

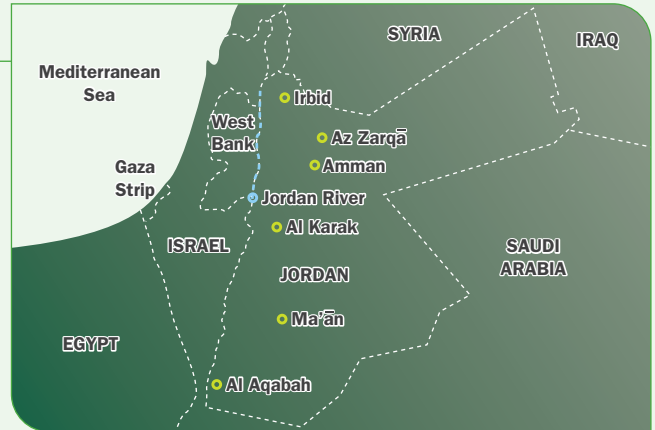
Regional Centres of Expertise

on education for sustainable development

RCE JORDAN

Geography

The initial geographical scope of the RCE would be The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Although a large area, 63% of the total population lives in Amman, Zarqa and Irbid, all of which are within an hour of each other. Despite recent efforts to decentralise, Jordan is still highly centralised and all stakeholders have their headquarters in Amman. Some stakeholders have a diverse network of members and activities which can be utilised for the RCE.



Regional challenges

Jordan is a constitutional monarchy with a population of about 5.8 Million, including 1.74 million Palestinian refugees and about 500,000 Iraqis. Despite major changes in recent years, Jordan is still facing poverty, with about 30% of the population living at or below the national poverty line. Nearly 70% of the country's population is under the age of 29 posing significant challenges for investment in education and health services. A major challenge is also the creation of employment for young adults, especially since the unofficial unemployment rate is at over 30%. Gender based discrimination and domestic violence are named significant problems by the Jordan Human Development Report. According to an annual poll of the Centre for Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, over 70% of Jordanians are still afraid to criticise the government in public. In the same poll, Jordanians also mentioned poverty and unemployment, and financial and administrative corruption as the two major problems meriting attention.

Only 2.6% of Jordan's land is arable, and the rest is mostly arid and semi-arid desert. The depletion of freshwater resources is a major environmental challenge, especially in urban areas which have an outdated water delivery system. Over 70% of water use is for agriculture, which renders 2.4% of the GDP and employs 5% of the workforce. Other significant environmental problems include deforestation, land degradation, desertification, poor waste management and, more recently, challenges of providing affordable energy. In general, there is little environmental awareness across all sectors of the population.

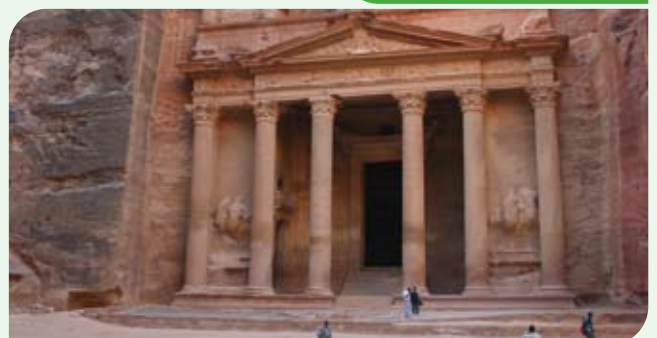
Organisations involved

The initial group of stakeholders who founded the RCE are representatives of Government, universities, development and research organisations, schools, and NGOs. This initial group includes the Ministries of Education and Environment, Jordan University for Science and Technology, IUCN WESCAN, Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, University of Jordan Department for Education, private schools, Jordan Cleaner Production Project, Jordan River Foundation and Jordan Human Development Fund/ZENID. The group is expected to grow in the coming months.

Decision-making structure

The decision-making structure for RCE Jordan will include a steering committee with 10-12 representatives of the founding stakeholders who will meet every month and report to the collective of institutions participating in the RCE. A Secretariat, located at the UNU-ILI, will facilitate inclusion of stakeholders and communication between them, facilitate access to the global learning space and create a knowledge base. Working groups on several topics, such as developing a logical framework, identifying target groups, and finding openings in the educational system where existing SD education material might be used will be created in the short term.

Petra, Jordan



Goals of the RCE

In the long term RCE-Jordan aims to serve as an example of good practice to other countries in the Middle East with similar cultural and environmental backgrounds.

The short term goals of the RCE are to:

- establish a network and resource centre of and for organisations concerned with ESD in Jordan;
- raise awareness for and utilise existing knowledge and resources on SD;
- identify and promote examples of good practices in ESD;
- enhance and strengthen, evolve and co-create a space for communication, cooperation and knowledge sharing among all stakeholders involved in ESD;
- detail the needs analysis for ESD;
- support the relationship between economy, technology, and education;
- work as a catalyst for curricula development toward SD and related activities;
- facilitate research;
- facilitate dialogue to translate SD into a regional cultural context;
- facilitate the development of teaching modules and materials for ESD;
- evaluate and apply existing experiences and examples; and
- facilitate multi-disciplinary thinking and education.

RCE Jordan's perceived role in the region

A baseline study on ESD in Jordan showed a lack of interdisciplinary thinking and action with high punctual awareness about sustainable development in certain areas. This leads to actions of limited scope. Environmental issues and problems, economic development and education are seen as separate and little attempt has been made to integrate them, let alone translating them into actions or curricula.

There appears to be little interaction and dialogue between activities, sectors, faculties and actors. The lack of cooperation manifests itself mainly in the areas of cross-sectoral information exchange, multidisciplinary research, collaboration on activities and utilising knowledge and expertise from actors and experts in different fields. There seems to be a need to integrate domestic academic expertise into policy making.

Although enrolment in primary and secondary schools is high, rates of enrolment in high school and higher education is much lower and experts say there is a lack of quality education and of teaching facilities. There is a growing gap between urban and rural, and private and public schools. The study as well as the Jordan Human Development Report rendered criticism of teaching methods and curricula which focus mostly on the accumulation of knowledge. The importance of teaching practical skills, interdisciplinary and critical thinking, and offering training in taking initiative as well as teaching theoretical knowledge has been emphasised.

RCE Jordan is working on addressing some of these issues.

Activities

Specific ideas for forthcoming activities include:

- examining existing education materials for schools and finding a way to fit these into curricula;
- identifying examples of good practice among schools, identifying case studies and aiming to multiply these examples;
- facilitating cooperation between schools, environmental NGOs and development organisations and possibly organising field days and field camps for students;
- creating an online database of all major stakeholders and their activities in Jordan;
- Greening the Campus initiative in cooperation with universities and headed by university students;
- organising a one-day symposium targeting the Jordanian private sector and university students to raise awareness on the environmental and economic benefits of ISO 14000 and other environmental certification procedures to ensure cleaner production;
- organising a high-level dialogue between representatives of various social and professional backgrounds on adapting the concept of sustainable development to the cultural context of the region; and
- research on detailing the basis for ESD in Jordan in specific, and in the Middle East in general.

Achievements

A baseline study has been conducted and a first workshop held in September 2005. Participants included the Ministries of Education and Environment, leading development and environment NGOs, research institutes, schools and universities. A second workshop in November analysed the baseline study and discussed some of the most pressing issues for ESD in Jordan. A preliminary working structure has been established and the workshop was followed by a launch of the RCE.

For more information

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