



北京師範大學  
BEIJING NORMAL UNIVERSITY



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



International Research  
and Training Centre  
for Rural Education



中国滋根  
CHINA ZIGEN



# China-Southeast Asian Symposium

## Towards Ecological Civilisation: Education for Sustainable Rural Development

### Synthesis Report



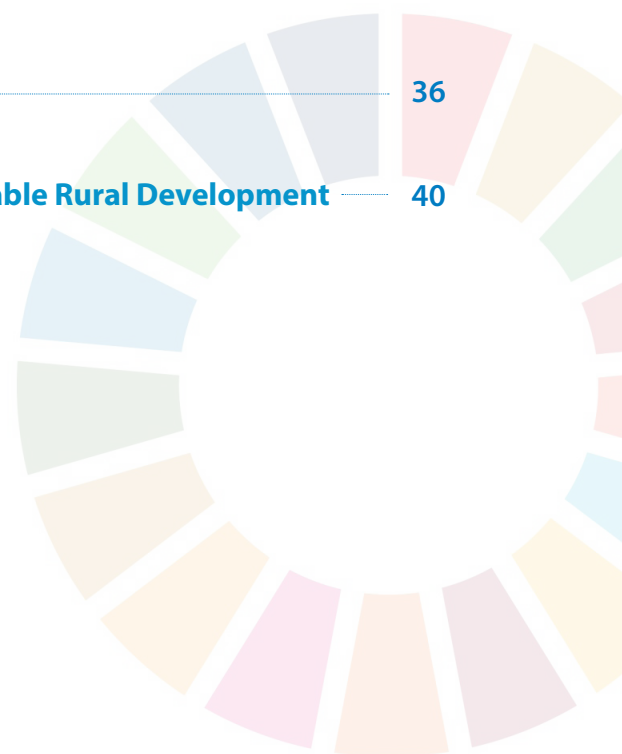
December 15-16, 2022

Education  
2030



## Table of contents

<b>List of acronyms</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>3</b>
Introduction	6
Envisioning sustainable rural development towards ecological civilisation	8
Conceptualising education for sustainable rural development	12
Understanding ESD policies and practices from multi-dimensional perspectives	16
Building partnerships between universities and local actors	20
Mobilising youth towards a more sustainable future	24
• Youth participation in sustainable rural development: strategy, role and impact of ESD programmes	24
• Experience sharing: youth on the move	26
• What a sustainable future requires of young people: insights and reflection from youth	30
• Be part of the solution: A call to youth-led actions for sustainable rural development	32
The way forward: working together for the realisation of ecological civilisation	34
<b>ANNEX 1 Conference Programme</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>ANNEX 2 A Call to Youth-led Actions: Promoting Sustainable Rural Development towards Ecological Civilisation</b>	<b>40</b>



## List of acronyms

**AIT** Asian Institute of Technology

**ASEAN** Association of Southeast Asian Nations

**ESD** Education for Sustainable Development

**HEI** Higher Education Institution

**NGO** Non-governmental Organisation

**SDGs** Sustainable Development Goals

**SEAMEO** The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation

**STEM** Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

**UN** United Nations

**UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

**UNESCO INRULED** UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education



## Executive summary

The current report is an exhaustive account of the discussion and debate at the China-Southeast Asian Symposium *‘Towards Ecological Civilisation: Education for Sustainable Rural Development’* (hereafter referred to as ‘the symposium’) held from 15 to 16 December 2022. The symposium was supported by the National Commission of the People’s Republic of China for UNESCO, hosted by Beijing Normal University, and organised by the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (UNESCO INRULED), Faculty of Education at Beijing Normal University, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and Asian Institute of Technology (AIT).

Under the overarching theme of *Towards Ecological Civilisation: Education for Sustainable Rural Development*, the symposium was structured into three sub-themes, *Policy and Practice, University and Local Actions*, and *Towards a Sustainable Future: Youth on the Move*. Scholars, youth representatives, university teachers and students, and NGO delegates from more than ten countries, including China, Laos, Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia, attended the symposium virtually and shared cutting-edge knowledge, evidence-based experience, and country strategies of sustainable rural development.



## **This executive summary captures five key takeaways that emerged from the symposium**

### **Ecological civilisation is a comprehensive development paradigm in which sustainable rural development plays a pivotal role**

Ecological civilisation is a comprehensive development paradigm and a form of social civilisation first proposed by the Chinese government. It is characterised by the harmonious development of humankind and nature, all-around advancement of culture, and sustained social prosperity<sup>1</sup>. It is highly consistent with the 5Ps of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely, 'people', 'planet', 'prosperity', 'peace' and 'partnership', echoing the common interest of international development and the sustainable future of the world.

In the process of building an ecological civilisation, rural areas play an indispensable role because of the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources they possess, as well as the threats they face, such as environmental degradation, loss of cultural heritage, and widening inequalities. Therefore, promoting sustainable rural development towards ecological civilisation is not just about industrial prosperity, it also encompasses the overall revitalisation of economy, culture, ecology, and technology.

### **Education is the key to sustainable rural development but still in need of a holistic approach**

Education and training in sustainable development allow everyone to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to shape a sustainable future, foster a sense of citizenship and empathy, and bring about personal and interpersonal transformation towards social change. Education for sustainable development (ESD) is a strategic approach that underscores interdisciplinarity, highlights the interlinkages between society, economy, and the environment, and combines cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural dimensions of learning.

Although education sectors, schools, and other academic institutions in many countries have made many efforts to incorporate ESD into education policy, curricula frameworks, or teacher training, less attention has been paid to the holistic planning of the whole education system and every sector of society. It is also necessary to promote the joint development of formal, informal, and non-formal education to ensure quality access to learning and training opportunities for all learners. Only with concerted interventions can the long-term vision of creating a community with a shared future for all be achieved.

### **Strategies, research, and practice of ESD should be innovative but tailored to local needs**

Even when the whole planet is facing common ecological challenges, different countries, and regions are coping with various sustainability challenges that interact with context-specific factors. This means advancing ESD in rural areas requires a close examination of the context, challenges, and prospects of local development. It calls for the recognition of indigenous knowledge and values, the re-orientation of

<sup>1</sup> Pan, J. (2020). Ecological civilization: A new development paradigm. <https://cciced.eco/environmental-industries/ecological-civilization-a-new-development-paradigm/>

education to stimulate creative thinking and empathy, and the establishment of liaison between higher education institutions and local stakeholders. During this process, different stakeholders should work together to enhance the capacity of universities and promote mutual understanding among each other.

In the meantime, viable solutions are needed to facilitate autonomy and innovation at local levels. This includes developing new policies and measures to popularise cutting-edge knowledge and provide skills training to cope with emerging challenges, taking localised actions with the engagement of professionals, community members and young people, and broadly disseminating experiences and lessons.

### **Youth-led actions can set the world on course to a more sustainable future**

Youth are the key agents of social change and indispensable stakeholders to tackle sustainability challenges. With their passion, dynamism, and creativity, young people have the potential to contribute to the sustainable development of their communities. However, many young people are still facing barriers to participating in this progress due to systematic discrimination (such as adultism), limited accessible resources, lack of educational support, and other contributory factors. Thus, young people should be provided with the platform and opportunities to gain the necessary competencies, voice their needs, and communicate with each other, so that they will be able to actively engage in the pursuit of ecological civilisation and build long-standing partnerships within and beyond their community.

Universities, civil society organisations, and individuals should put into efforts to ensure continuous youth engagement in sustainable rural development. It is also crucial to facilitate concrete collaboration with policymakers, educators, non-governmental actors, and community members. With adequate mobilisation and systematic support, youth-led actions will shape new forms of solidarity and citizenship, and eventually take the world forward to a more sustainable future.

### **Strategic partnerships in education are increasingly significant for the resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development of rural areas**

Evidenced by practices from different countries and regions, partnerships with multi-stakeholders have contributed to the development agenda of rural areas through resource mobilisation, knowledge exchange, capacity building, and technology transfer. While some countries have developed effective ESD strategies and approaches, some are still stalled at a certain stage. For this reason, building strategic partnerships can join the force of multiple stakeholders, leverage various expertise, and enable transformative change at a greater scale.

Areas of partnerships cover from policy-making to grassroots actions, in support of research, advocacy, and practices. The ever-emerging sustainability challenges also necessitate the formation of an effective and dynamic collaboration mechanism where every partner can monitor, assess and adapt to the ever-changing situation.

## Introduction

The World Bank statistic for 2020 shows that 44% of the world's population lives in rural areas. In low- and middle-income countries, the share of rural people is 58%<sup>1</sup>. Owing to demographic and environmental factors, rural areas continue to contribute to global development through the exploitation of labour and resources. However, rapid modernisation and urbanisation have intensified the dual crisis of the Earth's environment and human society. Competition for limited resources (both material and nonmaterial) has become increasingly fierce all over the world. Excessive resource exploitation and destructive development patterns have put local environmental and cultural heritage at risk. Inequalities among different groups have been further widened. These threats have further plunged rural areas, which are already disadvantaged, into a development dilemma and it requires us to reflect deeper on the past development models: how can we achieve development for all without sustainable development in rural areas?

Ecological civilisation is a concept that highlights the integrated development of the environment, economy, society, and culture. It is closely related to the notion underpinning sustainable development promoted by the United Nations. The aim of ecological civilisation is to strengthen the relationship between humans and nature, self-development, and society. Given this background, the importance of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in advancing global development cannot be overlooked. Goal 4.7 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that 'By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and culture's contribution to sustainable development.' Promoting sustainable development through education is necessary and urgent for raising awareness of ecological civilisation and calling for collective action. In this process, the value and essential role of rural areas must be taken into account.

In this regard, the China-Southeast Asian Symposium *Towards Ecological Civilisation: Education for Sustainable Rural Development* was held on 15-16 December 2022. This event was supported by the National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO, hosted by Beijing Normal University, and organised by the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (UNESCO INRULED), Faculty of Education at Beijing Normal University, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) and Asian Institute of Technology (AIT).

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>



The symposium aimed to enhance the international community's understanding of education for sustainable rural development under the framework of ecological civilisation and achieve the following objectives:

- Promoting understanding: to reflect on education for sustainable rural development from the perspective of ecological civilisation through ideas exchange, and to raise awareness of the role and impact of education in promoting balanced and harmonious economic, social, environmental, and cultural development in rural areas;
- Sharing experience: to share policies and practices on education for sustainable rural development from different countries and social organisations;
- Seeking solutions: to reach a consensus on the promotion of education for sustainable rural development, exploring effective and innovative pathways and solutions;
- Building partnership: to establish a global network through extensive partnership building and long-term efforts.

The overarching theme was *Towards Ecological Civilisation: Education for Sustainable Rural Development*, and three sub-themes were Policy and Practice, University and Local Actions, and Towards a Sustainable Future: Youth on the Move. More than 400 scholars, youth representatives, university teachers and students, and NGOs delegates from over ten countries, including China, Laos, Thailand, the Philippines, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia, attended the symposium virtually. The speakers shared their experiences and lessons learned in education for sustainable rural development, as well as their reflections on the challenges and prospects of building an ecological civilisation. Meanwhile, over 1,000 audiences participated in this event via live streaming.

The key output of the conference was the launch of *A Call to Youth-led Actions: Promoting Sustainable Rural Development Towards Ecological Civilisation*, which calls on young people to take the initiative in building ecological civilisation and provides references for actions needed from the youth and the education sector. This report is structured to provide a summary of the main ideas discussed in each session, the insights from speakers, and the main takeaways observed across the sub-themes.

## Envisioning sustainable rural development towards ecological civilisation

Ecological civilisation, which encompasses the environmental, economic, and cultural aspects of human communities, is envisioned as a sustainable and just world in which both mankind and the planet can flourish<sup>1</sup>. the process of building an ecological civilisation, rural areas play an indispensable role because the agricultural, natural, and cultural resources they possess.

As regions with diverse cultures, rich natural resources, rapidly developing industries, and massive populations, China and Southeast Asia face common challenges and opportunities in the process of building an ecological civilisation. Therefore, it important that China and ASEAN countries exchange experiences, strengthen cooperation, and seek a common vision.

The symposium started with an opening ceremony moderated by **Prof. ZHU Xudong**. Guest speakers shared their vision of sustainable rural development and set the scene for the following discussion.



### Moderator

**Prof. ZHU Xudong**

Dean, Faculty of Education, Beijing Normal University

### Speakers

**Prof. ZHOU Zuoyu**

Vice-president, Beijing Normal University

**Dr. Ethel Agnes Pascua-Valenzuela**

Director, Secretariat of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization

**Dr. YAO Jun**

Vice President, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association

**Mr. QIN Changwei**

Secretary-General, National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO

<sup>1</sup> Clayton, P., & Schwartz, W. A. (2019). What is ecological civilization?: Crisis, hope, and the future of the planet. Process Century Press.



**Prof. ZHOU Zuoyu** first extended a warm welcome to all speakers and participants. He stated that ecological civilisation is a social form that integrates the harmonious co-existence and comprehensive development of all individuals, human society, and the more-than-human world. The process of building an ecological civilisation

is based on the respect and preservation of the ecological environment and a vision of sustainable development for all. It requires changes in all aspects of the environment, economy, society and culture, and is an important concept to lead the transformation and development of China in the new era.

He further elaborated on the intrinsic link between ecological civilisation and the concept of sustainable development. The purpose of building an ecological civilisation is highly consistent with the '5P' concept of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, namely, 'people', 'planet', 'prosperity', 'peace' and 'partnership'. It echoes the common interest of international development and the sustainable future of the world, laying the foundation for the establishment of a community with a shared future for all.

#### **Dr. Ethel Agnes Pascua-Valenzuela**

pointed out the importance of education in building an ecological civilisation. She introduced the education agenda for sustainable development in Southeast Asia, which focuses on capacity building for young people, especially young women. She noted that there is a large number of low-skilled and poorly-paid workers in Southeast Asian countries, particularly in the agricultural sector. Hence, it is of great importance to increase investment in education and ensure equitable and quality access to formal education and training opportunities.



Given SEAMEO's dedication to promoting sustainable development and cooperation for a better quality of life in Southeast Asia and beyond, Dr. Ethel Agnes Pascua-Valenzuela stressed the priority status of education and the significance of building strategic partnerships to set common goals and build a more resilient education system. She said that through experience exchange and international cooperation, we can be part of the changes we envisage for ourselves.



**Dr. YAO Jun** introduced the ideas and pathways of China Zigen in promoting quality education and building an ecological civilisation in rural China. It is hoped that through pilot ecological education projects of China Zigen, the concept, knowledge and skills of sustainable development will enter the classroom, stay on campus and

disseminate to local communities. It will help teachers, students, parents and other community members to develop the value of agriculture, the rural community, the society, the ecological environment and the indigenous culture.

He pointed out that education for sustainable rural development is a forward-looking, comprehensive and systematic project which answers to both domestic needs and international concerns in the new era. The sustainable development goal cannot be achieved overnight, he hoped that countries will work together to build a network for cooperation, research and practice.

**Mr. QIN Changwei** addressed that the world is currently facing severe challenges caused by the climate crisis and environmental degradation, hence, building an ecological civilisation is the essential route for sustainable development. Chinese President Xi Jinping has systematically elaborated on the concept of ecological civilisation and pointed out that 'lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets'. This era urgently requires us to study, research and advance the agenda of sustainable rural development from different dimensions for the realisation of ecological civilisation.



He further highlighted education as the key foundation for building an ecological civilisation in rural areas, as well as the key to the 2030 sustainable development goals. In the face of emerging environmental challenges, new policies and measures are needed to popularise cutting-edge knowledges. Only when people are equipped with the attitudes, behaviours and competencies to build an ecological civilisation will there be a successful transformation of our society. He emphasised that China and Southeast Asian

countries are geographically close and culturally interconnected, we should work together to uphold the values of a shared future and strengthen educational cooperation to achieve a breakthrough in sustainable rural development within and beyond the region.

### Key messages

- 1 Building ecological civilisation requires changes in all aspects of the environment, economy, society and culture.
- 2 Education should be prioritised in the sustainable development agenda.
- 3 It is important to develop strategic partnerships for cooperation, research and practice in order to set common goals and build a more resilient education system.
- 4 New policies and measures are needed to popularise cutting-edge knowledge and provide skills training to cope with emerging environmental challenges.



## Conceptualising education for sustainable rural development

The *Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development* launched by UNESCO outlines five priority action areas for achieving the strategic goals of sustainable development and promoting global cooperation: advancing policy, transforming learning and training environments, building capacities of educators and trainers, empowering and mobilising youth, and accelerating sustainable solutions at the local level<sup>1</sup>. To begin with, it is necessary to review the concept, purpose and value of Education for Sustainable Development in the context of rural revitalisation and explore interconnections with policy-making, teaching and learning, youth mobilisation, and localised actions.

Given this concern, the symposium invited speakers from different backgrounds to deliver keynote speeches on the conceptualisation of education for rural development. The keynote speech session was moderated by [Dr. ZHAO Yuchi](#).



### Moderator

**Dr. ZHAO Yuchi**

Deputy Director, UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education

### Speakers

**Prof. WEN Tiejun**

School of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, Renmin University of China

**Ms. Jun Morohashi**

Chief, Section of Education for Sustainable Development, Education Sector, UNESCO

**Prof. Bert Tuga**

President, Philippine Normal University

**Ms. YANG Guiping**

Founder & Chief Expert, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association

**Dr. SHI Gendong**

Executive Director, China National Working Committee for UNESCO on Education for Sustainable Development

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO. (2014). *Roadmap for implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development*. Paris, UNESCO. p.15



**Prof. WEN Tiejun** shared his insights on the concept and core values of ecological civilisation and rural revitalisation from two perspectives: firstly, the difference in the demand for education between the industrialisation period and the ecological civilisation period, and secondly, the pathways to carry out localised education which integrates

indigenous knowledge and practices.

He argued that 'diversity' is the fundamental component of ecological civilisation, which means the uniformed course design and teaching methods in the past no longer meet the pluralistic needs of today's education. In addition, the market-oriented or industrialised way of teaching and learning poses a major obstacle to the concorded development of ecology and education. Therefore, advancing education for sustainable rural development requires us to return to nature, appreciate vernacular culture, and recognise the diverse needs of people and the environment in local areas.

**Ms. Jun Morohashi** introduced the competencies needed to address common sustainability challenges, including anticipatory abilities, collaboration, critical thinking, integrated problem-solving, normative thinking, self-awareness, strategic and system thinking, and ways to develop them in the context of the green and digital transition. She argued that ESD is a strategic approach that underscores interdisciplinarity, highlights the interlinkages between society, economy, and the environment, and combines cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural dimensions of learning.



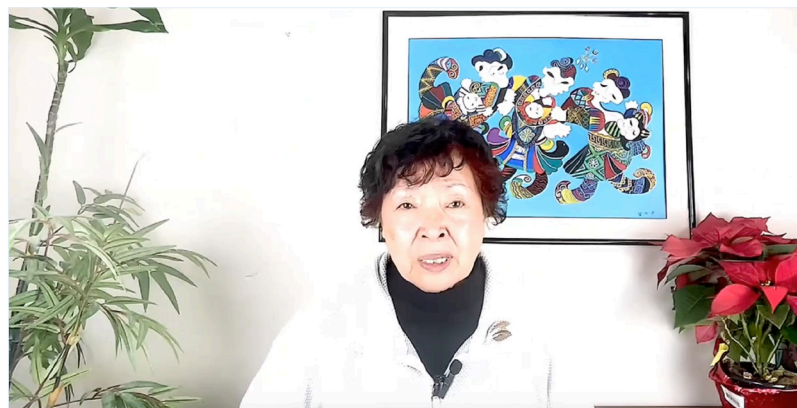
To accelerate the achievement of the 2030 SDG Agenda for Sustainable Development, UNESCO has adopted the Education for Sustainable Development for 2030 framework (ESD for 2030) and its roadmap for implementation in 2019. A global initiative, the Greening Education Partnership, was also launched this year, to engage more regional and country-level partners to green its education system to be climate-ready. She reaffirmed the necessity to redefine the relationship between schools, parents, and local community stakeholders to create a community spirit in promoting responsibility and respect for one another.



**Prof. Bert Tuga** analysed the complexity and interconnectedness of global challenges in the environment, economy, and culture. He argued that education plays a pivotal role in enhancing global solidarity because it fosters a sense of citizenship and collective accountability for building a more equitable and just world.

In respect of education for sustainable rural development, he emphasised the need for re-orienting education to stimulate creative thinking and empathy and to establish the link among villages, cities, and communities. Educational sectors and higher education institutions should consider the impact they bring to the communities, optimise the utilisation of various resources, and cultivate leadership skills of educators to ensure effective and sustainable transformation and meet the needs of local people.

**Ms. Yang Guiping** shared her understanding of the four pillars of sustainable development: viable economy, sustainable environment, diverse culture and social equity, which respond to China's overall plan in five areas (economic, political, cultural, social and ecological development). The objective of ESD is to disseminate the knowledge,



attitude and skills regarding these four dimensions. It requires the integration of sustainability issues in course design and pedagogy to cultivate students' sense of social responsibility.

She further elaborated on the importance of education in promoting rural development through the introduction of the Green Eco Schools project that China Zigen has been working on over the past 30 years. Through innovative transformation in classrooms, teaching, learning, and school policies, this project has demonstrated an effective approach to integrating indigenous resources and knowledge into compulsory education. However, contradictions still exist between the concept of sustainable development and mainstream perceptions of consumption and productivity. That is why ESD should also be included in community education and vocational education in order to promote the participation of the whole society in the construction of ecological civilisation.



Finally, **Dr. Shi Gendong** delivered a speech on the conceptual map of ecological civilisation education in China. He introduced the basic ideas of Education for Ecological Civilisation and Sustainable Development (EECS D) and further explained the concept based on its objectives, core capacities, implementation standards, course design principles, and so on. He



reinforced that the ultimate goal of sustainable development is to build a society of ecological civilisation.

At a practical level, Dr. Shi presented two case studies (one in an urban area and one in a rural area) to explain the implementation of EECS D in schools. Through the combination of thematic learning and empirical practices, as well as the optimised utilisation of campus resources, both schools have shown promising achievements in advancing students' ecological literacy and stimulating behavioural change.

### Key messages

- 1 'Diversity' is the fundamental component of ecological civilisation. Advancing education for sustainable rural development requires us to return to nature, appreciate vernacular culture, and recognise the diverse needs of people and the environment in local areas.
- 2 ESD is a strategic approach that underscores interdisciplinarity, highlights the interlinkages between society, economy, and the environment, and combines cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural dimensions of learning.
- 3 It is needed to re-orient education to stimulate creative thinking and empathy and to establish the link among villages, cities, and communities.
- 4 The objective of ESD is to disseminate the knowledge, attitude and skills regarding a viable economy, sustainable environment, diverse culture and social equity.
- 5 The ultimate goal of sustainable development is to build a society of ecological civilisation.

## Understanding ESD policies and practices from multi-dimensional perspectives

ESD is generally considered to be context-sensitive. Although many countries have attached importance ESD in educational policy, teacher training, and curricula, the process of implementation and how to integrate the economy, ecology, and equity of all communities education vary from case to case. Hence, to explore the core role of education and learning in the pursuit of a more sustainable future, it is worth discussing the difference and commonalities in the background, status quo, and trends of ESD policies and practices.

**Dr. HUANG Yu** moderated the 'Policy and Practice' session. Speakers from different country contexts set out the characteristics of policies and practices of sustainable rural development from the perspectives socio-economic, cultural, science and technology, environmental, and education.



### Moderator

#### Dr. HUANG Yu

Associate professor, Institute of International and Comparative Education, Beijing Normal University

### Speakers

#### Dr. Pietro Borsano

Deputy Executive Director and Senior Lecturer, School of Integrated Innovation, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

#### Prof. HAN Jialing

Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, Jinan University

#### Prof. Glenn B Gregorio

Director, SEAMEO Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture

#### Prof. Phiathep Phimpha

Head of Department of Pedagogy Social Science, Faculty of Education, National University of Laos

#### Mr. ZHANG Zhaowen

Former Vice President, China Adult Education



**Dr. Pietro Borsano**  
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

From a socio-economic perspective, **Dr. Pietro Borsano** shared his view on the digital economy trends and opportunities for rural development. He introduced us to the development of the digital economy in Southeast Asia. He believes that the current digital economy in Southeast Asia is growing very fast and the next

decade will be a critical period for the development of the digital economy. However, gaps between the development of the digital economy in rural Southeast Asia and other regions still exist. Therefore, there is a need to develop the digital economy based on local reality.

He also pointed out that digital technology has demonstrated healthy growth potential and can be leveraged to bridge the gap between rural schools and urban schools. As Thailand is currently undergoing a very rapid digital transformation and many people are starting to become very familiar with technology, it is important to strengthen the cooperation between Thailand, China, and other ASEAN countries in pushing forward digital transformation for sustainable development.

From a cultural perspective, **Prof. HAN Jialing** shared the practical experience of integrating vernacular culture into the classroom in China. She argued that cultural diversity means both acknowledging one's own culture and embracing other cultures, so it sets a very important condition for sustainable human development and facilitates the mutual advancement of different civilisations.



She then touched upon the approaches to promoting cultural diversity in rural schools. Vernacular identity roots in local history and culture, and schools should create a learning environment that cultivates students' cultural identity and motivates them to learn about the customs, local knowledge, and traditional cultural values. Secondly, rural schools should take the advantage of their connection to nature and develop vernacular curricula with their own characteristics based on local conditions. And lastly, real-life experiences can also be used to foster a sense of belonging and critical reflections on local culture.

From a science and technology perspective, **Prof. Glenn Gregorio** confirmed that technology can contribute to education but there is a need to change the old ways of thinking.

He argued that, on the one hand, innovative science and technology can bring direct changes to agriculture and rural areas, such as mechanisation of agriculture, carbon-smart rice cultivation, development of digital agriculture platforms and ecological systems, and so on, on the other hand, more emphasis should be placed on the requirements for innovation in the higher education system, strengthening the capacity of universities, increasing the number of relevant teaching courses, telling people what digital agriculture technology is, and encouraging students to create innovative solutions to issues of poverty and agricultural transformation. According to him, innovation is not a departure from tradition, but a way to build on it.



From an environmental perspective, **Prof. Phiathep Phimpha** reiterated the significance of environmental education for sustainable rural development. His argument was built on the overview of Education for Sustainable Development in Laos, including the incorporation of ESD in STEM teaching into formal curriculum framework and textbooks, and the

establishment of farmer field schools and community learning centres. He introduced the differences and connections between environmental education and ESD, and pointed out the vital role that ESD can play in ensuring equal access to education for all Lao citizens, reducing inequalities caused by gender, physical conditions or ethnicities, and eventually profiting from socio-economic development.

The last speaker in this session, **Mr. ZHANG Zhaowen** provided his insights from the perspective of lifelong learning education. He introduced the efforts made by the Chinese government in building a learning society. Although remarkable achievements have been made in community education, senior education, and vocational education, the education sector should continue to carry out lifelong learning opportunities for all people in rural areas, innovate and enrich the content of education for rural development, and promote the 'Internet + lifelong education' mode to meet the learning needs of the rural population.



### Key messages

- 1 Digital technology has demonstrated healthy growth potential and can be leveraged to bridge the gap between rural schools and urban schools.
- 2 Cultural diversity sets a very important condition for sustainable human development and facilitates the complementary advancement of different civilisations.
- 3 Technology can contribute to education but there is a need to change the old ways of thinking.
- 4 ESD can play a vital role in ensuring equal access to education for all, reducing inequalities caused by gender, physical conditions or ethnicities, and eventually profiting from socio-economic development.
- 5 The education sector should continue to carry out lifelong learning opportunities for all people in rural areas, innovate and enrich the content of education for rural development, and promote the 'Internet + lifelong education' mode to meet the learning needs of the rural population.



## Building partnerships between universities and local actors

As a critical enabler in global and local pursuits sustainability, higher education provides value the economy, society, and environment through research, innovation, community engagement, leadership, and societal influence<sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile, local actors, such as grassroots NGOs and community members, are often portrayed as the primary driving force for social transformation. Hence, to address the uncertainties of the contemporary world and effectively take action towards achieving the SDGs, universities and local actors should build long-term partnerships in research, advocacy, and practices.

The second session, 'University and Local Action', was moderated by **Prof. ZHANG Lili**. Drawing on the evidence-based experience in rural areas, scholars and practitioners discussed the objectives and approaches of localised actions, the importance of the partnership between universities and local actors, and ways of building up innovative collaboration.



### Moderator

**Prof. ZHANG Lili**

Faculty of Education, Beijing Normal University

### Speakers

**Mr. LI Guangdui**

Expert of ESD programmes, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association

**Dr. Athapol Anunthavorasakul**

Director of ESD Centre, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

**Prof. Mokbul Morshed Ahmad**

Head of Development Planning Management and Innovation (DPMI), Asian Institute of Technology

**Dr. Arlyne Marasigan**

Assistant professor, Philippine Normal University

<sup>1</sup> Price, E.A.C., White, R.M., Mori, K. et al. (2021). Supporting the role of universities in leading individual and societal transformation through education for sustainable development. *Discover Sustainability*, 2(1), 49.



**Mr. Li Guangdui** introduced the models of ‘integrating formal, non-formal, and informal education’ and ‘combining agriculture, science, and education’. He identified three major problems in sustainable rural development, namely, the tension between economic development and ecology, inequities in income and resource allocation, and the loss of traditional vernacular culture.

He then presented the efforts made by China Zigen in formal education (such as the reform in teacher’s professional development, course design, and school administration), non-formal education, and informal education (such as the establishment of learning centres in villages, and the specialised support for groups in need). He concluded that it is not enough to talk about rural revitalisation only in terms of industrial prosperity, diversified measures should be taken to facilitate autonomy and innovation at local levels and to realise the comprehensive revitalisation of industry, talents, ecology, culture, and organisation.

**Dr. Athapol Anunthavorasakul** shared his experience from the ESD movements in Southeast Asia. He noted that ESD is not just a subject in school, but an educational approach toward sustainable development that focuses on empowering human development holistically.



He showed the cases of ESD movements in Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and other ASEAN countries, which demonstrated the crucial role that university and community leaders play in the process and how partnerships and networks can help to promote quality education for all learners. He also elaborated on shifts of ESD in curriculum, pedagogy, and school transformation and concluded that education, as a mechanism to transform, needs to be transformed to tackle new and emerging challenges.



**Prof. Mokbul Morshed Ahmad**  
Asian Institute of Technology

**Prof. Mokbul Morshed Ahmad** shed light on the role of universities in promoting sustainable rural development based on the case of the Department of Development and Sustainability (DDS) at the Asian Institute of Technology. He mentioned that the mission of DDS is to respond to the regional needs of capacity development and contemporary issues in partnership

with all sectors. Academic research and community practices, particularly regarding community development, natural resources, and impact assessment, are of equal importance for students and faculty members. However, key challenges still exist in terms of funding resources, editorial services, and the gap between research and policymaking. Thus, we should work together to enhance the capacity of universities, promote mutual understanding among different stakeholders, and eventually benefit from each other.

**Dr. Arlyne Marasigan** continued the theme. She highlighted the significance of partnerships between higher education institutions (HEIs) and small rural schools in accelerating rural revitalisation, particularly when facing challenges intersecting with political-economic, environmental, educational, and social factors. She introduced an initiative which is

dedicated to promoting quality and rural agri-education for parents, teachers, and students. This initiative connected several higher education institutions and boosted many innovative educational projects for rural development. She also argued that HEIs should engage more graduate students and in-service teachers in university-rural school internships, encourage them to dream big but take meaningful actions, and create an atmosphere where they can fully unleash their potential to contribute to the community.



**Dr. Arlyne Marasigan**  
Philippine Normal University



### Key messages

- 1 It is not enough to talk about rural revitalisation only in terms of industrial prosperity, diversified measures should be taken to facilitate autonomy and innovation at local levels and to realise the comprehensive revitalisation of industry, talents, ecology, culture, and organisation.
- 2 ESD is not just a subject in school, but an educational approach toward Sustainable Development that focuses on empowering human development holistically through whole education and each system of education.
- 3 We should work together to enhance the capacity of universities, promote mutual understanding among different stakeholders, and eventually benefit from each other.
- 4 Higher education institutions should engage more graduate students and in-service teachers in university-rural school internships.



## Mobilising youth towards a more sustainable future

When confronted with the global sustainability crisis, rural areas are very often further entrenched in development dilemmas due to environmental degradation, loss of cultural heritage, and widening inequalities. Youth, as key agents of social change and indispensable stakeholders to tackle sustainability challenges, should 'think rural' and commit our abilities and efforts to build a shared future for all.

The third session 'Towards a Sustainable Future: Youth on the Move' invited youth representatives from China and Southeast Asian countries to share their actions for sustainable development, especially in



local communities. Moderated by **Ms. WANG Siyao**, programme assistant of UNESCO INRULED, speakers shared their experience and insights of youth-led actions, shed light on the role of youth in promoting sustainable rural development, and the challenges, lessons, and possible responses. This session also witnessed the launch of *A Call to Youth-led Actions* and discussed key opportunities to take youth actions forward beyond the forum.

### Youth participation in sustainable rural development: strategy, role and impact of ESD programmes

**Ms. GONG Shiqing**, programme assistant of UNESCO INRULED, kicked off the session by presenting the research outcomes of a case study on the strategy, role and impact of ESD programmes in rural China. This study was conducted by a group of young researchers, aiming to answer the following research questions: What are the strategies of ESD programmes in rural China? What role do these ESD programmes play in youth participation? What are the factors that promote/constrain youth participation in sustainable rural development?

The research process started with a purposive sampling based on the following criteria: the theme of the program should be related to ESD or rural revitalisation, the focal area should be in rural regions, and the targeted group should be youth participants aged 15-24 years. Six cases were then identified for the questionnaire survey. The content analysis of the primary findings was then triangulated by semi-structured interviews with 7 programme organisers and 11 youth participants.

Based on whether the programme organiser or participant is originally from or has settled down in the area where the programme is carried out, this study further categorised the six cases into three groups:

- 1) both the organiser and participants are non-native;
- 2) non-native organiser with native participants;
- 3) both organiser and participants are native.

The study found that different groups of ESD programmes showed different strategies in terms of the knowledge and skills that they focus on, the intervention approach they take, and the evaluation method they apply. In response to the role these ESD programmes play in youth participation, this study discovered the commonalities and differences in the types of youth actions they promote and the impact from cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioural dimensions. Lastly, this study identified the enabling factors and constraints of youth participation from the perspectives of policy, resource and environment, and social norms.

**Based on that, the following conclusions were drawn:**

- Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary learning or the application of disciplinary knowledge in real-life contexts enables a better understanding of sustainable rural development.
- Teamwork, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills are essential in any form of engagement.
- Partnerships with multi-stakeholders have a significant impact on the implementation of the ESD programme and the extent of youth engagement.
- Scant attention has been paid to an effective evaluation method to monitor the progress and assess outcomes of youth actions.
- There is a lack of systematic support to implement, sustain, or scale up ESD programmes in rural areas.

### Key messages

- 1 Different ESD programmes showed different strategies in terms of the knowledge and skills that they focus on, the intervention approach they take, and the evaluation method they apply.
- 2 Commonalities and differences exist in youth actions and the cognitive, social-emotional, and behavioural impact of the actions.
- 3 Factors of policy, resources, environment and social norms may facilitate or constrain youth participation.

## Experience sharing: youth on the move

Youth associations have long played an active role in empowering students with the knowledge, skills, and values needed for social change. Studies have found that youth-organised programmes can achieve the twin goals of fostering youth development and spurring social transformation (Conner, 2012).

In this session, five youth leaders from China, Thailand, Cambodia, and the Philippines were invited to share their experiences in promoting sustainable development in rural areas.



**Ms. LI Ziqiao**  
Huazhong Agricultural University

**Ms. LI Ziqiao** presented the project work of the *Green Association*. Founded in the year 2000, the *Green Association* has been dedicated to the education and community-based practice of ecological civilisation. There are three major ongoing projects: 1) The '*Green Dream*' project, aiming at training young people, particularly elementary and secondary school students, with the knowledge and skills for sustainable development. 2) The '*Clean Stream Plan*' for protecting clean water and building long-term partnerships with the environmental sector and community stakeholders. 3) The '*Wings in Blue Sky*' project which focuses on educational activities for bird protection. With the support from the local government, international organisations, and the university, the Association has made remarkable achievements in youth participation in green and environmental protection practices.

### Moderator

**Ms. WANG Siyao**

Programme Assistant,  
UNESCO International  
Research and Training Centre  
for Rural Education

### Speakers

**Ms. LI Ziqiao**

Green Association, Huazhong  
Agricultural University, China

**Mr. YANG Haowen**

Digital Hive Research  
Association, Northwest  
Agriculture & Forestry  
University, China

**Dr. Arie Ekawie Baskoro**

Margo Mulyo Community  
Programme, Asian Institute of  
Technology

**Mr. Raksmei Phal**

WeFarm Agriculture and  
Tourism Community  
Programme, Asian Institute of  
Technology

**Mr. Mark Ponce San Juan**

Comparative Education and  
Students' Critical Leadership  
Society, Philippine Normal  
University



**Mr. YANG Haowen**  
Northwest Agriculture & Forestry University

**Mr. YANG Haowen**, Head of the *Digital Hive Research Association*, introduced their experience in youth learning and agriculture development through science and technology. Aiming at digital beekeeping using artificial intelligence, big data, and the Internet, the *Digital Hive Research Association* provides innovative solutions to smart agriculture and

poverty alleviation. In addition to the assistance of bee-keepers, the Association also carries out a variety of activities to popularise apiculture knowledge, providing opportunities for young people to gain access to the industry and enhance their entrepreneurship skills. After five years of field research, their project has been well-received in different provinces in China as well as countries alongside the Belt and Road. With the goal of creating an unmanned smart beekeeping farm, the *Digital Hive Research Association* will continue the research and experiment in promoting sustainable rural development through science and technology.

**Dr. Arie Ekawie Baskoro**, the founder of the *Karang Taruna Margo Mulyo Community Project* shared the work they have done. The project was founded during the COVID-19 pandemic to alleviate the economic and environmental impact that COVID made on rural communities, aiming at increasing local people's income by providing



an online sales portal for products of micro, small and medium enterprises. In the meantime, marketing and logistics assistance was provided to vulnerable groups and the aged. This project also contributed to the green development of local communities through waste management and river cleaning activities. They hope to continue enhancing the partnership with government, NGOs, and private institutions and extending cooperation with more partners.



**Mr. Raksmei Phal** is the founder of the *WeFarm Agriculture and Tourism Project*. He discovered that, although 75% of Cambodia's population lives in rural areas and agriculture alone accounts for 22% of the GDP, young people are now rarely involved in farming activities or unaware of the ways to get involved. Hence, the *WeFarm* project was launched to promote the integrated

development of agriculture, tourism, and youth engagement in it. They organised various activities, such as farm stays and tours, education camps, seed banks, and so on, to arouse young people's interest and facilitate active participation. He further emphasised that youth play an indispensable part in advancing agricultural production and services, and eventually fostering a vibrant community focused on nature, culture, and healthy and sustainable living.

The last speaker, **Mr. Mark Ponce San Juan** shared their efforts of promoting sustainable development through the lens of lifelong learning at the *Comparative Education and Students' Critical Leadership Society*. As a leading education organisation for graduate student teachers, the Society is dedicated to providing meaningful learning experiences



in comparative education beyond the classroom, helping learners to acquire related knowledge and skills to make informed decisions for community development. They have organised different activities to improve the welfare of local communities and will continue to actively participate in community movements for moral, social, educational, economic, and civic betterment. According to Mr. San Juan, every young person and teacher should take a leadership role in building sustainable communities.

## Key messages

### 1 ***Green Association, Huazhong Agricultural University***

- Train young people with the knowledge and skills for sustainable development.
- Protect clean water and build long-term partnerships with the environmental sector and community stakeholders.
- Organise educational activities for bird protection.

### 2 ***Digital Hive Research Association, Northwest Agriculture & Forestry University***

- Provide innovative solutions to smart agriculture and poverty alleviation.
- Popularise apiculture knowledge, providing opportunities for young people to gain access to the industry and enhance their entrepreneurship skills.

### 3 ***The Karang Taruna Margo Mulyo Community Project, the Asian Institute of Technology***

- Help to increase local people's income by providing an online sales portal for products of micro, small and medium enterprises.
- Provide marketing and logistics assistance to vulnerable groups and the aged.
- Contribute to the green development of local communities through waste management and river-cleaning activities

### 4 ***WeFarm Agriculture and Tourism Project, the Asian Institute of Technology***

- Promote the integrated development of agriculture, tourism, and youth engagement in rural development.
- Organised various activities to arouse young people's interest and facilitate active participation.

### 5 ***The Comparative Education and Students' Critical Leadership Society, Philippine Normal University***

- Provide meaningful learning experiences in comparative education beyond the classroom.
- Help learners to acquire related knowledge and skills to make informed decisions for community development.

## What a sustainable future requires of young people: insights and reflection from youth

Ensued after the experience-sharing session was a roundtable discussion with youth leaders from different walks of life. The discussion was moderated by **Ms. ZHANG Silu**, with the participation of four speakers: **Ms. Nur Afifa Amani**, **Mr. Phiyachon Phumwiphat**, **Ms. LIN Lu**, and **Ms. QIU Huiqiao**.

The speakers first identified the biggest challenges in engaging youths to take actions for sustainable rural development and shared their strategies for coping with these challenges. Ms. Amani and Ms. Qiu mentioned that to generate and raise youth's awareness of local and sustainable development-related issues are the most difficult part of their work since academic performance and digital entertainment are always prioritised over public participation by local youths. Ms. Lin echoed their points and emphasised the importance of stimulating curiosity in students through hands-on and in-the-field activities. Mr. Phumwiphat pointed out that the detachment from rural issues of urban youths is mainly a result of their spatial and mental separation from rural communities. The key to getting youth involved is creating more enjoyable and meaningful experiences for them.

### Moderator

#### Ms. ZHANG Silu

Secretary-General, China Youth Climate Action Network

### Speakers

#### Ms. Nur Afifa Amani

youth leader of SEAMEO TED and Theirworld, Keningau Vocational College, Sabah, Malaysia

#### Mr. Phiyachon Phumwiphat

youth leader of clean energy project "CO2 To FUEL", Gainesville International School, Chiang Rai, Thailand

#### Ms. LIN Lu

lecturer, Wenzhou-Kean University, China

#### Ms. QIU Huiqiao

CEO, Wudao Wuxue Education for Sustainable Development, China



*Youth speakers at the roundtable discussion*



They further exchanged their views on the approaches to ensure the participation of all youths, including disadvantaged groups. Ms. Lin emphasised the importance of cultural events where old and young people in rural communities could meet and interact with each other. Ms. Amani shed light on the application of online platforms in ensuring learning continuities of rural students and promoting dialogues and exchanges. Ms. Qiu expanded on the topic of global exchange, cooperation, and partnership. She suggested that the key to effectively engaging youth for global solidarity is to let them take ownership.

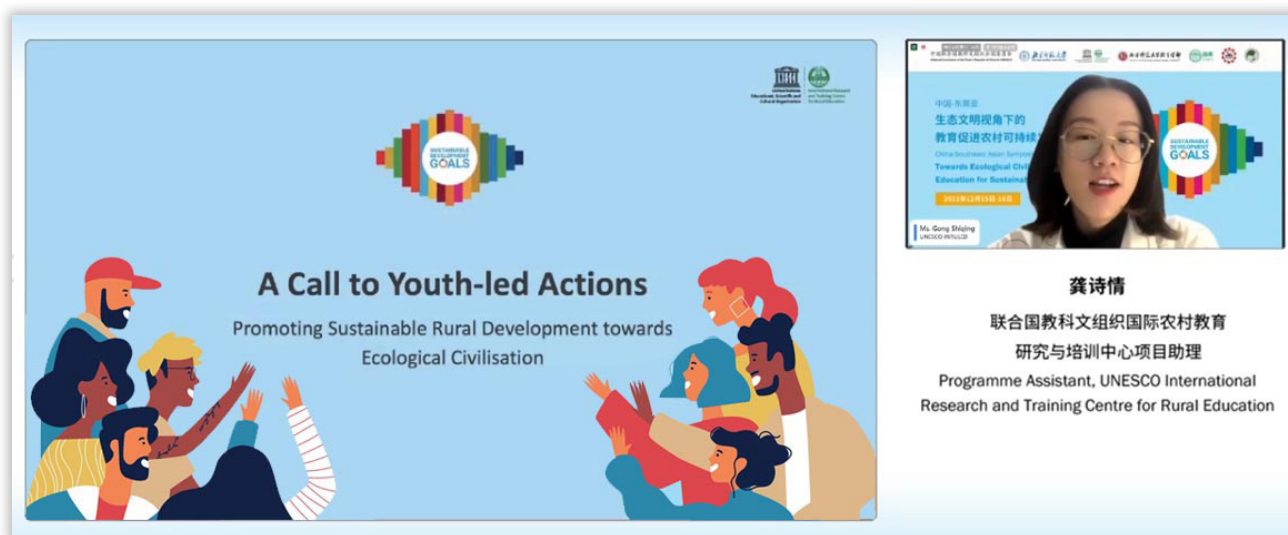
The panelists also shared their expectations of youth-led actions in the future. Ms. Amani suggested that schools should provide more opportunities for student participation to enhance their communication skills and self-confidence. Ms. Lin called for the engagement of youths and locals in rural areas in bottom-up actions, as well as collaboration between different professions and disciplines. Ms. Qiu and Mr. Phumwiphat reiterated the need of understanding the issues in rural areas and addressing them, as well as engage in regional knowledge sharing.

### Key messages

- 1 Challenges in engaging youths to take action for sustainable rural development exist in different aspects, such as raising awareness, stimulating curiosities, prioritising public participation, and building a sense of attachment to rural areas.
- 2 The approaches to ensure the participation of all youths in sustainable development including organizing cultural events, optimising the use of online platforms, promoting global exchange, and letting youth take ownership.
- 3 More schools should provide opportunities for student participation to enhance their communication skills and self-confidence.
- 4 Collaboration between youth and locals, as well as among different professions and disciplines, is needed.
- 5 It is necessary to promote the understanding of issues in rural areas and the sharing of regional knowledge.

## Be part of the solution: A call to youth-led actions for sustainable rural development

Aiming at mobilising youth from around the world to take action in promoting sustainable rural development, UNESCO INRULED, in collaboration with its partners, the Faculty of Education at Beijing Normal University, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association, Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization, and Asian Institute of Technology, launched *A Call to Youth-led Actions: Promoting Sustainable Rural Development Towards Ecological Civilisation*. Ms. Gong Shiqing and Ms. NIU Xinyi, programme assistants of UNESCO INRULED, introduced the drafting process and key messages of the *Call*.



The drafting process started with the document review and case studies of ESD programmes. The first draft was composed of situation statement, calling for youth actions and calling for cooperation from education sectors. It was then disseminated to the public to solicit feedback and signatures of support. With the coordination of INRULED's partners, 6 institutions and 306 people (101 anonymously) worldwide have signed and contributed feedback.

Since the notion of sustainable development and ecological civilisation are rather complex, the *Call* conceptualises these notions by identifying four prioritised areas for youth-led actions: environmental protection, cultural preservation, equity and inclusion, and technology and innovation. Each area was provided with detailed suggestions for action.

The *Call* urges youth to firstly 'prepare ourselves with the knowledge, skills, and values needed', then 'take the initiative in coping with multi-dimensional sustainability challenges' and 'build partnerships with multi-stakeholders and stand in solidarity with every young person in all diversity'. It should also be noted that this is an iterative rather than a linear process. To tackle the ever-emerging challenges, young people should always be prepared to learn, and take new leadership roles in new situations as well as build extensive partnerships.

The education sector was also called on to make concerted efforts through various approaches, including ensuring the provision of quality education and a holistic vision of ecological civilisation, recognising young people as equal partners, integrating the education of ecological civilisation in teacher education, promoting pedagogies of co-operation and solidarity, reconceptualising curricula, ensuring an equitable and transformative learning environment, and eradicating financial and systemic barriers.

It is hoped that this *Call* will act as a starting point for the establishment of more extensive partnerships and the promotion of more practical actions to advance the agenda of sustainable rural development worldwide.

### Key messages

- 1 The *Call* identifies four prioritised areas for youth-led actions: environmental protection, cultural preservation, equity and inclusion, and technology and innovation.

- 2 The *Call* urges youth to firstly 'prepare ourselves with the knowledge, skills, and values needed', then 'take the initiative in coping with multi-dimensional sustainability challenges' and 'build partnerships with multi-stakeholders and stand in solidarity with every young person in all diversity'.

- 3 The education sector was also called on to make concerted efforts through various approaches.



## The way forward: working together for the realisation of ecological civilisation

The symposium concluded with remarks by **Ms. YANG Guiping**, Founder of China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association, and **Dr. ZHAO Yuchi**, Deputy Director of UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education.

Ms. Yang began by congratulating the success of the symposium. She praised the event for its novelties in a) the comprehensive discussion of the role ESD can play in rural development from social, economic, and cultural perspectives; b) the exchange of lessons and experiences which explored both international frameworks and China's route of rural revitalisation and building an ecological civilisation. She said, this event was a great opportunity for academia and grassroots organisations from China and Southeast Asian countries to join forces on promoting sustainable rural development through education. She also expressed her hope for youth participation in raising awareness, cultivating attitudes, and taking action for rural development.

Ms. Yang further pointed out the steps that need to be taken after the event. Firstly, the outcomes of the symposium should be collated and widely disseminated. Secondly, the conference should be held regularly for updates on new practices, trends, and challenges. Thirdly, an extensive network should be built to unite academia, civil society organisations, education sectors, and grassroots actors. Lastly, youth should be provided with platforms to learn, communicate and take action together.

To sum up, Ms. Yang quoted that 'a good start is half of the success'. It is necessary that everyone move forward step by step to find resources and establish an effective mechanism for promoting rural development.

On behalf of UNESCO INRULED, Dr. Zhao first expresses his gratitude for everyone's participation in this symposium and the valuable support from partners. He then pointed out the diversity of education in the post-industrial era and the need to return to the originality of rural education. Therefore, it is important to take a step forward from the consensus that has been reached and turn the common vision into real-life actions.

Dr. Zhao also acknowledged the power of youth and partnership as reflected in the organisation of the event and the presentations of all youth speakers. He said that the closing of the conference is not the end but a new beginning. Looking ahead, we should actively carry our research in related fields, advocate for practices, and strengthen capacity building for youth. We should also expand partnerships to join the force of more individuals and institutions and to advance education for sustainable rural development towards ecological civilisation.

### Key messages

- 1 The outcomes of the symposium should be collated and widely disseminated.
- 2 It is suggested that the conference be held regularly for updates on new practices, trends, and challenges.
- 3 An extensive network should be built to unite academia, civil society organisations, education sectors, and grassroots actors.
- 4 Youth should be provided with platforms to learn, communicate and take action together.
- 5 It is important to take a step forward from the consensus that has been reached and turn the common vision into real-life actions.



## ANNEX 1 Conference Programme

Day 1-15 December 2022

### 14:00-14:30 Opening Ceremony

**Moderator:** Prof. ZHU Xudong, Dean, Faculty of Education, Beijing Normal University

#### Opening Remarks:

- Prof. ZHOU Zuoyu, Vice-president, Beijing Normal University
- Dr. Ethel Agnes Pascua-Valenzuela, Director, Secretariat of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization
- Dr. YAO Jun, Vice President, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association
- Mr. QIN Changwei, Secretary-General, National Commission of the People's Republic of China for UNESCO

### 14:30-15:45 Keynote Speeches

**Moderator:** Dr. ZHAO Yuchi, Deputy Director, UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education

- **Ecological civilization and rural revitalization in China: Concepts, values and practices**  
Prof. WEN Tiejun, School of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, Renmin University of China
- **Education for 2030 and the Greening Education Development Partnership**  
Ms. Jun Morohashi, Chief, Section of Education for Sustainable Development, Education Sector, UNESCO
- **Education for sustainable rural development: global lessons and local wisdom**  
Prof. Bert Tuga, President, Philippine Normal University
- **Promoting Education for Sustainable Development in Rural China**  
Ms. YANG Guiping, Founder & Chief Expert, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association
- **Ecological civilisation education and ESD in China: concept mapping and case studies**  
Dr. SHI Gendong, Executive Director, China National Working Committee for UNESCO on Education for Sustainable Development

**Break 15 minutes**

## 16:00-17:15 Session 1 Policy and Practice

**Moderator:** Dr. HUANG Yu, Associate professor, Institute of International and Comparative Education, Beijing Normal University

- **Socio-economic perspective: Trends of digital economy and opportunities for rural development**  
Dr. Pietro Borsano, Deputy Executive Director and Senior Lecturer, School of Integrated Innovation, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- **Cultural perspective: Practical experience of local culture education in China's formal education**  
Prof. HAN Jialing, Institute of Economics and Social Sciences, Jinan University
- **Science and Technology perspective: Technology for education for sustainable development**  
Prof. Glenn B Gregorio, Director, SEAMEO Regional Centre for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture
- **Environmental perspective: The role of environmental education in sustainable rural development**  
Prof. Phiathep Phimpha, Head of Department of Pedagogy Social Science, Faculty of Education, National University of Laos
- **Education perspective: Life-long learning and the implications for sustainable rural development**  
Mr. ZHANG Zhaowen, Former Vice President, China Adult Education Association

## 17:15-18:15 Session 2 University and Local Actions

**Moderator:** Prof. ZHANG Lili, Faculty of Education, Beijing Normal University

- **Education for Sustainable Rural Development: the models of 'Integration of Three Types of Education' and 'Three-in-one Education'**  
Mr. LI Guangdui, Expert of ESD programmes, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association
- **ESD Movement in ASEAN Countries: what we have done and where we move forwards**  
Dr. Athapol Anunthavorasakul, Director of ESD Centre, Division of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- **The role of universities in promoting sustainable rural development**  
Prof. Mokbul Morshed Ahmad, Head of Development Planning Management and Innovation (DPMI), Asian Institute of Technology
- **Building partnerships between higher education institutions and local actors to accelerate rural revitalization**  
Dr. Arlyne Marasigan, Assistant professor, Philippine Normal University

Day 2-16 December 2022

**14:00-14:15 Report**

**Youth Participation in Sustainable Rural Development: Strategy, Role and Impact of ESD programmes**

- Ms. GONG Shiqing, Programme Assistant, UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education

**14:15-17:45 Session 3 Towards a Sustainable Future: Youth on the Move**

**14:15-15:45 Part 1 Actions of Youth-led Associations: Experience Sharing**

**Moderator:** Ms. WANG Siyao, Programme Assistant, UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education

**Presentations of student associations**

- Ms. LI Ziqiao, Green Association, Huazhong Agricultural University, China
- Mr. YANG Haowen, Digital Hive Research Association, Northwest Agriculture & Forestry University, China
- Dr. Arie Ekawie Baskhoro, Margo Mulyo Community Programme, Asian Institute of Technology
- Mr. Raksmei Phal, WeFarm Agriculture and Tourism Community Programme, Asian Institute of Technology
- Mr. Mark Ponce San Juan, Comparative Education and Students' Critical Leadership Society, Philippine Normal University

**Q&A: further discussions and networking**

**Break 15 minutes**

**16:00-17:20 Part 2 Roundtable Discussion**

**Moderator:** Ms. ZHANG Silu, Secretary-General, China Youth Climate Action Network

**Roundtable Panelist:**

- Ms. Nur Afifa Amani, youth leader of SEAMEO TED and Theirworld, Keningau Vocational College, Sabah, Malaysia
- Mr. Phiyachon Phumwiphat, youth leader of clean energy project 'CO2 To FUEL', Gainesville International School, Chiang Rai, Thailand
- Ms. LIN Lu, lecturer, Wenzhou-Kean University, China
- Ms. QIU Huiqiao, CEO, Wudao Wuxue Education for Sustainable Development, China



**17:20-17:45 Part 3 A Call to Youth-led Actions: Promoting Sustainable Rural Development Towards Ecological Civilisation**

**Moderator:** Ms. GONG Shiqing, Programme Assistant, UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education

- An overview of *A Call to Youth-Actions: Promoting Sustainable Rural Development Towards Ecological Civilisation*
- Video messages for youth actions from partners
- Next steps

**17:45-18:00 Closing**

- Ms. YANG Guiping, Founder & Chief Expert, China Zigen Rural Education and Development Association
- Dr. ZHAO Yuchi, Deputy Director, UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education

**Organisers**

**Initiator**



**Co-initiators**



**Partners**



## ANNEX 2

### A Call to Youth-led Actions: Promoting Sustainable Rural Development towards Ecological Civilisation

#### Preamble

We, the young people of Asia and the Pacific, join our voices and efforts together to uphold the value of youth participation in promoting sustainable rural development and achieving the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, as well as working together to build a shared future for all.

We REALISE that although 44% of the world's population lives in rural areas, and that figure is 58% in low and middle-income countries, rural communities have been suffering the most loss and damage in coping with sustainability crises.

We are AWARE that excessive resource exploitation and destructive development patterns have put our planet at risk, and the crisis of environmental degradation, loss of traditional culture and heritage, and widening inequalities have further plunged already-disadvantaged rural areas into a development dilemma.

We ACKNOWLEDGE that young people, particularly those in rural areas, are not only the generation most threatened by the sustainability crisis but also the key stakeholders in propelling the world towards a more sustainable and equitable future of ecological civilisation. However, they are still facing barriers to participation in this progress due to systematic discrimination (such as adultism), limited accessible resources, lack of educational support, and other contributory factors.

We RECOGNISE the importance of ensuring continuous youth engagement in the sustainable development of rural communities, which requires concrete collaboration with policymakers, educators, non-governmental actors and community members, as well as accountable and effective mechanisms to foster youth empowerment and participation.

We EXPECT that our voices be heard, our experiences valued, and our efforts acknowledged in policy and decision-making, consultation, and partnerships.

We HIGHLIGHT the deeply-felt needs of marginalised groups and under-represented minorities, as well as our collective responsibilities, and opportunities, in promoting sustainable rural development across national, generational, and other boundaries, real or perceived.

Therefore, we call on our fellow youth to take the lead, and the education sector to put in concerted efforts, in advancing sustainable rural development towards ecological civilisation.

## Perspectives on Sustainable Rural Development

Promoting sustainable rural development is vital for the transition towards ecological civilisation. It involves a synthesis of sustainability reforms in policy, economy, education, and the entire human society.

To mobilise youth participation in achieving sustainable rural development towards ecological civilisation, the following four areas are priorities for youth-led action:

### Environmental protection

- Preserve local environments, including but not limited to land, water, forest, air and food;
- Respond to climate crises and advocate for changes in behaviours, systems and the ways in which societies mitigate the negative impacts of climate change;
- Protect biodiversity and restore currently-polluted environments in local areas;
- Reduce waste of consumer goods in all regions: food, clothing, electrical appliances, etc.

### Cultural preservation

- Recognise the value of indigenous lifestyles, languages, festivals, customs and customs to protect cultural diversity;
- Generate innovative approaches to recording and educating people about cultural heritage issues such as indigenous languages, vernacular architecture, festival traditions, and other practices.
- Foster a sense of empathy and compassion so that people understand different cultural identities.

### Equity and inclusion

- Ensure equal access to skills training, information exchange and networking services for all groups, particularly women, children, people with disabilities and other under-represented groups, in an inclusive, effective and safe manner;
- Eradicate systemic barriers that prevent people from disadvantaged and marginalised communities from fully participating in consultations on sustainable rural development.
- Increase localised support for groups in need in order to establish diverse and inclusive communities for all.

### Technology and innovation

- Develop and apply technologies that are closely-related to the unique cultural and natural conditions of rural areas and well-adapted to the sustainability goals of local communities;
- Leverage digital technologies to meet the increasing and diverse needs of rural populations, particularly those of groups disadvantaged in terms of food, energy, health, water, and other life essentials;
- Ensure responsible and optimised use of technological innovations through effective analysis, monitoring and evaluation methods.

## A Call to Action for Youth

Young people are both the driving force for social change and indispensable stakeholders in tackling sustainability challenges. We call on our fellow youth to join our efforts together to:

### **Prepare ourselves with the knowledge, skills and values needed for the transition towards ecological civilisation**

- Take an active part in sustainability-related classes, workshops or other forms of educational activities, both formal and informal, to gain knowledge and build the skills needed for promoting ecological civilisation;
- Stay informed about the ongoing sustainable development agenda at local, national and international levels;
- Recognise the value of indigenous knowledge and local cultural heritage in promoting sustainable development for all;
- Develop a sense of global community and connect local challenges with common global issues.

### **Take the initiative in coping with multi-dimensional sustainability challenges**

- Design, facilitate and launch awareness campaigns on key topics related to different dimensions of sustainable rural development;
- Advocate for sustainable lifestyles among our peers, families, immediate communities and larger groups in our society;
- Quest for grassroots leadership positions and make reasonable decisions for sustainable rural development, using essential ecological principles and knowledge as our reference;
- Provide support for disadvantaged and under-represented groups to voice their needs and gain necessary skills to participate in the promotion of sustainable rural development.

### **Build partnerships with multi-stakeholders and stand in solidarity with every young person in all diversity**

- Join youth-led organisations or networks for capacity building, knowledge exchange, joint advocacy and collective action in advancing sustainable rural development;
- Share our expertise, knowledge, skills and empirical experience with decision-makers, community members and other relevant stakeholders. This will enable us to contribute to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of rural development programmes;
- Work with academia, governments, non-profit organisations and across youth networks to foster extensive collaboration in building an ecological civilisation where everyone can thrive;
- Acknowledge the diverse rights of every young person and collaboratively explore appropriate approaches vis-à-vis their respective sustainable development needs.

## Concerted Efforts Needed from the Education Sector

Education is more than just teaching and learning; it is a social contract towards a transformative future. To empower youth with the ability to fully participate in sustainable rural development, we call on the education sector to make concerted efforts to:

- Ensure the provision of quality education and a holistic vision of ecological civilisation that enables every young person to gain the knowledge and skills needed for advancing rural development;
- Recognise young people as equal partners and engage them in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of education programmes for sustainable development, in a meaningful, effective, diverse, and safe manner;
- Integrate Ecological Civilisation Education in teacher education and provide pre-service and in-service support for teachers regarding pedagogy, instruction and the implementation of action-oriented activities that promote effective youth engagement;
- Promote pedagogies of co-operation and solidarity which stimulate collaborative, problem-oriented education. This will, in turn, drive interdisciplinary, inter-generational, and intercultural learning and investigation of ecological civilisation in formal, non-formal and informal settings;
- Reconceptualise curricula to embrace ecological, humanitarian, legal and other diverse ways of knowing and understanding to build youth capabilities in tackling complex sustainability challenges;
- Ensure an equitable and transformative learning environment that provides capacity-building, mentorship, and networks for young people to enhance their abilities in decision-making and advocacy for sustainable rural development;
- Eradicate financial and systemic barriers that prevent young people, particularly those from vulnerable and marginalised communities, from accessing and fully participating in the consultations for sustainable rural development.





