***Stepping Up to Sustainability in 6 SADC countries***

***A Climate Change Education Project***

***Brief Overview***

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| *Botswana Project Launch:* Over sixty participants, representing a range of government, university, schools and civil society organisations met in Francistown, Botswana on the 18th and 19th August for the 3rd National Environmental Education conference which was hosted by the Botswana Department of the Environment. One high-light of the conference was the launch of the USAID supported *Stepping Up to Sustainability Project* in Botswana. Delegates selected from, and made a commitment to, a range of “change-choice-practices” as a living experiment in sustainable living for themselves, their communities and work-place institutions! A range of further courses, follow-up workshops and sustainability commons practices will follow …… The Stepping Up to Sustainability is a support project of the UNESCO Global Action Partnership. |

The future well-being of all live on Earth, including humans, is at great risk due to Climate change. In southern Africa this risk is considered to be particularly high with increased droughts, floods and extreme weather events already threatening human well-being. For the past four years, WESSA (the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa) has successfully implemented the *Stepping Up to Sustainability Project* in South Africa. This project is an educationally-driven response to climate change, grounded in alternative livelihood practices and the implementation of supporting technologies with a reduced environmental impact. It is thus an education for sustainable development project with wide-srepad

The *Stepping Up to Sustainability Project* has been supported by USAID, and other partners, and the good news is that in 2015, USAID have approved a second phase of the project, extending project implementation to include work in 6 SADC countries: Zambia, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia, Lesotho and South Africa.

The project was conceived as a Human Capacity Development (HCD) Programme in recognition of the need to develop environmental skills in the SADC region. This need had been clarified through the SADC capacity needs assessment which was undertaken in 2012 (Mukuthe, et.al., 2012). A significant aspect of the project is thus capacity building through relevant, focused climate change education workshops and courses. The project also includes the establishment of an innovative ‘sustainability commons’ in each country, which will demonstrate and showcase the use and application of a range of sustainability technologies and will allow people to try-out and experiment with these low-carbon technologies.

The “Sustainability Commons” further present an opportunity for collaboration with, and the development of, Regional Centres of Expertise (RCEs) in support of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). It is envisioned that through these Sustainability Commons and the *Stepping Up to Sustainability Project*, regional RCEs will be strengthened. The project also plans to work with and support the excellent work that is being undertaken by the RCE’s as well as the UNESCO ESD Chairs which have been established at three leading universities in the region; these include the Universities of Swaziland, Botswana and Zambia. This support will ensure that the UNESCO GAP (Global Action Programme) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) – which are currently replacing the Millenium Development Goals (MDG’s) can be met (Taylor, 2014). The goal of this project is thus to strengthen the work that many networks are doing to effectively reorient education so that the empowering knowledge and skills become a reality and strengthen education and learning towards sustainable development.

**References**

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