

Regional Centres of Expertise

on education for sustainable development

RCE GHANA

The region

Ghana, originally called the Gold Coast, covers an area of 238,537 sq. km. and is located on West Africa's Gulf of Guinea a few degrees north of the Equator. Half of the country is less than 152 metres above sea level and the highest point is 883 metres. Part of the south, which is covered by forests, is bordered by the sea.



Ghana is rich in natural resources including gold and timber. The country has diverse landscapes ranging from the evergreen and semi deciduous forests in the south, to lagoons and mangrove forests on the coast and savanna grasslands in the north with the characteristic scattering of shrubs, and acacia and baobab trees. Ghana's forests host over 700 species of birds, and like most other African nations has rich traditional cultures that differ from one ethnic group or tribe to the other.

RCE Ghana will operate from Kumasi as the core area but will gradually radiate to cover the whole of Ghana.

Regional challenges

Ghana faces similar challenges to those faced by developing countries in Africa. The major challenges facing Ghana include rapid urbanization and large-scale development that are causing environmental and social stress.

Water, forest and mineral resource development projects bring in their wake environmental problems and social disruptions. Improper use of hazardous chemicals in both agriculture and industry create additional threats to human health and safety. Fishery resources and sites of historical and cultural importance are negatively affected by uncontrolled development in the fragile and sensitive economic coastal zones.

Regional role

RCE Ghana expects to play a major role in spearheading advocacy initiatives to change the educational framework, so that graduates at all levels are capable of ensuring sustainability in the region. RCE Ghana also hopes to play a leading role in general education and promotion of awareness on environment and sustainable development. It also perceives its role as a platform for interaction and dialogue between governmental organizations, District Assemblies, academic and research Institutes and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Organizations involved

The initial group of RCE partners are the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology's (KNUST), University College of Education Winneba, Association of African Universities, Ghana Chamber of Mines, Ghana Health Service, Forestry Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, Kumasi Zoological Gardens, Aburi Botanical Gardens, Tropenbos International-Ghana, Conservation International Ghana, Friends of Rivers and Water bodies, Kumasi Metropolitan Assembly, Focus FM Radio and KNUST primary and secondary schools.

Decision-making structure

The final decision-making organ will be a Steering Committee made of representatives from the major stakeholder groups. The Executive Management Committee will oversee the management of the activities of the RCE, and operate from a secretariat, to be based at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST).



Goal of the RCE

The goal of RCE Ghana is to become a centre of expertise in the area of sustainability in Africa through enhancing public awareness and understanding of sustainable development (SD) and education for sustainable development (ESD) and the generation of innovative programmes in the areas of learning and research.

Long-term objectives

- Raise public awareness and understanding of the essential role of ESD for the creation of a sustainable society.
- Serve as a base for the integrated study of sustainable development issues at national and regional levels.
- Promote the integration of local sustainability challenges into non-formal, formal and informal education.
- Facilitate trainers' training through workshops and seminars, and develop teaching modules and materials for ESD.
- Establish, enhance and coordinate partnerships and networks in the region.
- Support sustainable agriculture and reduce waste.
- Promote sustainable management and use of national and regional resources.
- Facilitate dialogue to translate SD into a regional cultural context.
- Serve as an example of good practice to other countries in West Africa with similar challenges and environmental backgrounds.

Short-term objectives

- Inventory ESD initiatives to help establish a local resource knowledge base.
- Promote awareness and understanding of the concept of SD and ESD among all stakeholders.
- Assess the role of environmental education and ESD in the current curricular at the basic, secondary and tertiary levels of education.
- Facilitate the development of teaching modules and materials for ESD in tertiary education.
- Initiate interdisciplinary ESD courses and assist in mainstreaming ESD in tertiary education.
- Create a platform for dialogue between universities, NGOs, school teachers and educational / environmental administrators.
- Identify and promote examples of good practices in ESD.
- Promote conservation of river environments and eco-tourism.
- Facilitate research on sustainable development.

Activities

Activities of RCE Ghana are mainly research, teaching and extension on ESD. Planned activities include,

- raising awareness through capacity building programmes,
- developing a strategic plan and a policy framework within the general framework of ESD,
- creating a network to promote information exchange and collaboration between organizations including NGOs, Government, and academic institutions,
- developing ESD partnerships focusing on priority themes in the region such as waste management, tourism, cultural heritage, forestry and mining,
- establishing an ESD resource centre to facilitate cooperation between the stakeholders, and
- promoting projects and the use of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) and science and technology for SD.

Achievements

- An ad-hoc Executive Management Committee has been established and has met several times to discuss goals, governance and partners of the RCE.
- A process to engage key representatives from formal, informal and non-formal educational institutions and NGOs has been initiated.
- A stakeholders' workshop was held in March 2007, and a steering committee formed at the end of the event.



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