately, the quality of education. The question is whether the country really is financially capable of providing free, quality basic education.

It should be noted that in the DRC, there are three categories of teachers: teachers who are registered and paid by the state, teachers who are registered but not paid by the state, known as NPs (unpaid teachers), and newly recruited and unregistered teachers



referred to as NUs (new units). The latter two categories of teachers were fully paid by the parents, while the former received a supplement from the parents. In addition, the parents covered the running costs, building costs and other miscellaneous costs.

The implementation of free basic education is experiencing problems with a number of consequences regarding the functioning of schools. The state salary is lower than the bonus that teachers received from parents (in most cases and especially in urban areas, the parents' bonus has been reduced by at least half). Throughout the country, not only 'NPs' but also 'NUs' have not been paid. Support staff in schools (ushers, sentinels, secretaries, etc.) who used to be paid by parents are no longer paid. At the same time, the overcrowding of schools is leading to a plethora of pupils in some classes, sometimes exceeding 100 pupils per class. Hence, there is the need to build and equip new classrooms. The operating costs of schools formerly borne by parents are a problem, especially at secondary level. Projects initiated by parents for the benefit of schools remain unpaid (construction, rehabilitation, equipment, infirmary, libraries), with the discontent of NP and NU teachers, and even some paid teachers, leading to strikes.

In such a context, what quality of education can we expect from the education system? Indeed, among the four pillars of quality education, the facilitating environment for teaching and learning (competent, well-paid and motivated staff, holistically welcoming schools, good governance and the country's own education sector policy) ought to be highlighted.

### **The pathways to solutions**

To satisfactorily reach SDG 4.6 in the DRC, the following conditions must, therefore, be met: the education system has to be reorganised and important adjustments have to be made by

- a.** reviewing the reliability of the country's overcrowded schools and the estimation of the number of additional schools to be built;
- b.** expanding public school facilities in order to relieve overcrowded classrooms and overworked teachers;
- c.** reviewing the training and objective recruitment of teaching staff;
- d.** improving the working conditions and remuneration of teaching staff;
- e.** providing the necessary budget for this purpose in the state budget;
- f.** paying an adequate salary to teachers, including the necessary social benefits to cover their living expenses (housing, food, medical care, children's school fees, transport, etc.);
- g.** developing a new salary scale that ensures better living conditions for teachers;
- h.** improving the material conditions for school children (school buildings, furniture, textbooks, teaching and learning materials, etc.);



- i. adhering to and strengthening of the principles of good governance in the country's administration, and in particular in the education sector, through reorganising and restructuring the Service de Contrôle et de Paie des Enseignants (SECOPE);
- j. physically inspecting schools and staff to prevent embezzlement;
- k. ensuring the census and payment of all primary schools and the corresponding monitoring of the management of funds;
- l. combating corruption and embezzlement and fully prosecuting all those involved in corruption and embezzlement.

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## **MALAWI 2063 - opportunities and challenges of Malawi's roadmap to quality education for all**

by Juma Wasili, Nyasa Rainbow Alliance, Malawi

According to recent UNESCO reports, Malawi has an adult literacy rate of 62.14%. While the male literacy rate is at 69.75%, for females, it is at 55.2%. Despite numerous and strenuous efforts to bridge the gap, the country's educational standards are still below the international standards. This is largely attributed to a myriad of factors such as the low political will to invest in education and the lack of commitment to operationalise the SDGs, particularly education goal number 4.

However, of late, the state, stakeholders and civil society organisations have taken several strides to reaffirm their commitment towards inclusive and equitable quality education for all. This looks very promising as it comes at a time when Malawi has just published a development blueprint called Malawi 2063 (MW2063) - an ambitious roadmap to guide Malawi on creating "an inclusively wealthy and self-reliant nation". MW2063 has comprehensively highlighted the need for increased funding to educational programmes and stressed the promotion of research, science, technology and innovation. Apparently, the education system has been re-designed to respond to the current needs of the curriculum and to include all emerging issues regarding the tenets of SDG 4.

Local and international experts have described this roadmap as a game changer as it sets out to tackle the urgent challenges facing the planet. The roadmap, furthermore, explores the next step UNESCO is suggesting in responding to those challenges through education. However, the implementation and realisation of the programme envisages some obstacles. Little effort has been made to ensure that the guide is localised. There has not been enough awareness raising by the responsible authorities, which is especially problematic because Malawi is a country where access to information is very limited. Most people in Malawi do not have access to the Internet, where they could acquire information.

I see the online engagement through the series of events of "Civil Society for ESD 2030" as a great opportunity to learn and interact with fellow volunteers in this field and maintain an international platform for sharing best practices and innovative ideas for creating a better world for everyone. I believe that this will be crucial in my advocacy work aimed at increasing the contribution of education to building a more just and sustainable world.



# Integrating the global goals of ESD into national development planning processes in Malawi

by Ruth Kaperemera, Malawi

The role of ESD in achieving the SDGs in Malawi is to reshape world views and values that have enormous potential to address the sustainability challenges humanity faces. Malawi's government commits to realise ESD by integrating it into the national development planning process. The focus lies on creating a good environment that enables the relevant stakeholders to take action, for example through teacher accreditation processes and in-service trainings for educators.

However, in order to fully implement ESD, some principles have to be met:

- The training of teachers in colleges and universities has to focus on inclusive education, to teach learners of diverse needs with the aim of all learners being independent at the end of the education circles.
- There are high numbers of learners enrolling in schools, including those from marginalised groups. Thus, more infrastructure development is needed to meet the growing levels of school enrolment.
- More technological aspects like phones and computers as the common gadgets for teachers and learners to use on the ground should be included.
- Malawi's government should develop a policy that supports ESD as well as inclusive education.
- Social issues have to be addressed. Poverty is an obstacle as it affects access to education and increases school dropout, leading to illiterate communities or societies.
- Education should focus on empowering people to create jobs themselves, rather than just be waiting to get employed after graduating.



# EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BENIN - challenges and achievements

by Jacob Sovoessi, International Consultant and Manager of Nego-Com, Benin

In the Republic of Benin, education constitutes and remains the first national priority, which is laid down in the Constitution of Benin (December 11, 1990) as well as in several laws following the Constitution (law n° 2003-17 of November 11, 2003, and law n° 2005-33 of October 6, 2005). Based on this principle, Article 3 of the Constitution stipulates that “the school must allow everyone to have access to culture, science, knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills”. The Government of Benin is resolutely committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 in general as well as to achieving the objectives of Education for Sustainable Development in particular. This commitment is reflected in the country’s main strategic development documents, whose rate of alignment with the SDGs is estimated to be at least 70%.

## The challenges of ESD in Benin

Various education plans and projects are developed in Benin, reaching 45% of the total population under the age of 15. However, several challenges remain to be overcome:

- Education has to be democratised, meaning that access to education needs to be expanded in order to reach all children in the country.
- Qualified education has to be offered despite the very disparate standard of living of households. Thus, financing of education is a crucial challenge in the context of countries of the Global South, where public and private financing and national and multilateral financing coexist within the framework of development aid.
- Appropriation and awareness of the 2030 Agenda has to be improved through training and information workshops.
- In order to assess financial needs, indicators for inventory and costing of Benin's priority targets need to be adapted to local circumstances.

## Operational axes for the implementation of ESD in Benin

At this step, I want to highlight five major axes.

- **Axis 1:** linking to the SDGs: At all education levels (primary schools, colleges, high schools, universities) initiatives must be linked to the SDGs to ensure ESD. Thematic studies allow learners to initiate, analyse and lead to conclusions of sustainability. For example, the government, through decentralised structures, ensures the identification of project ideas and their formulation to continue on its course towards achieving the SDGs.





- **Axis 2:** Education for sustainable development has to be included in in-service trainings. Many departments are already doing this for the benefit of their employees to initiate or sustain ESD, including the Ministry of Nursery and Primary Education, the Ministry of Secondary and Technical Education and Vocational Training, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Ministry of the Interior and Public Security.
- **Axis 3:** Reducing inequalities through education to leave no one behind! Reducing inequalities makes it possible to involve actors without distinction of means and resources, and without distinction of social or territorial origin.
- **Axis 4:** ESD through cooperation and partnership: for sustainable development, partnerships between the Global North and the Global South are vital. The Civil Society in Benin recognise this and work for the following issues: Acknowledging the interdependencies between the North and the South and their common responsibility in relation to global issues; improving partnerships that go beyond financial cooperation; understanding partnerships as a capacity to be open to questioning and be turned towards the mutual reinforcement of each other (and not only as the realisation of a joint action); seeing partnerships as an opportunity but not an end in itself.
- **Axis 5:** ESD through actions of civil society organisations and through support for the socio-professional integration of young people in Benin: schools have to be strengthened regarding their management, their autonomy and their social, technical but also financial sustainability.

## Conclusion

Generally in Benin, education appears to be an essential means to achieve other development objectives. With access to qualified education, young people can acquire essential skills, find a professional integration, enter the labour market and break out of poverty. SDG 4, in its interconnections with other goals, is thus an essential pillar for poverty reduction, while contributing to building more equal and peaceful societies.



## **EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT is a means for people's equal social and political participation**

**by Ruhi Naz, Rights and Development Professional, Bangladesh**

Putting people at the heart of the development goals should be the focus of any state or government, since there is no development without people. The Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 underlined the key role of people for its implementation. It is invariably understood that without people's equal participation, no development can take place. In order to create an environment conducive to all, which reduces disparity, promotes equal treatment and ensures human rights, it is pertinent to promote education. However, the promotion of knowledge alone will not be effective if people only have access to information but do not learn how to use that information to participate in politics. Working as a practising lawyer and representing civil society, I had the opportunity to engage with different people belonging to various strata in the country. Doing so, I have been able to conclude that focusing solely on enabling access to education to fulfill the development agenda as a whole will not be enough.

We live in a complex society where patriarchal norms and religious sentiments still rule massively. Therefore, creating an enabling environment that promotes good governance and non-discriminatory practices and ensures justice for all, which is the prerequisite for any sustainable development, still remains a fancy dream. It can be well argued that education is the best way to pull a community out of economic misery and social disparity. Education creates human capital and resources, which has many benefits for economies and for societies as a whole. Furthermore, education promotes employment, earnings, market capital mobilisation and health. For societies, it drives long-term economic growth, reduces poverty, strengthens institutions, promotes open governance systems and fosters social cohesion.

Keeping that in mind, the Bangladesh government has pledged to implement the SDGs, including goal 4 on education (covering primary to tertiary, technical and vocational education, improving the literacy and numeracy of the population, strengthening inclusiveness and equity in education, improving the quality of education and teacher trainings). Knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour that contribute to sustainable development are given prominence. Thus, Bangladesh has made a good start in getting the SDG ball rolling. The government quickly set up an inter-ministerial committee, under supervision of the Prime Minister's Office, to monitor implementation and report on progress. The government has incorporated the key provisions of the SDGs in the 7<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan for 2016-2020. It has also drawn up a handbook mapping the responsibilities of different ministries and authorities for implementation of the SDGs and their targets.



Now, on a broader scale, we can look at the practical difficulties or challenges persisting in achieving those targets:

- **Gender inequality and discrimination:** in Bangladesh society, discrimination based on sex and gender still exists. Although relatively, the level of girls' enrolment in schools has increased, a large number of girls belonging to marginalised communities still lag behind. Child marriages are still very prevalent. A male dominance culture makes it difficult for girls to pursue education.
- **Governance challenges in the education sector:** it is imperative to focus on policy, planning, monitoring and management contexts of national education systems in order to identify the obstacles which hinder ESD. Also, it is necessary to look for actions required to strengthen or adapt policy and planning frameworks and processes to achieve targets and commitments.
- **Climate change and inter-city migration:** natural disasters and calamities render people vulnerable, and in many cases, they tend to migrate to other places, which definitely hinders promotion of education in such communities.
- **Lack of skills development:** in order to achieve ESD, it is necessary for the education system to be revived to apply newly equipped skills and an innovative methodology. Meeting commitments under the SDGs not only requires an increasing number of enrolments in the education sector but also improving the quality of education. This calls for a change in teachers' mindsets, reducing of political interference, a recruitment system that focuses on competencies and effective networking.

Until these conditions are met, implementing ESD will not be realised.

However, despite those various challenges, Bangladesh has made considerable progress in ESD. Many published reports claim that enrolment to both the primary and the secondary level of education has increased over the years. In addition to the initiatives taken by the government to implement and monitor commitment under the SDGs, a national platform was launched called the Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, which is a network of more than 110 organisations and is intended to contribute to the national SDG process of Bangladesh. This unique platform was convened in 2016 as a congregation of organisations already working in different areas of SDGs, in order to promote greater interaction and coordination among themselves and with the government and other related stakeholders. The aim is to make a concerted effort in realising the SDGs, and to ensure transparency and accountability in the national process.

Taken from a report titled "Four Years of SDGs in Bangladesh - Non-state actors as delivery partners" published by the Citizen's Platform for SDGs Bangladesh, in 2020, the following data shows NGO involvement in ensuring commitment to ESD:

- delivered education services to 2.9 million learners (61.71% girls/female) through 79,573 learning centres and/or schools.
- operated 37,000 formal and non-formal centres/schools with 1.7 million learners (56.56% girls).



- extended pre-primary education support, including early childhood development, through 25,000 centres covering 700,000 learners.
- provided lifelong learning facilities through 20,000 community learning centres (CLCs) for 700,000 learners.

The report further mentions that many children in Bangladesh get access to the mainstream education system through the government's primary schools. However, NGOs are providing education support to the marginalised children, particularly those who do not enrol in schools or those who have dropped out from the mainstream schools. Thus, dropout children, children with disabilities, children of ethnic minority communities and children living in hard-to-reach areas are targeted in particular for being provided education by the NGOs. Finally, it can be concluded that as Civil Society, NGOs in Bangladesh are key actors in realising "ESD for 2030" alongside of the government. Therefore, a concerted and more focused coordination between the two is urgently needed.



## ESD RELEVANCE AND EXPERIENCE IN INDIA - a reflection

by Dr. Malathi Santhanam, →Karl Kuebel Foundation for Child & Family, India

ESD is the key to all the other SDGs. Thus, improvement in SDG 4 should be reflected in improvements in the other Goals. This connection between SDG 4 and all other SDGs has been pointed out a lot. However, it has not been converted into concrete actions that much. It takes time to synchronise education with lifestyle changes and values. Nevertheless, the number of resources invested to generate discussions, data, reports and policies on ESD is commendable. Dialogues occur at all levels with a variety of stakeholders on various SDGs.

The main obstacle for ESD refers to affordability, accessibility and availability of resources, especially of data, decision and power to execute. Particularly the North-South divide, and with it the limited self-esteem of the countries of the Global South to set a pathway of change themselves, rather than following examples from the West, have been holding progress back. The Global South and North differ regarding the environment and history of their civilisations. The heterogeneity of our planet is its beauty, and we need to accept differences, challenge stereotypes, shed prejudices and be open to collaborate and co-create liberal and individual-centred education.

### Intersectoral partnerships

The connection of charity, development, business, and politics with education is the factor of change. Education has never been vested only with academia, but has historically had other custodians and has always run in relation to economic actors. We need to disseminate our understanding of knowledge and information across different segments of the population. Education is the only factor that cuts across every sphere of every individual's life. Thus, there should not be a divide and competition between policy-makers, politicians, governing structures and educators. Rather, there should be a comprehensive mindset with eye-to-eye partnership. I believe that all of those partnerships depend on the three variables affordability, opportunity and accessibility of ESD. These variables then correlate with the key-parameters: values, attitudes, knowledge and skills.

### Local and global cooperation

We should follow a bottom-up approach from local through national to global induction of ideas and sentiments. Furthermore, global partnerships should go hand in hand with ESD, setting aside political and racial differences and looking at the planet as our common ground to live in co-existence. There is a need for change in people's culture of learning and living. There are plenty of opportunities that enable change in the culture of



learning and living through diverse formal and informal means, structures and standards of education.

## Digitalisation

The digital divide or scarcity of resources is another obstacle for ESD. The pandemic has increased the digital divide. There are certainly limits across certain sections to access and afford it due to lack of resources. However, it can be converted into an opportunity to revitalise and formulate new interrelationships. At present discussions among the educationists, technocrats and policy makers is revolving to work out strategies to “do-no-harm” concerning both opportunity and affordability.

## ESD indicators

The main obstacle for ESD is the lack of synchronisation across micro, meso and macro levels. There are many players, and each of them is bringing own interpretations and viewpoints. However, there is a lack of forecasting and realistic estimation of possible changes. We may talk about many changes, but we are still trapped in old quantitative metrics of measurement which fail to look for change in the qualitative dimensions. We are, for instance, still quantifying education in terms of activity and output, such as the data for school completion and employability. However, fewer indications are available to measure the qualitative change that happens in an individual. What is completely left out is the outcome of everyone’s responsibility to achieve their interest along with their accountability to bring change and sustain the planet in all forms.

## Opportunities for “ESD for 2030”

“ESD for 2030” will have a big impact on my working context, which is mentoring the international youth volunteers, conceptualising training and moderating developmental discussions, coaching organisations for framing policies, evolving theory of change in projects and programmes and, most importantly, localising the SDGs by integrating the SDG indicators and targets in the discussions and above all in developing pedagogical tools for SDGs.

To raise awareness and increase education on the SDGs across different sections of the population both the drivers and the driven should join hands to create and implement tools (refer: <https://ventao.org/en/developing-quality/project-the-sdgs-in-weltwaerts-weltwaerts-in-the-sdgs/>). We can pave pathways of change for the people, by the people and with the people. By participating in the development of pedagogical tools, I see how we can best raise awareness of the SDGs among people. It also enables me to explore the gap. Additionally, analysing the data of the government and comparing it with reports of different agencies enables me to correct my training and education curricula. Tool development is essential to ensure and enable all levels of people to visualise the importance and their role to contribute to sustainable development. Digitalisation can be used here to minimise paper, maximise output and enhance learning.



Region-specific indicators should be added to the targets in order to achieve more validity and fit and to achieve the desired objectives. Generating such an amount of data and publishing results across different languages will be a formidable task, and it will be a cost intensive one. The players should aim at co-creation, and not the principle of duplication and claiming attribution. More local CSOs should be educated, invited and made accountable generate data and contribute it to the databank. They must be recognised as a custodian agency. The technological boom, virtual learning opportunities and equating all at one level is a given opportunity, and the obstacles are global challenges like terrorism, the limited role of regional players and transition across the globe and the inability to find and fix the mid point.

### **“ESD 2030” in India**

I am proud that India is a pioneer in reforming the education sphere in particular. We are so inclusive and flexible in balancing local cultural sentiments with global level advancements. India has revised its education policy to make it liberal and match individual competencies. The communication channels across different structures and accessibility of data are one of its strengths. There is a data bank (NITI Ayog) which can be referred to for research and evaluation of education in India. More than committing to the improvement of education itself, India is also advocating to various countries on the importance of education.

Furthermore, civil society organisations (CSO's) are the new prominent ESD players in India. CSOs have wonderful initiatives ensuring that “no one is left behind” in any form. A good proportion of the country's labour force is working in this sector, and it is the global connect for cultural exchange and community sentiments.



## VISIONS FROM WALLMAPU, MAPUCHE ANCESTRAL TERRITORY, CHILE

by Jorge Huichalaf Díaz, Educational Cooperation Koyam, Chile

Thank you very much, friends of VENRO. Thank you for your willingness to listen and this space to repeat something that we had requested earlier. In our point of view, there is a missing objective to add to “ESD for 2030” and the SDGs as a whole: the Right of Mother Earth should be included as SDG number 18.

When the current 17 SDGs were established, it was clearly only the interests of the human being and his little ego that were taken into account. Today, we know that the rights of nature are essential to install in all legislation, as is a review of corresponding punishment in the event of non-compliance. If we must respect the dignity of the human being to recognise and respect human rights, we should also respect and recognise the dignity of Mother Earth.

We, as people, inhabit a sacred space, and we cannot continue this desecration by savage capitalism. It is madness not to stop and think. Here, education here can be an opportunity for change and an evolutionary leap towards true freedom, love and compassion.

In order to accomplish this, we need to restructure our schools, focusing on new objectives of solidarity and cooperativism inspired from our ancestral concepts and in our own mother tongue: agro-ecology, recycling, clean energy, clean oceans, reforestation, technological transfer, social economy and solidarity - all this has to be incorporated in schools as centres of dissemination and urgent practice.

We are asked to educate for peace by our major conventions. However, with the Mapuche territory surrounded by militias, it is not only difficult for ESD to be implemented here, but also to ensure the rights of poor children in the first place. However, we will still continue our work. Tomorrow, I will plant another tree again and fight for water to water it, even if this will get me into jail, like my brothers. But if it is not me, who else? And if not now, when?





## A HOLISTIC, PLURALISTIC AND ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACH TO ESD STRENGTHENS THE POLITICAL AGENCY OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

by Laurens Bynens, Djapo, Belgium

*Djapo is a Belgian CSO specialised in ESD. Combining theory and practice, we provide advice and various services in the field of ESD, ranging from stand-alone learning materials to short/long-term and in-depth coaching and assistance. We work with schools, (future) teachers, policy-makers and various organisations.*

Our opinion is inspired by our experience in the formal education context of Belgium (Flanders), and our recommendations are, hence, mostly linked to formal education.

ESD should incorporate three principles:

1. holism: environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development, as well as aspects of time (past, present, future) and place (local and global);
2. pluralism: critical thinking and the inclusion of and respect for different perspectives;
3. action-oriented teaching, e.g. improving pupils' competences (skills, knowledge, willingness and alertness) needed to undertake action for sustainable development.

Djapo's approach does not advocate pre-determined answers or solutions to the social and global challenges of sustainable development. ESD issues are political in essence; they are connected with norms, values and emotions, and can be controversial or even polarising. These issues (e.g. climate change) can be a source of worry and hopelessness, but they also offer valuable opportunities for learning and interaction.

A well-considered approach is thus needed which consciously deals with the inextricable pedagogical tensions inherent in ESD, and which aims to increase young people's voice, sense of agency, the disposition to think critically for themselves, to relate to the world and to make their own conscious choices. Their school is a miniature society and a 'separate space-time' where there should be room to discuss, explore and experiment with ESD issues, and for them to holistically develop themselves.



Based on our own experiences, we believe the following principles could help advance the agenda of “ESD for 2030”:

1. In order to bridge the institutional gap between themselves and the formal education sector, CSOs need to consider:
  - a. the needs of teachers and schools (as opposed to solely ‘instrumentalising’ teachers and schools for their own goals and needs);
  - b. their own role as ‘external’ partners and how they can best support schools and teachers, who are crucial actors for ESD and Agenda 2030;
  - c. the relevant educational policies.
2. ESD programmes and interventions should try to integrate the dimensions of theory (the ever-growing academic work on ESD), policy and educational practice.
3. It can be challenging and requires considerable (structural) effort to integrate ESD into the school at the different levels (a whole school approach). The inclusion of ESD in the curriculum can be an important incentive for schools to introduce or further integrate (elements of) ESD.

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## WHAT DO GERMAN ADOLESCENTS EXPECT FROM “ESD FOR 2030”? – perspectives of the German Youth Panel on ESD

by Martin Hagemeyer on behalf of the German Youth Panel on ESD (youpaN),  
Germany

In 2017, the German Youth Panel on Education for Sustainable Development (youpaN) was founded, prompted by a statement in the German national action programme on ESD and actively realised by Stiftung Bildung, a private foundation for education and youth participation. Today, the youpaN is part of the national strategy for sustainability, and is partly funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research. It consists of 30 young people aged between 16 and 27. The youpaN delegates one person with voting power for the national platform on ESD, which is Germany’s central institution for the implementation of ESD, and a substitute representative. In addition, every member of the youth panel works in one of the national forums on ESD, which in turn are obliged to support the work of the national platform. Therefore, the members of the youpaN can bring their own views and initiatives into the national ESD process.

Generally, the youpaN demands a fast implementation of the Berlin Declaration on “ESD for 2030”. In other words, the Declaration should fully be realised by 2030. In particular, the youpaN demands two transformations, as stated in the Preamble of the Berlin Declaration:

Firstly, we want economies to transform socially and ecologically to enable every human on earth and future generations to live in dignity and enjoy human rights. Those transformations can fundamentally be induced by education. However, this requires changes in the education systems. We want schools to be safe places without any discrimination and the highest level of equality of opportunities. To achieve this, the youpaN demands that 10 per cent of German GDP be spent on education and research. This money could be invested in expanding teacher and assistant capacities, improving digitisation and equipping school buildings.

Taking research into account, it is obvious that we need equity in all educative branches, considering not only all forms of schools, but also universities, professional training institutions and nonformal learning environments. For all these institutions, we would like to see a holistic, institutional approach applied, so that all students can learn and live in an environment the way they should learn according to “ESD for 2030”. Not only should the physical surroundings be modernised, the didactics should be, too. ESD must be a core element of all curricula, but students also need significantly more free space in education institutions. The youpaN is convinced that “ESD for 2030” can only be realised if students in all education institutions are able to choose more often themselves which projects they want to pursue, ideally with ESD relevance, and can get professional help at any time. This way, all students will develop the most adequate experience of self-efficacy, which is crucial for “ESD for 2030”.



Secondly, the youpaN wants to address a special focus on commitment of the Berlin Declaration. As a youth panel, we think it is crucial to empower young people to become “change agents” for sustainability. However, this engagement should not be one-sided; besides knowledge, young people must be given the power to change relevant structures. Therefore, the youpaN demands an active participation of the youth in shaping “ESD for 2030” and education processes at all levels. Currently, youth participation for ESD only exists at national level. However, in Germany, all curricula are determined at the level of the Federal States. Hence, the youpaN demands the establishment of Youth Future Councils at Federal, State and municipal level. Meanwhile, the engagement of young people in society should be more appreciated. As long as fundamental decisions are made by an older generation, the youpaN deems political participation of different generations biased in a way that jeopardises a sustainable future. All generations, especially those who teach and are in power in sectors which are key to sustainability, should be aware of future problems and social cohesion. This is why the youpaN demands compulsory advanced trainings on ESD for leaders in economy and the offer of ESD trainings for leading politicians.



## THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF “ESD FOR 2030”

by **Andrea Lapegna, Lifelong Learning Platform,  
European Civil Society for Education, Belgium**

Overall, education and lifelong learning are key enablers and levers for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The cognitive empowerment required to achieve many of the SDGs is often developed in education, as shown by research. When it comes to education for sustainable development, the strengthening of climate education and action has been identified as arguably the most impactful social tipping intervention in stabilising the Earth’s climate by 2050, adapting securely and building resilience.

At EU level, the main issues and obstacles are as follows: i) the stagnation of and relative decrease in investment in education ii) inadequate and insufficient support for educators, iii) lack of coherent and interlinked education policies and iv) low integration of sustainability in education systems and across curricula. At LLLP, we consider that the EU has an important role to play in i) ensuring adequate, long-term funding at European, national and regional level, ii) supporting current and future educators’ professional development, iii) mainstreaming innovative pedagogies suited to education for sustainable development across the curricula and making education systems sustainable in the long term, iv) achieving policy coherence across different areas.

We hold that the programme “ESD for 2030” fits well with the work conducted by LLLP and our members. Its focus on advancing policy, transforming learning environments, building capacities of educators, and mobilising and empowering youth will be key to supporting the work of CSOs working at all levels and in all sectors of education and training. Ensuring an inclusive network of stakeholders and the mobilisation of resources across Member States will be crucial to implementing the roadmap and achieving the goals set forth by the programme. The main strength of the framework is the recognition of ESD as holistic and transformational, encompassing learning content and outcomes, pedagogy and the learning environment itself. In our view, its weakness lies in the focus on sustainable development and not on sustainability itself. We consider that the aim should be to build sustainable and resilient education systems and not narrow it down to serving the purpose of development. Learners everywhere should be equipped with skills and knowledge and be able to exercise critical thinking to live in tune with their society, environment and the planet, and should eventually decide on their own development goals according to this balance.

As a civil society network operating at EU level, the relevant commitment here is from the EU institutions. The EU has included the green dimension as part of the Communication on the European Education Area and is now working on a set of Recommendations on education for environmental sustainability. Both policy documents align well with UNESCO’s “ESD for 2030” roadmap and the main five priority areas. The EU shares the priorities on ensuring policy coherence across different levels and



building synergies across different education and training sectors. Similarly, there is a commitment to support the capacity building of educators, implement transformative pedagogies, and foster cooperation among different stakeholders across and within EU countries. All these initiatives will directly support the realisation of “ESD for 2030”. In order to develop and implement these various initiatives, the Commission is reaching out to civil society actors to ensure that their voice is heard throughout this process. LLLP and its members have been actively participating in the consultation processes part of the aforementioned EU initiatives.

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