

# Regional Centres of Expertise

on education for sustainable development

## RCE PACIFIC

### Geography

RCE Pacific will cover the Pacific Island Countries (PICs) comprising the sub-regions of Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia.

### Regional challenges

Sustainable Development (SD) in its totality is a new concept in the Pacific region though aspects of it have been addressed separately in all development planning and major projects. What is needed now is a more balanced and holistic approach to development. This is particularly critical for the island nations because of their limited resource base including human resource and the general lack of financial and institutional capacity. In addition, these countries are faced with new and emerging threats – trade liberalisation, HIV/AIDS, vulnerability to climate change, the conflicts between traditional and modern living, and security issues to mention a few.

### RCE Pacific's perceived role in the region

Innovative approaches involving local, national and international partners will be needed to deal with these challenges. On a positive note, the region has been very active both at the national and international arenas in addressing these issues. There are several new initiatives in the region to respond to these challenges: various Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEA), WSSD Type 2 partnership initiatives, regional strategies and framework to address water, ocean, climate change and education, among others.

RCE Pacific needs to blend in and enhance the outcomes of these activities by providing the knowledge, skills, perspectives and values necessary to foster SD.

Around the Fiji islands



### Organisations involved

RCE Pacific will involve institutions of formal, non-formal and informal education at both regional and national levels. At the regional level, RCE Pacific will embrace the members of the Council of the Regional Organisations of Pacific (CROP), regional ministries of education and planning, NGOs and other groups for its effective operations. That these groups are already interacting with each other on a number of issues relating to SD will aid RCE Pacific's work.

To be effective, RCE Pacific will align itself with the 14 Pacific Type 2 Partnership Initiatives including WSSD Capacity Building Type 2 Partnership, University Consortium – Small Island Developing States (UC-SIDS) and the Pacific Plan. The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) and Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) with their on-going involvement in SD initiatives and leadership in the region will be active players. Through the Pacific Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (PACE-SD) and activities of the research centres START/APN, there is already a strong linkage among these groups.

### Decision-making structure

- University of South Pacific (USP) will take the lead in developing RCE Pacific, and PACE-SD will play the key role as coordinator/facilitator of RCE Pacific within and outside USP.
- Within USP, the Director of PACE-SD will report directly to the Deputy Vice Chancellor and an Advisory Committee comprising senior USP staff and other stakeholders from outside the University which sets the general strategic directions. Major decisions require approval by the University Senate and the Council.
- At the regional level, the issue will be raised at the CROP Working Group on Sustainable Development and other relevant fora.

## Goal of the RCE

The goal of RCE Pacific is to improve public awareness, education and training to promote sustainable development, and build the capacity of Pacific Islanders to achieve sustainable development suitable to the region.

## Short-term objectives

- Promote understanding and awareness of the concept of ESD among all stakeholders.
- Assess the role of environmental education and ESD in the current curricula at the basic and tertiary education levels.
- Evaluate SD priorities, challenges and strategies to address them in the curricula.
- Initiate interdisciplinary, holistic ESD courses as a first step.
- Promote distance and flexible learning (DFL) and e-learning to enhance SD training.
- Establish RCE/Universities' partnerships and networking, particularly with UNU and UC-SIDS, for ESD.

## Long-term objectives

- To serve as a focal point for the integrated study of environment and sustainable development issues at the regional and national levels.
- To coordinate, stimulate and catalyse ESD teaching, research and consultancy at both regional and national levels.
- To maintain close contact and collaborative links with governments and agencies related to ESD.
- To facilitate the promotion of culturally sensitive environmental and development research.
- To provide information to present and prospective students and the outside community about courses and careers in the areas of environment and sustainable development.

## Activities

The activities of RCE Pacific may include:

- integration of SD issues into high school curricula;
- promotion of outreach activities such as Chemistry Outreach to Schools (COTS), Small Islands Voice (SIV), and Ocean Future Society among schools and village youth groups;
- community oriented projects aimed at natural resource conservation and income generation initiatives;
- efforts to reorient University curricula to promote ESD;
- Distance and Flexible Learning (DFL) based special training on climatology and agro-metrology, integrated coastal management, integrated waste management, green accounting, Environmental Impact Assessment / Strategic Environmental Assessment (EIA/SEA), GIS/RS;

- establishment of an online resource centre for tertiary education institutions to promote ESD;
- review of the interconnectivity of environment, population and poverty from the Pacific Island context;
- promotion of projects that employ Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Science, Technology and Innovations for SD;
- MEA capacity building and promotion of e-learning through networking; and
- increased number of multidisciplinary and targeted research projects addressing natural resources, economically active ecosystems, trade, urbanisation, waste management and climate change impacts assessment, and adaptation studies.

## Achievements

The Pacific Island countries launched 14 voluntary Type 2 partnership initiatives at WSSD, one of which is focused on education-based capacity building, with special attention being paid to higher educational institutions.

PACE-SD was established by USP to develop a more focused and collaborative approach to environmental education, research, consultancy and capacity building in the Pacific Island region. The Centre is designed to work with all other relevant sections of the university, regional and international environmental organisations, regional governments and NGOs to promote environmentally sustainable development.

The main focus of the newly established Faculty of Islands and Oceans at USP will be the sustainable management of island natural resources and both terrestrial and marine biodiversity. Particular attention will be paid to the sustainable development challenges of atoll countries in the Pacific.

At the Mauritius International meeting of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), an MOU was signed by five universities – University of the West Indies, University of the South Pacific, University of Mauritius, University of Malta and the University of The Virgin Islands – who joined hands to offer courses and programmes inter-regionally using a common platform.

For the improvement of Basic Education in the PICs, the Pacific Regional Initiative for the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) was launched to spearhead the implementation of the Pacific Islands Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP).

## For more information

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