

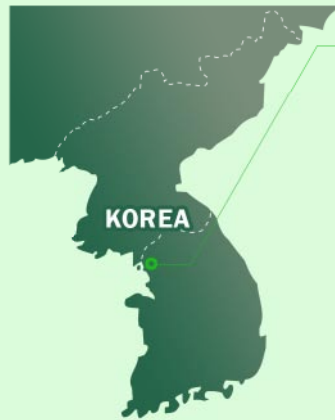
Regional Centres of Expertise

on education for sustainable development

RCE INCHEON

The region

Incheon is situated in the heart of the Korean Peninsula, and borders the Yellow Sea. As of 2006, the city covers an area of about 995 sq. km. or 0.98% of the country, and is 1.6 times larger than Seoul. Incheon has a long and indented coastline with a total of 155 islands, of which 114 are uninhabited. Incheon City has a population of about 2.7 million and is the third most populated city in the country. As urban areas continue to expand, the population is expected to rise to 3.5 million by 2020.



In 1883, Incheon opened the country's first modern port, and has since played a pivotal role in modernizing Korea by introducing foreign civilizations to the country, and carrying the Korean civilization overseas. Today, Incheon is home to about 7,700 businesses, a majority of which are small and medium-sized.

Incheon City's budgetary constraints have resulted in insufficient infrastructure for education, and the area has a smaller number of institutions for higher education and libraries, when compared to other metropolitan areas.

Regional challenges

Due to increased foreign investment, the city has seen an influx of migrant workers, but there is insufficient infrastructure, manpower and services to assist immigrants and foreigners. Although efforts to open international schools and hospitals are underway, much needs to be done particularly with regard to residents' attitudes towards foreigners and foreign language fluency.

Incheon faces several environmental problems, including air and water pollution. As a result of the sharp growth in car ownership, motor vehicle exhaust accounts for 81.5% of air pollution in the area. Sixteen of Incheon's 30 small rivers that pass through the city centre are polluted from domestic sewage and wastewater. Pollutants carried by rivers and large-scale coastal development projects have resulted in marine pollution. In addition, 30% of waste dumped at sea across the country is concentrated around Incheon Port. Green areas in the city centre that are accessible to the public are scarce and parks are relegated to the outskirts of the city.

The education sector's challenges include the Korean education system's focus on improving test scores rather than on skills building. There is also a widening education gap attributable to differences in economic, social and cultural conditions of households and regions.

Regional role

Although improving citizens' quality of life has always been a crucial issue, Incheon has been hampered by the lack of cooperation among the public, businesses and the city government. Activities of the city government and NGOs to improve quality of life have been confined to environmental issues. However, in recent years, the city government has promoted initiatives related to sustainable development, thus facilitating activities of organizations founded on public-private partnership, such as the Task Force for Survival of Rivers and the Local Agenda 21 for Incheon. Now, armed with these experiences and strengths, Incheon City recognizes that the establishment of an RCE would enable the city to pursue sustainable development, and to go beyond the realm of the environment to address the wider areas that affect the quality of life of all citizens. Also, with Incheon emerging as an international city, an RCE here would no doubt lay the foundation for more active cooperation with international organizations and raise the city's profile.

Goals of the RCE

RCE Incheon's vision for the medium term is to seek organic integration and development of ongoing sustainable development activities in the area. In the long term, the RCE plans to:

- promote the image of Incheon as a sustainable city;
- promote balanced urban development and sustainable development in Incheon;
- create an SD network in northeast Asia;
- help build infrastructure through international cooperation; and to
- build a foundation for transforming the education system.

Organizations involved

The Environment and Forestry Bureau, the Science and Technology Department of the City Government; the Incheon Metropolitan Office of Education, the University of Incheon's Office for International Affairs, the Gyeongin National University of Education, the Incheon College of the Korean National Open University; media such as the Incheon Times and Kyeongin Daily; NGOs such as the Incheon Branch of Korean Federation for Environmental Movements and the Incheon Branch of the Association of Teachers Protecting the Environment and Wildlife; the research institution Incheon Development Institute; the Incheon Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Incheon Environment Roundtable and the Local Agenda 21 for Incheon are all involved in the RCE.

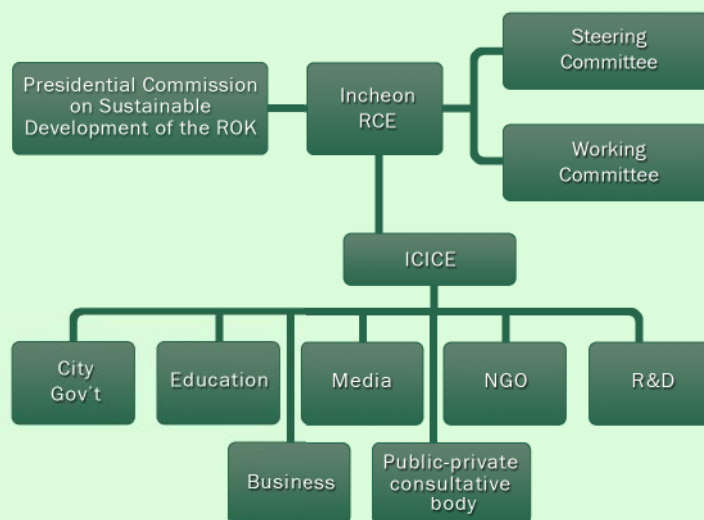
IMAGES OF INCHEON



Decision-making structure

The RCE Working Committee will discuss an array of issues on SD and report the outcome to the Steering Committee for final decisions. The Working Committee will have three sub-committees – planning, education and public relations – for more effective and specialized RCE activities. Also, through close cooperation with the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development, the Incheon RCE will ensure that its activities remain in tune with a national SD strategy.

Founded in September 2005 by the city government, the Incheon Center for International Cooperation and Exchange is an organization dedicated to international exchange affairs. Established under an official ordinance, the ICICE has the mandate to continuously pursue RCE activities in the future. The ICICE will serve as a secretariat by providing a forum for dialogue, promoting external cooperation and furnishing necessary financial and administrative support. It will seek to ensure that roles are clearly defined among committee members, and that they are entrusted to address the areas of their expertise.



Organization of RCE Incheon

Activities

RCE Incheon's plan for 2007 is as follows:

- Phase 1: Hold an event marking RCE acknowledgment, and hold meetings with the working and steering committees whenever necessary afterwards.
- Phase 2: Hold a public awareness event with international RCE experts addressing city officials and citizens to promote the concepts of sustainable development and RCEs.
- Phase 3: Hold an international event to discuss the vision for RCE Incheon.

For more information

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