

11th Global RCE Conference: Education for the Sustainable Development Goals
7-9 December, 2018, Cebu, the Philippines



Plenary III

Presentation and panel discussion 'RCE Engagement in National and International Sustainability Processes'
7 December, 2018, Cebu, the Philippines

Presenters:

- **Ms. Vanessa V. Carriedo (ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity)**
- **Dr. Mary Otieno (RCE Greater Nairobi)**
- **Dr. Rhodora Bucoy (RCE Cebu and Chairperson, Philippine Commission on Women)**
- **Dr. Juliet Jeruta (Director IV, Department of Education, Region VII)**
- **Dr. Jana Dlouha (RCE Czechia)**
- **Prof. Kimberley Smith (RCE Greater Portland)**

Prof. Mario Tabucanon (UNU-IAS) introduced Plenary III, noting how in the previous session, UNESCO's role in ESD leadership globally was presented, as well as possible entry points for RCEs into the international processes in terms of GAP and the SDGs. In this session, it was time to hear from the RCEs, with a distinguished panel ready to shed more light in terms of answering one question: 'How can RCEs be engaged in and become instruments in achieving GAP in relation to national and international sustainability processes'. Prof. Tabucanon introduced the first panellist, Ms. Vanessa V. Carriedo, from the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity.

Ms. Carriedo's presentation was focused on 'Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Education: Opportunities for Partnership'. The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) was introduced, with Ms. Carriedo then explaining how they are on a mission to collaborate and connect with RCEs in the biodiversity sector. Their programmes and thrusts are anchored on supporting the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity (2011-2020) and helping them achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (20 ambitious targets for biodiversity conservation) through regional programmes and projects on biodiversity thematic and geographic areas. The key elements of the ACB Strategic Plan were explained, including their aim to mainstream biodiversity through different elements such as agriculture and tourism, as well as in the education sector. The BCAMP (Biodiversity Conservation and Management of Protected Areas in ASEAN) project (a five-year programme funded by the EU) was also introduced, and is a project which aims to contribute to global sustainability, by enhancing the conservation of biodiversity and effective management of protected areas in Southeast Asia. An overview of the project was given, as well as a focus on one of the components relating to mainstreaming it into education. This included three phases, with entry points including formal, informal, and tertiary education. She also spoke about a potential ACB-

RCE partnership; a benchmark study on how ASEAN Member States can mainstream biodiversity in the education sector, implement plans of interventions based on gaps, and develop partnerships with key actors in the education sector. This is one way for RCEs to be integrated in national and international processes.

Next to present in the panel discussion was Dr. Mary Otieno, from RCE Greater Nairobi, speaking about how RCEs can engage nationally and internationally towards implementing the SDGs. Being a former RCE coordinator, Dr. Otieno began by explaining why RCEs were initiated. RCEs are expected to engage with schools, the community, and higher education. In Kenya, education curriculum, which is under review, has incorporated community service, which is what RCEs are all about. When RCEs were introduced, university leaders did not know what they were. Thus there is a suggestion to reintroduce RCEs in higher education institutions, to engage the managers and awaken them as to what RCEs are and what their role is. Current issues exist in terms of vertical integration and planning and analysis of RCE issues. Dr. Otieno noted, "Through my experience, when you are coming up with a project, you are contacting your partner in the community. The rest of the community doesn't know what is going on. The purpose is the big impact, [but] how do we create the big impact of RCE initiatives?". She mentioned that the current practice in Africa is stagnating, and that more vertical integration is needed. Her suggestion is to re-introduce RCE to institutions such as universities so they know their role is to introduce RCEs to the community. Other suggestions include adopting a school and introducing what an RCE is so that the members of the school community can start appreciating the role of RCEs. Project-based advocacy could also be conducted, creating more awareness. All of this should assist in starting to redefine who RCEs are, what they are able to do, and how they can work together. It is difficult for people to understand what an RCE is in Africa. That is why it is necessary to redefine RCEs in the target institution, and ensure that they work with the community. It is essential that they understand how their livelihoods and their problems can be improved. In conclusion, effective multi-stakeholder engagement is needed, to highlight areas such as government leadership, stakeholder engagement, communication and outreach, and SDG reporting and feedback.

Dr. Rhodora Bucoy, RCE Cebu and Chairperson for the Philippine Commission on Women then presented on how the commission could be engaged with the RCE work in the country and around the region. She also spoke about influencing government units, academia, and NGOs to promote gender equality and women empowerment in all of their projects. They are currently focusing on a major strategy to mainstream gender in climate change adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction, especially as during such incidents, women are the ones who are affected; climate change and its hazards often magnify gender inequality and have more devastating effects on women. During periods of disaster, in some places women are still expected to perform all domestic and care work in addition to addressing disasters and its consequences. In order to realise gender mainstreaming as a strategy, there is a need to engage academia and private sectors to help monitor and evaluate the

gender impacts of all of their projects – real development cannot happen unless women and children are included.

Dr. Juliet Jeruta, Director IV at the Department of Education, Region VII, spoke about the Intersectoral Approach in Education Service Delivery, presenting development frameworks and priorities, in relation to the global vision for education. She explained that they focused on SDG 4, looking at the kind of graduates they wanted to produce, whilst education stakeholders addressed the four Cs (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity). In all of their work, they have continued to sustain a culture of empowering innovation with academia as the lead.

On behalf of the RCEs in Europe, Dr. Jana Dlouha from RCE Czechia provided an update on RCEs in the region. She noted that cooperation is minimal because of the diversity between cultures and languages, but they do have the regular yearly regional meeting, with the most recent one held in Brittany, France in August 2018. Dr. Dlouha spoke about the interlinkages between priorities in the GAP, and the UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) strategy for ESD in Europe. Looking at different RCEs in Europe, they are mainly contributing to Priority 3 (Building capacities of educators and trainers). There is a big stress on technical and vocational education and training, however in Europe it is not such a high priority, due to the fact it is a knowledge economy with a high percentage of university graduates. Despite this, it is important in terms of achieving the SDGs and transforming society, including initiatives for migrant entrepreneurs.

The last presenter on the panel was Prof. Kimberley Smith from RCE Greater Portland, representing the Americas region, who spoke about ways RCEs could work nationally or collaborate together. This included how they are advancing policy, e.g. projectsthatmatter.org, transforming learning and training environments, and building capacities of educators and trainers. Examples were also provided on what RCEs in the region have been doing; RCE Bogota is focusing on climate change and empowering young people to do more research, RCE Cuenca del Plata is doing a project on native trees, and RCE Georgetown is empowering and mobilising youth, thinking about how to expand the youth network, and expanding the model which has been executed well in the Asia-Pacific region. They are also thinking about what can be done at the community level, emphasising inclusion and diversity. Education 2030 was also mentioned, with questions raised as to how they could empower people to become change makers to use education to achieve the SDGs. What do we need to get systems thinkers? How can we anticipate the risks of the future, and have the skills to address them? The norms and values to support sustainability and solution thinkers have to be more purposeful and intentional as to how youth can develop these lifelong skills. Prof. Smith ended her presentation by encouraging the audience to think about ways to collaborate to be more effective.

Prof. Tabucanon thanked the panellists for their presentations, then asked for Dr. Mee Young Choi, Head of Education Unit, UNESCO Jakarta, in her role as commentator, to provide her comments.

Dr. Choi thanked the key speakers and began by mentioning the keywords most heard across the presentations: 'integrated', 'leadership', 'multi-sectoral', 'capacity partnership', and 'cross-cutting'. Rather than having a summary for commonalities, she raised the question: 'How can you improve it or make changes in the future for ESD?'. She informed the audience in relation to this, that UNESCO organised an international ESD event in Bangkok for the post-GAP period, to which discussions are still in progress. In closing, she pondered how RCEs could survive in the future with many different multi-stakeholders in support.

Prof. Tabucanon then invited the audience to ask questions.

Usman Mohammed from RCE Kano posed a question to Dr. Otieno in regards to how she advises African RCEs to use her model to service a way of galvanising RCEs at the National Level. Dr. Otieno mentioned it was a very difficult question to answer in terms of the model, however stressed the importance of redefining themselves, along with working with mentors to help them come up with a model to take them out of the institutions.

A representative from RCE Yogyakarta asked if an impact analysis of the ESD programme had been undertaken. Dr. Otieno mentioned that all RCEs submit their reports annually, and an analysis could be done on that, looking at the progress, where they are. Dr. Jeruta added that through the Department of Education, they have tried to have one exit assessment on job readiness, but the question is, how do they go down to the communities? UNESCO emphasised the participation of civil society. They have found that with GAP readiness, it takes everyone to put in effort.

Dr. Hiroaki Takiguchi, Project Director, ESD Programme at UNU-IAS, asked a question to the panel regarding the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) in 2019 focused on SDG 4, as to what the message from the RCE community would be to New York – what is the RCE community's advantage and how can it make a difference? Dr. Dlouha responded by saying that RCEs have a very unique institutional framework that allows cooperation across different boundaries. RCEs are supposed to deliver social impacts on societies, and without this institutional framework it would be even more difficult to do this.

A representative from RCE Ilocos asked if there was a way that the mobility of faculty of students could be implemented, since most RCEs are based in a university, to enact a network of networks. Prof. Smith responded by mentioning there is a research project currently being worked on – a governance and structure research project – that looks at how universities can become more engaged in communities. RCE Greater Portland also

have a think tank where people can contribute... the network of networks model is something that needs to be thought about as we can move towards this.

Dr. Otieno posed a question as to how RCEs can work better through UNU. One of her observations is that RCEs are involved in initiatives that they have come up with through their networks. They mobilise funds, and they do pockets of initiatives. But if they are to have a big impact, UNESCO chairs have projects that they're working with around the world. The UNESCO Chair for York University, Charles Hopkins, has a project on reorienting education training systems to serve those youth and communities that are hard to reach, so they can come up with initiatives to help communities. This project is going beyond the institutions. This is where UNU can see how to involve the schools and communities in a project they can own. The majority of RCEs in Africa cannot do the first part of the project, coming up with baseline data.

The final comments came from UNESCO, with Dr. Choi explaining that through her working experience in Asia, Europe, and Africa, the working environment and conditions for RCEs would be quite different. When she was in Africa, the working mechanism with central and local government and universities was not easy to define with one generic mechanism for all different countries in Africa. For RCE involvement in international mechanisms and roles, local expertise should be involved, with practical mechanisms available for RCEs to support in poverty reduction.

Prof. Tabucanon then proceeded to wrap up the panel discussion, focusing on the question that was raised by Dr. Takiguchi regarding the HLPF which will be held in New York in July. He expressed it would be beneficial for RCEs to be visible at that forum, which would provide an opportunity to showcase the contributions of the RCE community globally. UNU-IAS cannot do this alone, therefore the content should come from RCEs. If talking about impact for example, perhaps it could be organised into the following structure: 1) how RCEs can contribute, aligned into how RCEs contribute to policy making, relating to governance; 2) how RCEs have contributed to institutional change; 3) individual change, change behaviour of people, skills development; and 4) community empowerment. All of these are very much aligned with UNESCO. They emphasised on these four areas to affect societal change. Prof. Tabucanon asked the RCE community to give exemplars of what they have done successfully. Possibly between now and the middle of 2019, if there could be a continued conversation from this panel onwards, to consolidate the inputs of the RCE community, and bring it to New York for the HLPF as the contribution of the RCEs. The panel discussion was then closed, with Prof. Tabucanon thanking the all-women panel once again for their contributions and presentations.