

Regional Centres of Expertise

on education for sustainable development

RCE KYRGYZSTAN

The region

The Kyrgyz Republic, located in Central Asia, shares its borders with China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It is a small but diverse country that covers 198,500 sq. km. Over 93% of the country lies above 1000 metres and mountains dominate the landscape. Seven percent of the land is occupied by agricultural fields, settlements, roads, and industrial enterprises.



The Kyrgyz Republic gained its independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991, and has since faced the challenge of political transition to a market economy. The country's 5 million population is mainly of Kyrgyz ethnicity. People of other nationalities in the country include Russians, Ukrainians, Uzbeks, Kazakhs and Tatars. This diversity has led to unique cultural traditions and knowledge.

The Kyrgyz Republic's Tien-Shan mountain ranges are well-known, as are the ranges of Alay and Pamir. These mountain ecosystems are rich in biodiversity, genetic resources, endemic species and medicinal plants.

Regional challenges

The key environmental problems facing Kyrgyzstan include pollution from industrial and municipal waste, radioactive contamination, degradation of mountain ecosystems, desertification, growing levels of air pollution and trans-boundary water issues. Around 2.3 million hectares of grassland are under threat of degradation. Lack of access to water and sanitation has led to contagious diseases, and the quality of ground water has deteriorated due to industrial and municipal waste dumping.

Forty percent of the population lives below the poverty level with an income of less than \$2 a day, with rural-urban migration exacerbating the problem. Infant mortality rates are 1.8 times greater in the poorest 20% of households than in the wealthiest 20%, and child mortality is almost twice as great.

Regional role

To deal with the problems in the region, RCE Kyrgyzstan plans to introduce an effective system of environmental management and governance. The RCE will also

- enhance understanding of the importance of mountain ecosystem conservation among diverse groups including decision makers at the national level, and
- develop programmes involving private business enterprises in the sustainable use of resources.

Organizations involved

A consortium including the following institutions has been formed:

- Representatives of the Bishkek Humanitarian University (BHU), based in the capital of Kyrgyzstan
- Government organizations such as the Agency of Environmental Protection and Forestry, the Ministry of Education and Science, and the Kyrgyz Academy of Education
- Representatives of NGOs including the ecological movement BIOM, which is very active in ESD; and the NGOs Beagle, Tabiyat and Aleyne
- Representatives of international organizations such as the National Affiliation of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia and the National Commission of UNESCO

As the development of the RCE progresses, representatives of the network of ecological projects, the Centre for Ecological Education, the Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, and of various universities, schools, will also be involved.

Goals of the RCE

The main goal of RCE Kyrgyzstan is the mobilization of existing organizations of formal, non-formal, and informal educators to deliver ESD throughout the country.

Short-term objectives

- To create a network of knowledge institutions, government organizations, companies, business enterprises, and NGOs
- To develop curricula and materials on ESD
- To provide training for trainers on ESD
- To study and disseminate best experiences and practices on ESD
- To provide expertise for publishing materials on environmental education and ESD
- To conduct surveys on ESD-related issues

Long-term objectives

- To initiate the development and adoption of the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development, and of the Kyrgyz Republic Law on ESD
- To develop and distribute knowledge tools and educational resources on ESD
- To support the creation of ESD resource centre networks in Kyrgyzstan, on the basis of existing networks of ecological schools, public organizations and state bodies
- To support the development and promotion of innovative ESD programmes at all levels of education
- To disseminate sustainable development ideas through mass media

Decision-making structures

The RCE office will be located at the Bishkek Humanitarian University. A Steering Committee will support the RCE in the implementation of activities and in the promotion of ESD. This committee will review RCE progress, provide feedback to the coordinating unit, increase awareness about the RCE and coordinate partnership activities between stakeholders. The Steering Committee comprises of key ESD promoters, including representatives from state agencies, universities, NGOs, CAREC, and teachers.



Activities

The RCE will focus on:

- building capacity for RCE stakeholders, NGOs and government on ESD;
- raising awareness of decision-makers, teachers, schools, universities and NGOs on the importance of mountain ecosystem conservation through seminars, workshops, conferences, trainings and development of information material.

In addition, the RCE will plan activities on:

Transformative education

- Publishing an ESD National Review
- Developing the capacity of teachers to include ESD in subjects relating to the natural and human sciences, such as mountain ecosystem conservation.
- Assisting universities in introducing aspects of mountain conservation into national curricula, and developing a cross-curriculum approach in SD and ESD.
- Introducing an ESD training programme for all stakeholders.

Research and development

- Organizing public fora to discuss priorities in ESD strategy development and preparing an ESD National Strategy and Action Plan for the Kyrgyz Republic.
- Developing partnerships and cooperation among educators, experts and NGOs to share information, experience and materials.
- Conducting research in cooperation with researchers from the Soil-Biology Institute of the National Academy of Science, the Kyrgyz Academy of Education and other research institutions.

For more information

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