

BioTopic



Environmental Education (EE) for a Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a major concern for global and local communities. In light of persisting and emerging challenges resulting from human expansion development, and increased pressure on the carrying capacity of ecosystems, the international community acknowledges the need for a decisive action to reduce human society's ecological footprint. Georgia aspires for rapid economic growth while ensuring a healthy environment for its future generations. Therefore, there is a need for ensuring that the society as a whole is equipped with appropriate sustainable development values, skills and knowledge, as well as the motivation to apply it to their own actions. The interest in education as a means for sustainable development has surged recently in Georgia. However, it has a long history, beginning in 1977 when Tbilisi hosted the World's First Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education, organized by UNESCO in partnership with UNEP. During this conference the Tbilisi Declaration, which established a framework for formal and non-formal environmental education activities at

local, national and international level, was yielded. Since that time, EE is well reflected on the national platform.

Environmental Education (EE) – “a learning process that increases people's knowledge and awareness about the environment and associated challenges, develops the necessary skills and expertise to address the challenges, and fosters attitudes, motivations, and commitments to make informed decisions and take responsible action”

Tbilisi Declaration 1977,

The Georgian National Strategy and Action Plan on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (2012-2014)

In the year 2012 the Georgian Government initiated the elaboration of the Georgian National Strategy and Action Plan on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development (EESD). The strategy is in line with the vision and goals of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development and the UN Economic Commission for

Europe's ESD Strategy and Action Plan and aims to

1. Strengthen the leadership role of the government by aligning policies, regulations and operational frameworks to support EE;
2. Raise the profile of EE in the formal, non-formal and informal sector;
3. Increase the EE competence and capacity of formal, non-formal and informal stakeholders;
4. Promote research in the environmental sciences at higher education institutions;
5. Facilitate networking, cooperation and coordination among stakeholders.

The strategy has been elaborated in a participatory style involving representatives of various ministries and donor agencies as well as stakeholders active in the field of EE.

Implementation of the EESD

The EESD provides the framework for a consolidated and coordinated action by all stakeholders involved in EE. The coordination of the implementation



process will be realized through a Clearing House Mechanism (CHM) comprised of representatives from national and international partners, with MoE serving as the focal point. The German Technical Cooperation project “Sustainable Management of the Biodiversity in the South Caucasus” as well as a number of international donor organizations will be represented in the CHM and provide support for the implementation of EESD. Some of the EE highlights already under preparation are the following:

2012 - Year of Environmental Education: The Ministry of Environment Protection of Georgia (MoE) has designated 2012 as “Environmental Education Year” and is planning to celebrate it by extensive EE agenda, most remarkably, by adoption of the EESD.

Tbilisi+35: Environmental Education for Sustainable Development: Under the aegis of the President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, the international and intergovernmental conference “Tbilisi+35: Environmental Education for Sustainable Development” is initiated by the MoE to be held on 6-7th September, 2012 in Tbilisi, Georgia. Tbilisi +35 will bring together high level delegates from around the world to discuss the implementation of current national, regional and international EE agendas, and define pathways beyond. Commemorating

the Tbilisi Declaration of 1977, Tbilisi +35 seeks to secure renewed political commitment for EE and will result in a focused political document that will outline the global and national environmental education agenda beyond 2012.

Eco-clubs Initiative – Greening Schools: To support the effective implementation of the EE curricula into the classroom and achieve the respective behavior change among school teachers, students, their families and communities at large, the EESD promotes the Eco-Club Initiative. The Eco-Club Initiative will cover comprehensive activities ranging from training teachers in EE competencies and provision of appropriate EE materials, to support children within the implementation of community EE projects and celebrate successes with their peers. The Eco-Club Initiative is supported by USAID, the Norwegian Government through the Norges Naturvernforbund, SIDA and the German Government through GIZ.

Campaigning Green: Several green campaigns (including cleaning, planting, bird-watching, red list campaigns) have been conducted to promote the understanding of the interdependence between the environment and human activities. Moreover, green awareness was targeted through TV and radio (Green Broadcast, GeoGuide, Ecometer) as well as social media. The aim of EESD is to scale up these and

similar campaigns to reach out to diverse communities and aim at building responsible behavior towards nature.

Eco-Education – Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Citizenship: The Junior Rangers Program is one of the educational activities of the Agency of Protected Areas of the Ministry for Environment Protection. It aims at providing school children with information about wildlife and conservation, while stimulating thinking and action for protection of Georgia’s green heritage. The program takes teaching out of the classroom and encompasses various activities, including tours, camps and workshops. APA plans to enlarge its educational portfolio by providing more educational services to wide range of target groups.

More activities will come up, initiated by local, national and international partners. The EE initiative of the Government should help to make all these efforts successful, to implement the various activities more efficient and finally to achieve a better understanding of the importance of a healthy environment for a sustainable development in Georgia.



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