



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

8th AFRICAN REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXPERTISE (RCE) Meeting

HOSTED BY RCE ZOMBA

8-10 August 2018

"UPSCALING THE IMPACT OF AFRICAN RCEs IN ACTUALISING THE SDGs"

CONCEPT NOTE



**R
C
E** REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXPERTISE
ON EDUCATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

ACKNOWLEDGED BY



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THE 8th AFRICAN REGIONAL CENTRE OF EXPERTISE (RCE) Meeting

1. Background

1.1 What is an RCE?

An RCE is network of individuals, organizations and experts who are committed to using education as a tool for building a sustainable future. The network emphasizes on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) which is an umbrella for many forms of education that already exist and new ones that remain to be created at formal, non-formal and informal levels. The network brings together multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary members who might not usually work together. RCEs think globally but act locally and they are unique in that regard. RCEs put Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) as a core element to societal change. RCE's view of ESD is that it is fundamentally about values, respect for others including those of present and future generations, for difference and diversity, for the environment, for the resources of the planet we inhabit. To achieve these aspirations, RCEs raise awareness on ESD challenges, inspire innovation and promote both behavioural change and civic engagement across sectors.

An RCE is regionally based, tackling local challenges facing villages, towns, and cities in its region. RCEs work on a range of initiatives including workshops on sustainable development for educators, conducting research and creating policies that focus on education for sustainable development (ESD). RCEs also work closely with universities, schools and informal learning institutions, such as museums, parks, private sector, local governments and organizations, NGOs and the media to ensure that sustainability issues are integrated in formal, non-formal and informal levels of education. Each RCE empowers people within its community to lead better, more sustainable lives by providing them with the information, education and tools they need to create positive social and environmental change. The main goal of RCEs is to bring about transformative learning which results in an improvement of livelihoods.

1.2 The origin of the RCE Concept

The United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) developed a programme on ESD and introduced the concept of RCEs in response to the UN resolution from the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development WSSD. At the end of the 2002 WSSD in Johannesburg, Heads of State requested the UN to declare a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. In the same year, the UN declared 2005-2014 as the United Nations Decade on Education for Sustainable Development. Globally, there are 164 RCEs located in Africa, Middle East, Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific. Africa and Middle East Zone consist of 37 RCEs including RCE Zomba whose secretariat is based in Zomba at Chancellor College (University of Malawi). Post 2014, RCEs adopted a Global Action Plan (GAP) whose key focus has

been on advancing policy by mainstreaming ESD, transforming learning and training environments using the whole-institution approach, building capacities of educators and trainers, empowering and mobilizing youth, and accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level.

1.3 Governance

The Global RCE network's secretariat is located at UNU-IAS, headquartered in Tokyo, Japan. The network works closely with hundreds of partners at local, regional and international levels. Its key partners at UN level include UNESCO, United Nations Environmental Programme (UN Environment) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The network also works closely with the Ubuntu Alliance, an association of 14 of the world's foremost educational and scientific institutions that together signed the Ubuntu Declaration at the Johannesburg summit.

1.4 RCE Zomba

RCE Zomba in Malawi was formally acknowledged as an RCE in 2007. It has membership comprising of local communities, government departments (e.g. forestry, fisheries, agriculture), youth, researchers, environmental practitioners and academia. Short term objectives of the RCE include: Promoting wider networking and collaboration related to ESD processes; Development and implementation of policy processes; Re-orienting education towards SD, covering existing programmes from the point of ESD and designing an integrated SD curricula; Development of participatory low cost and accessible learning materials in support of ESD; Promoting and sharing sustainable indigenous knowledge related to ESD; and Research including the monitoring and evaluation of ESD projects and programmes.

Major achievements include promotion of afforestation on Zomba Mountain and surrounding hills to mitigate against climate change effects; empowerment of local women through training in alternative fuel strategies; capacity building in briquette making as a form of waste management; regeneration of Chirunga Forest and establishment of Chanco Community Radio as a form of community engagement through media. The radio serves as a learning space for sharing best practices of ESD. In addition, development of environmental programmes by communities through Radio Listening Clubs builds confidence and hence ownership, thereby leading to sustainability. Some members of RCE Zomba have also attended regional and international RCE conferences where Malawian projects on ESD have been showcased.

2. Global and Regional Meetings

Since inception of the network, members have been holding annual conferences at regional level and bi-annual global conferences as an opportunity for members to meet and share ideas and best practices related to Education for Sustainable Development. The African regional conferences provide a forum through which experts from across the continent can interact and learn from one another on ESD best practices that promote implementation of Agenda 2030. Two years ago, delegates to the 6th African RCE Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya focused on developing capacities of African RCEs for the implementation of the Global Action Programme on ESD and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. Last year's conference in Lusaka, Zambia focused on exploring capacity to influence an integrated and coherent approach to sustainable development in Africa.

2.1 The 8th African RCE Regional Meeting

The 7th African RCE Regional Meeting was held in Lusaka Zambia from 2nd - 4th August 2017 and delegates unanimously agreed that Malawi should host the 8th African RCE regional meeting. The 8th African RCE regional meeting will therefore be hosted by RCE Zomba at Chancellor College, University of Malawi in August 2018. The theme for the three-day meeting will be '**Upscaling the Impact of African RCEs in Actualising the SDGs.**' This theme stems from the fact that RCEs in Africa have the potential to contribute to actualising the SDGs locally, nationally, regionally and globally. But as presently constituted and implemented, are the RCEs in Africa making any visible/sustainable impact? What are the challenges and how can they be overcome? The RCEs are good/relevant vehicles but how can the drivers be empowered?

In line with the theme of the meeting, all the workshops, seminars and field visits will address the following key issues: where are we, what are our challenges and how can we raise the impact of the RCEs to more visible and relevant levels, locally, nationally and regionally.

2.2 Main events during the meeting and why you should attend

It is anticipated that the 8th African RCE Regional Meeting in Zomba, Malawi, from 8-10 August 2018 will be a colourful, highly participatory and educative event. There will be plenary as well as parallel sessions to showcase how global sustainability challenges, some of which are complex and rock solid, are 'unfrozen' via the ESD discourses. The programme will also have a parallel youth session and youth roundtable discussion where all youth related matters will be addressed. The Malawian youths will be able to interact with fellow youths and learn from those who have embraced the entrepreneurship spirit. We anticipate various forms of presentations, including posters and displays from local and international participants. This will be an opportunity to showcase their work, thus increasing their visibility and creating more networks with participants from other countries. Above all, this would be an

opportunity for RCE Zomba to interact with policy makers from UNU-IAS, UN Environment, UNICEF, UNESCO and the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs.

From past experience, such conferences tend to be graced by top government officials and hence we expect to have officials from the Ministries of Environment, Energy & Climate Change, Education, Agriculture as well as Youth.

2.3 Conference objectives

As indicated earlier, the 8th African RCE Meeting will tease out the steps that should be undertaken in upscaling the impact of African RCEs in implementing the SDGs. The specific objectives of the meeting are:

1. Critical reflection on challenges, impact, sustainability and opportunities for implementing and upscaling SDGs and ESD-Global Action Programme through RCE activities
2. Showcase the work of the African RCE network in implementing Global Goals and ESD-GAP
3. Share ESD opportunities and challenges associated with implementation of the SDGs
4. Discuss the roles that adults and youths can play in upscaling SDGs/ESD activities through RCE activities
5. Review the action plan for African RCEs
6. Discuss current and emerging issues on SDGs, ESD, SD, climate change and environment as they affect African communities
7. Develop a youth roadmap for implementing SD, SDGs, ESD-GAP and integrate youth into the national SDGs' implementation plan, policy and programs
8. Help develop capacities of youth with skills to embrace entrepreneurial spirits and initiatives as well as community project creation

2.4 Proposed thematic areas for the conference

1. Creation of space for multi-stakeholder engagement especially with local communities
2. Challenges and opportunities in upscaling ESD activities
3. The role of gender and youth in RCEs
4. Role of academia, politicians and the private sector in upscaling RCE activities
5. Harnessing the role of media in upscaling RCE activities
6. Curriculum gaps on ESD in formal education
7. Innovative technologies to support ESD
8. Appropriate by-laws on ESD and their enforcement

2. 5 Expected outcomes/outputs:

1. Conference publication on shared strategies on upscaling the implementation of SDGs through ESD
2. Concrete strategies on upscaling the youths, adults, private sector, policy makers and academia's involvement in RCE activities
3. Revised action plan for African RCEs
4. Publication of articles in RCE Journal

3. Venue

The conference will be held at Chancellor College (CHANCO), a constituent college of the University of Malawi located in Zomba city. CHANCO has successfully hosted international conferences in the past and recently was the venue for a Linguistics Association of SADC Universities (LASU) conference under the Faculty of Humanities.

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