Good Practices in Education for Sustainable Development
Using the Earth Charter

UNESCO/ EARTH CHARTER INTERNATIONAL
Education for Sustainable Development in Action
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Introduction

The overall goal of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) is "to integrate the values inherent in sustainable development into all aspects of learning to encourage changes in behavior that allow for a more sustainable and just society for all". A key question that often emerges is: what are the values inherent in sustainable development that could help us, as human beings, to realize the vision of sustainability?

Increasingly, more groups and individuals around the world are recognizing the Earth Charter as an empowering and practical source of these values. The Earth Charter resulted from a decade-long, worldwide, cross-cultural civil society dialogue to identify the widely shared values and principles of sustainability, and is being used as a values-based educational tool to guide humanity towards a sustainable future.

As a matter of fact, UNESCO, during its 32nd General Conference in October 2003, adopted a resolution recognizing the Earth Charter "as an important ethical framework for sustainable development". The resolution affirms member states' intentions to "utilize the Earth Charter as an educational instrument, particularly in the framework of the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development". So, how is this being accomplished?

This publication has been envisioned to offer stories – case studies from around the world – that highlight how groups and individuals are using the Earth Charter as a tool for education for sustainable development. These stories come from non-formal and formal educational settings and describe a variety of experiences, including the development of guidebooks for primary school teachers, the inclusion of sustainability values in universities' departments of education, law, engineering and general studies; the reshaping of local, regional and national curricula; and, the creation of vital and engaging programs and workshops for children and youth.

The richness and diversity of these stories demonstrate that the Earth Charter’s integrated approach can help to clarify the vision of a more just, sustainable and peaceful world at the same time as it broadens this vision. These stories also show that there is no single 'right way' of approaching this task – the methods used for bringing the values of sustainability into educational practices depend on the context, creativity and the level of engagement of those involved.

In the process of preparing this publication, a set of criteria were developed to select these stories which best responded to the purpose of the ‘good practices’ series, of which this publication is now a part. The following criteria were used for selecting the stories:

• Are values-driven experiences that use the Earth Charter as a framework or tool

• Promote transformative learning – characterized mainly by:
  • Promoting ‘learning’ more than ‘teaching’
  • Concentrating more on the construction of meaning than on communicating the message
  • Promoting the mutual transformation of teachers and learners
  • Focusing on local knowledge and community-based decisions and actions
  • Orienting learning more towards process than product/result
• Use constructive and participatory methodologies
• Use multiple methods and integrative approaches
   Experiences that use interdisciplinary approaches to assess and address issues, drawing upon a variety of
   methods: writing, art, drama, debate, scientific analysis, etc.

• Are context specific and action oriented
   Experiences where teachers and students (and/or community members) are learning about regional,
   national and global issues while carrying out actions through field trips, projects, and community service
   opportunities.

• Are on-going experiences that can also offer ‘lessons learned’

This publication includes twenty-seven illustrative stories from countries around the world. Each one is written by a
different author – a schoolteacher, community activist, youth worker, university member, minister of education, law
professor, teacher trainer, art instructor – and each brings a different experience to light. To build some continuity in
sharing these experiences an effort was made to organize the content of each story around three main sections: (1)
A general description of the experience, including its objectives, duration, target group(s), and information about the
leading organization(s) involved; (2) A detailed explanation of the methodological aspects and activities of the
experience; and (3) A final section on the conclusions and lessons learned from the experience.

The stories in this collection share a common objective – to contribute to building sustainable societies. We hope
that you will enjoy the wide variety of contexts, objectives and methodologies presented in this publication.
Furthermore, it is our hope that these experiences will stimulate and inspire new efforts to integrate the values of
sustainability into education and into all educational settings across the globe.

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