



## Japan

The Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) was launched in Japan on March 30, 2006, with the launch of the **National Action Plan for DESD**. The action plan highlights three goals, seven key guidelines and contains short-term and long-term strategies, domestic strategies, the promotion of international cooperation, and evaluation and review stage where indicators will be developed.

The three goals of Japan's National DESD Action Plan are:

1. Every citizen becomes aware of participating in building a sustainable society by 2014
2. All stakeholders tackle every issue on integrating environment, economic and social development centering on environmental conservation
3. Provide emphasis on understanding the difficulties and cooperation for MDGs in developing countries

The seven key guidelines of Japan's National DESD Action Plan are:

- Active involvement to lead community development
- Reserve a learning place for every stakeholder
- Every scope of education must be interwoven by a holistic and integrated approach within environment, economic and social perspectives.
- Introduce more participatory approach and action-oriented learning
- Nurture more systemic thinking, critical thinking, alternative thinking, analytical skills, and communication skills.
- Enhance partnerships among different stakeholders
- Evaluation by project cycle management.

### Consultations

Japan Council on the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, or 'ESD-J', is a nationwide network organization to connect various NGOs in Japan for Education for Sustainable Development in Japan and has been working closely with citizens, municipalities, academics and national government since 2003. Under this national umbrella organization, regional talks on ESD were held in various cities and with its strong advocacy activities; a national implementation scheme of ESD was developed with the collaboration of several ministries. At the same time, ESD-J has been in communication with partners in Asia to promote ESD and to share experience on ESD within the region.

The Government has made many attempts to address EE. The Basic Environment Law of 1993 promotes EE, and the Renewed Basic Environmental Plan of 1999 ranks EE as a key environmental policy. An Environmental Education Promotion Law was also introduced in 2003. This law provides for the development of a basic governmental policy for EE. In many cases, EE efforts from government agencies have faced coordination issues. Owing to the compartmentalized nature of the administrative structure, the

efforts seem to lack an overall perspective on realizing a sustainable society. These need to become more comprehensive and systematic. This could be achieved through the creation of an organization or governmental department that is responsible for the overall coordination of such efforts. A positive step in this direction is seen in some joint Ministry projects for EE that have been recently initiated.

### **Projects/Initiatives**

**Life Environmental Studies** (Seikatsuka) is an elementary school subject that incorporates elements of science and social studies together into an integrated curriculum. This subject is considered to be a good example of EE in the formal education system, and three hours of class time are spent on the subject every week. Teachers create their own teaching material, drawing examples from various sources. The subject places an emphasis on nature and social relationships.