

Regional Centres of Expertise

on education for sustainable development

RCE PENANG

Geography

The geographic scope for RCE Penang's activities is the State of Penang with its island, territories in the mainland and its neighbouring states, with possible satellite activities in several areas such as Kubang Kerian in Kelantan, Transkrian and states in East Malaysia. There is also the possibility of collaboration with other interested organisations working on ESD in Southeast Asia.



Regional challenges

Penang is acknowledged as among the most successful and liveable places in Asia. It is rich in tropical and cultural treasures. However, like any other state with rapid economic development, Penang faces challenges such as rapid urbanisation and large scale property development that are causing environmental and social stress.

There is a high level of concern and awareness among the communities on environmental issues, and a variety of programmes and activities are in place to address these as well as the social and economic aspects of sustainable development. While these awareness-raising programmes are very important, a more comprehensive education-based approach is still needed.

RCE Penang's perceived role in the region

Penang's challenges need to be addressed with an educational framework that is capable of ensuring sustainability in the region. Thus, educational programmes form the backbone of RCE Penang.

The mission of RCE Penang is to build capacity to deliver, support and generate innovative education for sustainable development (SD) in Penang. This will be achieved by working with partners and by developing a coordinated communication and dissemination framework for regional ESD projects and programmes.

Organisations involved

The core organisation of RCE Penang is Universiti Sains Malaysia. Among the potential actors identified are the Department of Environment, Penang State Government, Municipal Council, and NGOs such as Social and Environmental Research Institute (SERI), Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM), Malaysian Nature Society (MNS), Consumer Action of Penang (CAP), Third World Network, Pesticide Action Network–Asia Pacific, Penang Environmental Working Group (PEWOG), Water Watch Asia and the Asia & West Pacific Network for Urban Conservation. Centres within USM such as the Centre for Education and Training in Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CETREE), Centre for Marine and Coastal Studies (CEMACS), Centre for Archaeological Research–Malaysia and the Museum, River Engineering and Urban Drainage Centre (REDAC), Unit of Women and Human resource Studies (KANITA), Basic Education Research Unit (BERU), are also involved.

Universiti Sains Malaysia



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Goals of the RCE

- Create public awareness and understanding on SD and the needs for ESD.
- Move higher education institutions to spearhead ESD activities and awareness in the region.
- Coordinate the compilation of current ESD practices from across Penang and the neighbouring states in order to share and generate regional ESD good practices.

Objectives

- Cultivate sustainable development competence of the existing workforce.
- Promote the region's commitment to sustainable development.
- Advance sustainable development competence of all the region's citizens to facilitate social inclusion and active participation in SD.
- Increase opportunities for sustainable development volunteering.
- Promote sustainable management and use of the community's physical, cultural and environmental assets.

Strategies to achieve the objectives include:

- establishing leadership for sustainable development;
- developing and promoting compelling images of sustainable regional development;
- developing and promoting sustainable development training opportunities for school teachers, teacher educators and school administrators;
- working with key partners to identify funding sources for ESD projects;
- developing an ESD Strategy guide for local authorities; and
- establishing one stop shop for information on ESD good practices in the region.

Achievements

RCE Penang through USM as the leading actor and main operation centre has contributed to the expected functions of RCE in several ways. Awareness on ESD among the university communities and in Penang has been raised through seminars and workshops. ESD awareness has also been raised nationally through the government representatives working on ESD and through the recognition of the RCE. Contributions have been made to reorienting the approach towards environmental education, and ideas and information on implementing the DESD strategy have been disseminated. Collaborations and a network among various stakeholders in the region are also being developed.

Activities

Activities at the university level are the Healthy Campus Programme, programmes on energy saving, and the University and the Community Programme in which faculty members disseminate research findings to benefit the community or in which students' clubs and societies work on various SD-related activities with the outside community.

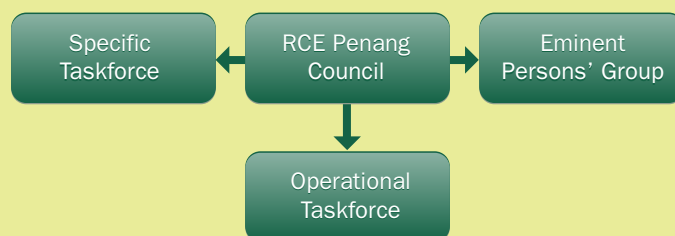
Several awareness and capacity building seminars have been conducted – National Seminar for Teacher Development on ESD, International Healthy University Conference, ASEAN-EU EfSD Workshop, Training of Trainers' series, and the ASAIHL International Conference on Education for Sustainable Development.

Planned activities include:

- encouraging the active engagement of stakeholders through relevant programmes;
- developing ESD partnerships focusing on priority themes in the region such as waste management, tourism, and cultural heritage;
- cultivating ESD partnerships that address social equity issues, with education activities that aim to address the social, environmental and economic dimensions of ESD;
- fostering ESD partnerships that address the concept of efficiency in the use of natural resources;
- developing partnerships to test the potential of internet to develop innovative and effective online ESD learning communities; and
- promoting professional development of teachers.

Decision-making structure

RCE Penang is operated by four main committees – the RCE Penang Council consisting of all stakeholders in Penang (representative of USM, NGO leaders and other civil society actors); the Eminent Persons' Group; a Specific Taskforce whose activities are based on specified areas of sustainable development such as recycling and energy conservation is headed by the USM representative and includes representatives of NGOs working on the identified issues; and an Operational Committee consisting of representatives from different schools and centres at the University.



For more information

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