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UNU-IAS Roadmap for the RCE Community 2016-2020

During the launch of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) in 2005, the United Nations University (UNU) inaugurated its first Regional Centers of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCEs). Over the following ten years (2005-2014), RCEs have contributed significantly to the aspirations of DESD. From an initial grouping of seven RCEs, the network has expanded to 146 RCEs across the globe as of January 2016, bringing together an unprecedented amount of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) practitioners and experts. Together, these experts have translated local initiatives in global action, provided knowledge platforms on a number of diverse topics, and acted as a resource base on ESD to communities inside and outside the RCE community. The RCE community is composed of the global RCE network, the Global RCE Service Centre at the UNU Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), and the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for RCEs.

During the decade, the global RCE network has engaged a wide array of multi-stakeholders including decision and policy makers at many levels of governance, identified and shared outstanding ESD practices, and created thematic and geographical networks of educators, researchers and practitioners. By linking formal and non-formal education sectors, as well as synergizing top-down and bottom-up approaches to ESD, the global RCE network has been able to build bridges and cross boundaries in implementing effective ESD practices. Stakeholders around the world recognize RCEs' unique ability to act as an interface of education, research, policy and practice for sustainable development.

 The Global Action Programme (GAP) on ESD is the follow-up to the DESD which seeks to generate and scale up concrete actions in ESD. At this moment for the ESD community, it is important to celebrate our accomplishments, while looking forward to the work that remains to be done within the field and through the GAP framework as well as through other multinational processes. The UNU-IAS Roadmap for the RCE community presented here is the result of coordinated internal review conducted by the UNU-IAS' ESD Programme team during 2015, in consultation with and advice from the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs. It seeks to capitalize on successes and respond to challenges relating to ESD which have arisen during the DESD, and will play a role in the implementation of the GAP and beyond. This roadmap is reflective of the new directions the ESD Programme is undertaking to contribute to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The ESD Programme is committed to contributing to this agenda by meeting the following objectives:

- Accelerating regional and local sustainability solutions through learning
- Transforming higher education institutions
- Developing Sustainable Development (SD) and ESD competences and capabilities
- Contributing to development of a science-policy interface

In the pursuit of reaching these objectives, sustainable consumption and production (SCP), biodiversity (Bio), ecosystem services and associated traditional knowledge (TK), climate change (CC) and disaster risk reduction (DRR), and higher education initiatives (HEIs) will be emphasized as thematic areas.

The global RCE network, in partnership with other ESD- and SD-related networks, is well positioned to serve as a driving force in meeting these objectives. Because RCEs operate at local and regional levels to implement the global ESD agenda, they can give critical insight on how to effectively engage with new initiatives, scale up existing actions, disseminate insights and practices, collaborate meaningfully with international sustainability platforms and processes, and build capacity for local and national stakeholders. In doing so, they can contribute to a global learning space on ESD where best practices can be learned and applied to contribute to sustainable development throughout the world.

Strategy 1: Strengthening governance to better coordinate ESD/SD learning and actions within the RCE community

In accord with the Guiding Principles for the RCE Community, the Global RCE Service Centre and the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs will work in collaboration with the global RCE network to coordinate actions, share information, and bring new actors and communities into the RCE community. The global RCE network should feel empowered to take initiative in organizing activities, such as planning and holding meetings/conferences, supporting development of potential RCEs, mentoring new RCEs, and reporting to the Global RCE Service Centre so that synergies can be found for RCE learning and collaboration.

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Implementing Strategies	Action Items	Outputs
• Support development and acknowledgement of new RCEs	• Work with RCEs in mentoring and reviewing progress of RCE candidates	• New RCEs from different regions acknowledged
• Empower RCEs through sharing data and match-making for ESD activities	• Create database of ongoing RCE projects through annual reports; • Following-up with RCEs in reporting activities	• Searchable database of thematic categories; • Up-to-date contact information for active RCEs
• Coordinate regional governance and planning	• Hold yearly regional meetings; • Coordinate youth and other thematic and strategic meetings at RCE regional conferences	• Action plan for each region developed during meeting and implemented during the following year
• Engage RCEs w/ self-assessment for quality assurance	• Revisit RCE reporting on assessments and modify/simplify the methodology for wider use; • Identify opportunities for assessment and provide coaching;	• Consolidate results of assessment for reporting; • Make materials accessible
• Align with RCEs in effective communication	• Engage with RCEs to define common communication goals, messages and channels	• Develop a shared communication platform to promote RCE network activities in and outside of the RCE community

Outcomes: Multi-stakeholder governance is enhanced both within and between RCEs, with mechanisms to implement and agreed upon for respective action items.

Strategy 2: Enhancing the capacity development of local and regional stakeholders to contribute to both local and global sustainable development initiatives

To contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Global RCE Service Centre will engage with the global RCE network to create thematic working groups around research and implementation for given SDGs. These thematic working groups will be best positioned to strategize how to build capacity within their local communities to engage with the given SDG. Furthermore, all RCE members should feel empowered to learn from each other and other peers on best practices in relation to ESD/SD. This can be accomplished by creating and sharing learning materials, relevant for tackling

sustainable development challenges, as well as through exchange and dialogue with peers around the globe.
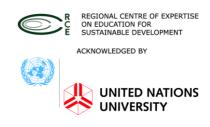
Implementing Strategies	Action Items	Outputs
• Continue support of thematic working groups within the RCE community in relation to SDGs (beginning with themes of SCP, CC, Bio & TK, HEIs)	• Bring together, through electronic media and, where appropriate through face-to-face meetings, RCE members based on reported thematic interests; • Facilitate sharing findings/progress with the RCE community at large and link to other thematic working groups where appropriate; • Work with joint projects between RCEs	• Thematic working groups present findings at various fora including regional/ global RCE conference; • Input to the capacity development processes for the RCE community
• Build capacity of RCEs to engage with policy and decision makers	• Facilitate workshops and webinars on capacity building around thematic focus areas; • Utilize and develop RCE learning materials to deliver capacity development and leadership programmes	• Workshops and webinars held among RCE members on different topics; • Flyers on how to engage policy makers and other decision makers
• Develop and share information on fellowship, exchange, and training programmes to enhance pool of experts in ESD	• Identify RCEs that desire to host exchanges; • Develop plan for working exchanges; • Provide information about possible exchanges within ESD and SD areas to the members of the RCE community	• Exchange opportunities disseminated throughout the RCE network

Outcomes: RCEs have improved knowledge and capacity in implementing effective ESD initiatives as well as stronger connections within the RCE community and beyond.

Strategy 3: Strengthening the impact of actions related to SD/ESD by linking local and regional SD and ESD debates and processes with international platforms

The RCE community can contribute to international sustainable development debates, networking, and research initiatives, especially in the priority thematic areas (SCP, Bio & TK, CC & DRR, HEIs), by offering their expertise around the globe. RCEs are also engaged with all Priority Action Areas of the GAP. The GAP Priority Action Area 5: accelerating

sustainable solutions at the local level, is seen as especially relevant for implementing RCE activities. The key to strengthening impact will be to scale up practices from the local to the global, keeping in mind global platforms can also highlight and disseminate localized solutions to SD challenges. The RCE community can also work on developing strategies and materials for engaging decision makers with sustainable development by linking with training programmes and conferences by working in tandem with the Global RCE Service Centre.

Implementing Strategies	Action Items	Outputs
• Work w/ thematic groups on research linking ESD to broader SD debates (a) Work towards SDG12 and associated Goals; work w/ 10YFP on SCP[i] (b) Work w/ IPBES[ii] & CBD[iii] (c) Work w/ UNFCC[iv] (Article 6) & Sendai Framework for DRR (d) Work w/HEIs	• Author publications linking ESD to broader SD debates (a) Participate in education events dedicated to SCP, including those organized with/by 10YFP (b) Participate in IPBES and CBD education/capacity building events (c) Participate in Education event at UNFCCC COP and other relevant events (d) Seek collaboration with other HE networks and initiatives	• 1-2 publications for each thematic working group (per year); • Presentation at each of the side events participated in (every year)
• Engage w/ RCEs' cross-cutting approach to all GAP Priority Action Areas; • Work w/ UNESCO	• Initiate communication with UNESCO and key partners; • Develop toolkits, with focus on accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level	• Publications/presenta-tions at UNESCO or partner meetings; • Toolkits distributed among the RCE network
• Link RCEs to other ESD programmes and networks	• Inform the RCE community of potential engagements via open call	• RCEs engage with ESD programmes in their geographic/thematic areas
• Work w/ RCEs to engage w/ ESD and SD policy at the sub-national and national level	• Initiate conversations b/t RCEs and national focal points for ESD and SD processes	• Share experiences and strategies during meetings

Outcomes: Both individual RCEs and the global RCE network are engaged with local, national, and international ESD/SD initiatives and platforms.

While the UNU-IAS Roadmap for the RCE Community (2016-2020) is designed to illustrate the overall direction of the global RCE network, it will also be iterative in its implementation. Strategies, action items, and outputs can all be revisited and adjusted accordingly.

[i] 10 Year Framework Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production (http://www.unep.org/10yfp/)
[ii] Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (http://www.ipbes.net/index.php/about-ipbes)
[iii] Convention on Biological Diversity (https://www.cbd.int/)
[iv] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (http://unfccc.int/2860.php)