

# Roadmap for the RCE Community 2021-2030

# Preamble

Having delivered Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) to regional and local communities worldwide through the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (UN DESD 2005-2014) and the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP 2015-2019), the global movement of Regional Centres of Expertise on ESD (RCEs), acknowledged and promoted by the United Nations University (UNU) with support of partner organisations, hereby reaffirms its commitment to creating a sustainable world under the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and beyond.

Inspired by the visions of the Tongyeong (2012) and Okayama (2014) Declarations on RCEs and ESD<sup>1</sup>, an RCE is a network of existing formal and non-formal education organisations mobilised to deliver ESD in the region or locality where it is situated. An RCE consists of four core elements, namely, governance, collaboration, transformative education, and research and development.

The Global RCE Service Centre headquartered at the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), with support of the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs<sup>2</sup> and in consultation with the Global RCE Network, availed of these valuable experiences for developing the *Roadmap for the RCE Community 2021-2030*.

Individual RCE operations and collectively those of the Global RCE Network are expected to conform to principles of good ethical behaviour and practices, as well as to the values of the UN and UNU Charters. Hence, the document entitled [☞ \*Guiding Principles for the RCE Community\*](#)<sup>3</sup> adopted on 4 November 2014, and any subsequent updates thereof, shall be an integral part of the *Roadmap*.

1— The Tongyeong Declaration on RCEs and ESD was adopted at the 7th Global RCE Conference in Tongyeong, Republic of Korea on 24 September 2012; the Okayama Declaration on RCEs and ESD was adopted at the 9th Global RCE Conference in Okayama, Japan on 7 November 2014.

2— For details on composition and functions of the Committee, see Section 3.

3— [☞ \*Guiding Principles for the RCE Community\*](#)



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# 1 Context

## ► Key challenges

The UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs constitute a call for action by all countries to promote prosperity with sustainable livelihoods and social justice while protecting the planet. Whereas progress has been recorded in the implementation of the SDGs across many countries, for most goals, the pace of progress has been insufficient and substantial acceleration is needed<sup>4</sup>. This situation is attributable partly to ineffective governance such as lack of political will to transform development programmes into sustainable long-term practices and failing to ensure that global and national agendas are firmly translated to fit local contexts. While acknowledging diverse challenges in respective RCE contexts, the overarching challenge is the need to rethink what, where and how we learn to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that enable us all to make informed decisions and take individual and collective actions on local, national and global urgencies<sup>5</sup>. In this regard, there is a need to accelerate and mainstream transformative learning in all levels of formal and non-formal education. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic presents an enormous challenge and the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs provide an internationally agreed roadmap for recovery. Despite the RCEs' unique and important roles in creating sustainable solutions through regional and local multi-stakeholder partnership on ESD, RCEs currently are not yet duly recognised by many local and national government authorities.

## ► The past roadmap (Roadmap 2016-2020)

Having been recognised as an extraordinary grassroots movement that significantly contributed to translating global sustainable development (SD) policy and vision into local realities<sup>6</sup> under the UN DESD framework, the RCE community subsequently adopted the first roadmap, the *Roadmap for the RCE Community 2016-2020*. It focused on three priority areas: 1) strengthening governance to better coordinate ESD/SD learning and actions within the RCE community, 2) enhancing the capacity development of local and regional stakeholders to contribute to both local and global sustainable development initiatives, and 3) strengthening the impact of actions related to SD/ESD by linking local and regional policy discourses with international platforms.

During the *Roadmap for the RCE Community 2016-2020* implementation period, the RCEs have executed programmes and projects on ESD that are locally relevant and culturally appropriate. According to a study, the projects conducted by the RCEs throughout the GAP on ESD 2015-2019 period have highlighted the areas and initiatives undertaken for transformative learning at the local level in pursuit of sustainable development, by utilising the sustainable development capacities, expertise, and resources found within the Global RCE Network<sup>7</sup>. RCE activities were focused around education, thus all RCE projects were tied to SDG 4 (Quality Education), specifically SDG 4.7 on ESD, and spanning the full 17 SDGs.

4– SDGs Progress Chart 2020, UN DESA

5– Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap, UNESCO, 2020

6– Building a Resilient Future through Multistakeholder Learning and Action: Ten Years of Regional Centres of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development, UNU-IAS, Tokyo, Japan, 2014

7– RCE Project Trends during the Global Action Programme on ESD (2015-2019), UNU-IAS, Tokyo, Japan, 2020

## ► Guiding global frameworks

The *Roadmap* is guided by several key international frameworks that address global aspiration towards SDGs. While committed to contributing to all interlinked 17 SDGs, the *Roadmap* stresses the inherent importance of the interplay between SDG 4 (quality and inclusive lifelong learning for all) and SDG 17 (multi-stakeholder partnership) for RCEs' actions. The *Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)* framework places ESD (SDG 4.7) as a key enabler to all other SDGs. To build a follow-up to the Global Action Programme (GAP 2015-2019) that contributes to the UN 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, the *ESD for 2030* framework aims at increasing the contribution of education to building a more just and sustainable world.

The *Roadmap* recognises the five priority action areas of the UNESCO ESD Roadmap, namely (i) *advancing policy*, (ii) *transforming learning environments*, (iii) *building capacities of educators*, (iv) *empowering and mobilising youth*, and (v) *accelerating local level actions*. The individual RCEs' action plans dedicate and reflect efforts to address these *ESD for 2030* priority action areas in the context of the SDGs.

The RCEs likewise aim to address the ESD-related goals of the various international conventions and global processes related to, or contained in, the UN 2030 Agenda such as, but not limited to, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC, Article 6), UNFCCC Paris Agreement (Article 12), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, Article 13, Aichi Biodiversity Target 1), UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), UN Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, Ten-Year Framework of Programmes for Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (SCP 10YFP), UN Decade of Ocean Sciences, UN Decade on Ecosystems Restoration, International Decade of Indigenous Languages, as well as through relevant regional (continental) level multilateral agreements. In terms of monitoring progress, the Global RCE Network will align with monitoring under the *ESD for 2030* framework and, to the extent possible, with the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on SD (and its regional fora), which is the UN platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for SD and its 17 SDGs.



## 2 Vision and Mission

### Vision:

Towards creating a just, tolerant and sustainable world, RCEs aspire to use Education for Sustainable Development as a mechanism for implementing/enabling sustainable development, translating global sustainable development goals and issues into local actions in the regions in which they operate.

### Mission:

In the context of the *Education for Sustainable Development: Towards Achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)* framework, RCEs are committed to further generating, accelerating and mainstreaming ESD and contributing to the realisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in their respective regional and local contexts through facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships.

## 3 Goal and Scope of the Roadmap

The main goal of the *Roadmap* is to guide the RCE community, like-minded partner organisations and networks to expand, accelerate and scale up the impacts of RCEs' actions related to SDGs and the *ESD for 2030* framework at local, national and global levels. The *Roadmap* portrays the long-term vision and mission of the RCE community towards the year 2030 and contains the goals, strategic priority areas, and suggested actions that reflect relevant agreements and frameworks in partnership with development organisations and education institutions at all levels.

The *Roadmap* is subject to a mid-term review on progress after five years from inception. The outcome of the mid-term review serves to gauge progress and provide feedback to the RCE community and related implementing agencies and actors and will form bases for any updates and adjustments on courses of actions.

The RCE community is composed of the Global RCE Network, the Global RCE Service Centre, and the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs<sup>8</sup>. The *Roadmap* serves to guide the planning and implementation of various local and inter-RCE activities of the Global RCE Network members, and it provides guidance to the Global RCE Service Centre and the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs in performing their supporting roles.

- The **Global RCE Network** consists of duly acknowledged RCEs operating in regional and local communities across the world and constitutes a Global Learning Space on Sustainable Development. Activities of RCEs are also coordinated at the continental level – Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, and Europe – as well as according to thematic groups. The *Regional Advisors to the RCE community* assume an advisory role for RCEs and mentor those who are interested in becoming RCEs, as well as provide advice to the Global RCE Service Centre on policy, strategic and operational matters with regards to the promotion and development of RCEs.
- The **Global RCE Service Centre** is headquartered at UNU-IAS, which provides assistance in facilitating communication and networking of RCEs.
- The **Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs** consists of representatives of a group of organisations from the Ubuntu Alliance<sup>9</sup>. It reviews RCE candidates for acknowledgement and provides strategic advice on the development of the Global RCE Network through the Global RCE Service Centre. The *Regional Advisors to the RCE community* provide support and participate in Committee meetings.

8– For details on responsibilities of each constituent of the RCE community in terms of resource mobilisation, support and advocacy, see Section 5.

9– The Ubuntu Alliance is an association of 14 of the world's foremost educational and scientific institutions that together signed the Ubuntu Declaration at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002.

# 4 Strategic Priority Areas

The *Roadmap* has four strategic priority areas, as follows:

1. **Serving as local and regional hubs for ESD and showing leadership for innovation**
2. **Strengthening the association of RCE activities with SDGs and ESD framework**
3. **Expanding knowledge sharing and outreach**
4. **Monitoring progress of RCE achievements**

These strategic priority areas are in alignment and aim to create synergy with the strategic objectives of UNU-IAS and its thematic programme on Innovation and Education as well as other related programmes.

## Strategy 1

**Serving as local and regional hubs for ESD, showing leadership to pioneer, practice and advocate for knowledge and innovative approaches**

The RCEs bring together organisations at the regional/local level to jointly promote ESD. Specifically, the RCEs serve as a regional/local knowledge base on ESD and play a leadership role in pioneering innovative practices, promoting ESD dialogue among regional/local stakeholders, and mainstreaming ESD in formal, non-formal and informal education from a lifelong learning perspective and in the practice of the whole institution approach.

### Suggested actions

▶ **Serve as a hub for intellectual and innovative leadership on ESD**

**Examples:** Create knowledge-based system to support decision making including transformative learning cases for innovative leadership on ESD in regional/local communities; Develop and promote innovative methodologies and approaches that integrate the principles and delivery of ESD and their impacts in the implementation of SDGs in regional/local communities; Promote innovative leadership programmes on ESD exemplifying transformative learning in regional/local communities.

▶ **Incorporate ESD in formal/non-formal education and in the whole institution approach in the region/locality where RCE is located**

**Examples:** Work with regional/local education institutions to develop ESD learning cases and materials aiming to scale them up to be used for ESD for 2030 country initiatives; Organise awareness raising among policy and decision makers about RCEs; Create opportunities for dialogue between ESD stakeholders and policy and decision makers to bring about change, such as through citizens' assemblies and other networks; Integrate ESD in community lifelong learning programmes for sustainable transformation based on local cultural context.

▶ **Provide opportunities, mobilise and strengthen the engagement of youths on ESD in regional/local communities as one of the key actors in addressing sustainability challenges**

**Example:** Engage youths in knowledge creation, dissemination and knowledge-based system development that relate to good behavioural values and ethics in consonance with regional/local values essential for sustainable development; Activate and support the initiatives of youths and the RCE Regional Youth Coordinators; Provide opportunities for youths to show leadership, practice and advocate innovative approaches on ESD.

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## Strategy 2

**Strengthening the association of RCE activities with key local, national and global policies and frameworks related to SDGs and ESD**

The RCEs aim at inclusive engagement in devising and implementing appropriate solutions to regional and local sustainable development issues in the context of SDGs, *ESD for 2030* and their national country initiatives. The individual RCE and the Global RCE Network at large must have the capacity, and possess the expertise, knowledge and skills that enable them to associate regional/local ESD efforts on key issues with relevant national policies and international frameworks and to make the public aware of the meaning, challenges and opportunities of sustainable development.

### Suggested actions

**Build capacity of RCEs to stay abreast of the trends and development of SDGs and ESD for 2030**

**Examples:** *Facilitate workshops and webinars on capacity building around thematic focus areas and the SDGs; Utilise RCE learning resources on SDGs and ESD to deliver capacity development and leadership programmes including for policy and decision makers; Work on strengthening the RCE activities on SDGs and ESD in schools and universities including mainstreaming and localising the SDGs in curricula.*

**Contribute to transforming teacher training and professional development to integrate ESD and necessary pedagogy**

**Example:** *Promote innovation and creativity in teaching ESD as fundamental elements of quality education; Provide teachers with repositories of ESD teaching resources and necessary pedagogy; Partner with higher education institutions to reflect ESD locality in teacher training; Promote inquiry-based learning/science education for systemic, innovative, and critical thinking in teacher training, professional development and school leadership to help understand and tackle issues connected to SDGs.*

**Participate in inter-RCE thematic groups' research linking ESD to broader SD debates**

**Examples:** *Get involved in inter-RCE thematic groups to work with international frameworks and processes such as UNFCCC (Article 6), CBD (Article 13, Aichi Biodiversity Target 1), Sendai DRR, SCP 10YFP, and academic networks including ProSPER.Net, IAU and COPERNICUS Alliance, on research issues linking education and sustainable development.*

**Take a cross-cutting approach to all ESD for 2030 Priority Action Areas**

**Examples:** *Initiate and maintain communications with UNESCO and key partners in contributing to the ESD for 2030 framework mindful of the inter-connections among the five priority action areas; Develop ESD toolkits with focus on accelerating sustainable solutions at local levels and across all priority action areas of the UNESCO ESD Roadmap.*

## Strategy 3

**Expanding knowledge sharing and outreach among RCEs, external partners, communities and relevant stakeholders, including by leveraging innovative technologies and modalities**

While strengthening capacity to address regional/local sustainable development issues, the RCEs are expected to expand the knowledge exchange and diversify the outreach channels on SD and ESD. The Global RCE Network will engage in knowledge-sharing not only within the RCE community but to a wider outreach community such as external partners, relevant stakeholders including non-governmental organisations and civic associations, and ESD learners, thereby enhancing the Global Learning Space on SD through, but not limited to, leveraging innovative technologies and modalities.

### Suggested actions

**Foster networking among RCEs and with other ESD networks and programmes**

**Examples:** *Share with the RCE community potential or current engagements and links with other ESD-related networks; Develop protocols on relationships between RCEs and other promoters of ESD including international development and education institutions and relevant national ministries; Promote effective communication and outreach exchange between the RCEs at all levels to strengthen the Global RCE Network.*

**Link RCEs to open access online platforms for ESD resource sharing**

**Examples:** *Share educational and learning resources for the implementation of transformative, participatory, and appropriate technologies for SD; Create models and platforms for sharing RCE activities, projects and publications with regional/local stakeholders.*

**Build capacity using effective and innovative modalities**

**Examples:** *Utilise the opportunities during the Global RCE Conferences and RCE Regional Meetings for effective and innovative knowledge/experience sharing and organise joint seminars/workshops in face-to-face and/or virtual mode; Utilise innovative mapping technologies for information sharing across a range of different aspects of ESD and to demonstrate the interlinkages among the 17 SDGs.*



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## Strategy 4

**Monitoring the progress of achievements of RCEs and promote them in local, national and international platforms and processes**

The RCEs create solutions that enable sustainable development practices in local communities by utilising education, innovative learning methods and multi-stakeholder partnerships<sup>10</sup>. Monitoring progress will be based on the extent to which the RCE activities and projects contribute to the *Roadmap's* strategic priority areas, as well as the five *ESD for 2030* Priority Action Areas. Accomplishments will be framed into learning resources, made accessible to ESD and SD learners, and showcase good practices in relevant local, national and international sustainability events and processes. These will serve as inspirations and models to emulate, as well as to possibly influence policy making, thereby raising the visibility of the RCEs and their contributions.

### Suggested actions

▶ **Engage RCEs with self-assessment for quality assurance and accomplishments for ESD for 2030 framework and the Roadmap's strategic priority areas**

**Examples:** *RCEs link their self-assessment to RCE portal reporting and simplify the methodology for wider use; Identify opportunities for assessment and provide coaching to members; Assess how the SDGs- and ESD-relevant RCE projects have helped partners and communities to reshape their approach to sustainable development.*

▶ **Provide required inputs for consolidated RCE portal reporting and participate in awards recognition and relevant promotional events**

**Examples:** *Provide regular reporting to the Global RCE Service Centre according to prescribed content, format and modality; Participate in the annual RCE Awards organised by the Global RCE Service Centre framed around ESD for 2030 priority action areas and SDGs; Respond to calls for applications/nominations for ESD and ESD-related awards and honorific recognitions by reputed organisations; Produce publications based on projects and research showcasing successful interventions by RCEs that helped create change and SD transformation in communities.*

▶ **Engage RCEs with opportunities to contribute to national reporting on SDG 4.7**

**Examples:** *Respond to calls by respective national governments and UNESCO National Commissions to contribute to national reporting by participating in consultation meetings and/or submission of reports; Create forum through seminars/workshops where non-formal and informal education partners contribute to revision of academic curricula at all levels for contributing to ESD for 2030 country initiatives.*

10— Multi-Stakeholder Approaches to Education for Sustainable Development in Local Communities – Towards Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia, UNESCO 2020 (A collaborative publication of UNESCO Bangkok and UNU-IAS containing selected case studies of RCEs in Asia-Pacific)

## ► Outcomes

The *Roadmap*, with clearly defined strategic priority areas and suggested action items, enables the RCE community to attain a position of enhanced strength, capacity and competency to better serve regional and local communities. The following outcomes are expected:

- Community stakeholders become aware of the global issues and national policies and programmes that are relevant to local contexts and the RCE is equipped with the capacity to provide ESD for the SDGs and other relevant education and development frameworks at all levels.
- Global Learning Space on SD and ESD is facilitated and promoted by sharing of good practices, knowledge, skills and resources for learners in pursuit of *ESD for 2030*.
- Visibility of the Global RCE Network is elevated to an extent that its position is globally recognised as a network and platform for ESD where good ESD practices are displayed and showcased at the local, national and international levels.



# 5 Resources, Support and Advocacy

The *Roadmap* implementation entails certain responsibilities for members of the RCE community in terms of resource mobilisation, support and advocacy.

## ► Global RCE Network

Members of the Global RCE Network assume the ownership of the implementation of the *Roadmap* through the following:

- The RCE commits to participate in inter-RCE activities and in events and processes organised by the Global RCE Service Centre and partner organisations.
- The RCE stakeholder organisations have the responsibility to work with partners and mobilise their own resources to undertake ESD projects and activities for the regional/local communities.
- The RCE develops its own annual action plan in relation with the *Roadmap*.
- The RCE stakeholder organisations are accountable for their actions that impact regional/local communities.
- The RCE commits to the terms of the *Guiding Principles for the RCE Community*.
- The RCE is responsible for regular reporting to the Global RCE Service Centre.
- The RCE is responsible for aligning projects and activities with the strategic priority areas of the *Roadmap* and to commit resources towards the implementation of the *Roadmap* action items.

## ► Global RCE Service Centre

The Global RCE Service Centre is the custodian of the Global RCE Network membership. It promotes the development, acknowledgement and proper functioning of RCEs. It supports the Global RCE Network through the following tasks:

- Provides and promotes global and regional (continental) platforms to facilitate collaboration and networking for strengthening intra- and inter-RCE linkages;
- Raises the visibility of the Global RCE Network and supports its outreach through its advocacy activities and community-based research;
- Encourages RCEs to take the lead in and sustain collaboration among RCEs both geographically and thematically;
- Reinforces a clear governance mechanism for the Service Centre, as Secretariat, to support, monitor and incentivise RCE activities;
- Provides oversight and assessment on any breach of the *Guiding Principles for the RCE Community* and to take necessary actions as deemed appropriate;
- Compiles and provides existing guidelines and materials, develops new ones as necessary, and disseminates them to support capacity building of RCEs as well as their coherent operations, especially within the strategic priority areas; and
- Works with the Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs in reviewing new applications for RCE acknowledgement, and supports the development of policies and strategies for the RCE community.

## ► Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs

The Ubuntu Committee of Peers for the RCEs serves as an advisory body to the Global RCE Service Centre on issues of policy, acknowledgement, monitoring and quality assurance of the RCEs. Specifically, it supports the RCE community through the following tasks:

- Provides advisory role on policies and strategies for the RCE community especially in relation to the *Roadmap* and the *Guiding Principles for the RCE Community*;
- Advises on monitoring and reviewing the progress of the *Roadmap* with the Global RCE Service Centre;
- Provides oversight and judicial assessment on matters of RCE behaviour and conduct as stipulated in the *Guiding Principles for the RCE Community* upon request of the Global RCE Service Centre; and
- Engages RCE members in relevant *ESD for 2030* activities both organised by the Global RCE Service Centre as well as those launched or organised by external parties (e.g., UNESCO National Commissions), and reviews and advises RCE-related *ESD for 2030* engagement through the Global RCE Service Centre.

## 6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will be conducted according to existing established processes of the RCE community in alignment with the monitoring and evaluation of the *ESD for 2030* framework:

### Level 1

The progress and achievements of RCEs will be monitored in a participatory manner by the individual RCEs themselves through annual review by the regional/local stakeholders. Each RCE is expected to conduct an annual progress review. The annual review will then be the basis for the RCE's annual reporting which will be reflected in updated RCE profile pages as well as new ESD project reports to the Global RCE Service Centre.

### Level 2

The RCE regional meetings/ conferences - Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, and Europe - will make analyses of the reviews from the individual RCEs and share trends and findings with the Global RCE Service Centre.

### Level 3

The regional analyses will be reviewed at the bi-annual global RCE conferences. Over a period of five years, trends and conclusions can be drawn for feedback and follow up actions. There will be a global RCE conference to conduct a mid-term review of the Roadmap in 2025/2026 possibly coinciding, or in conjunction, with the mid-term review of the *ESD for 2030* framework.

The three-level process will be replicated for the second half of the decade and a global RCE conference will be held at the end of 2030 to review the overall achievements of the *Roadmap for the RCE Community 2021-2030* in coordination with the *ESD for 2030* framework.



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