The establishment of the Malaysia-UNESCO Cooperation Programme (MUCP) was announced by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Hon. Dato’ Sri Mohd. Najib Tun Abdul Razak during the 35th session of UNESCO General Conference in 2009. Malaysia pledged to provide financial contribution (USD 5 million and subsequent USD 1 million per year) through the Malaysia Funds-in-Trust, for supporting the implementation of projects jointly selected under the MUCP. Through this Fund, the cooperation between Malaysia and UNESCO is strengthened, in particular to the mobilization of Malaysian expertise and services of Malaysian institutions, including the existing Category 2 Centres and South-South cooperation for the benefit of the countries of the Asia and the Pacific region as well as for Africa, with particular emphasis on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Islands Developing States (SIDS).

The MUCP would serve the common interest of Malaysia and UNESCO and contribute to the enhancement of South-South Cooperation in education, science and technology, natural, social and human sciences, culture, communications and information.

The implementation of the projects under MUCP will contribute to the attainment of internationally agreed development goals including the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) as well as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which will build upon the MDGs and converge with the post 2015 development agenda.

The projects should strengthen UNESCO’s:
- Medium Term Strategy C/4; and
- Approved Programme and Budget C/5

Besides the above, the projects may also have direct contribution to the following:
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC);

Priority Areas
- Science, Engineering & Technology
- Water Security
- Education for Sustainable Development (Climate Change Education)
- Sustainability Sciences
- Knowledge Generation
- Skills Development
- Strengthening Education Leadership
- Disaster Risk Management
- Culture and Heritage
- Social Inclusion

Geographical Areas
- ASEAN
- LDCs
- SIDS
- SOUTH-SOUTH
- AFRICA
- ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
- LATIN AMERICA
Education for Sustainable Development in the Pacific Island Countries

In accordance with priorities identified by the Pacific Island countries (Fiji, Niue, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu) through situational analyses of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and workshops conducted in these countries, project activities were organized in line with the identified priorities. They include: developing resource book on climate change and disaster risk management in Fiji, adaptation of indigenous language in the curriculum in Niue, integrating ESD elements into the secondary school curriculum in Tonga, publishing and distributing an ESD directory in Palau, and development of resource materials on climate change education in Tuvalu.

Achievements to date include the completion of Fiji’s Resource Book on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Using Traditional Knowledge, which is currently being trialled in Year 7-8 classes, the completion of a Palau Vocabulary and Idiom book aimed at strengthening the ability of Year 9 & 10 students to speak pure Paluan language. It emphasizes on using a repetition style approach to capture the student’s attention to realistically learn and constantly speak the proper vocabulary, and translating literacy and numeracy standards into the Nuean language in Niue.

Another important highlight in case of Tuvalu is that the climate change educational materials have been developed. They are relevant to the unique situation that Tuvalu continues to face due to climate change. The August 2015 workshop will build capacity for teachers from outer islands to learn how to properly use these materials in the classroom and will further strengthen sustainability efforts in this important project for Tuvalu.

Promoting South-South Cooperation through Climate Change Education in Asia Pacific Small Island Developing States

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face a number of distinctive challenges to sustainable living and sustainable development, including severe vulnerability to Climate Change and sea-level rise, natural and environmental hazards, freshwater resources and energy as well as fragile economic and social structures. Climate Change Education (CCE), within the framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) constitutes an essential element in the response to these challenges; it helps learners to understand and address the impact of environmental problems, encourages changes in their attitudes and behaviours, helps them adapt to climate change-related trends, improves their livelihoods, and increases economic security and income opportunities.

For small island societies in the Asia Pacific, a significant component of overcoming sustainability challenges will be to build bridges and networks that promote problem-solving actions that mobilize key actors and constituencies.

This project hopes to contribute to the enhancement of educational system of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in Asia Pacific in the field of education for sustainable development and in particular climate change education. As such, it will be able to equip its citizens with knowledge and skills to be adaptable and resilient in the midst of changing climate. This initiative is unique in a way that the project output is adopted to the circumstances unique to Small Island Developing States in Asia Pacific. It is hoped that by training the trainers it will sustain the project especially in consideration of the teacher educators at the teacher training institutes.

Science Harnessed for ASEAN Regional Policy (SHARP)

Responding to the ASEAN needs, the project develops strategies to protect the environment and the sustainable use and management of natural resources essential to the long term economic growth and social development of ASEAN member states. It is aligned with the ASEAN-UNESCO Framework Agreement of Cooperation (FAC) and associated Indicative Joint Programme of Action (2014-2018) and UNESCO Regional Bureau’s Science Support Strategy: Meeting Society’s Needs with Science-based Solutions. “Environmental Sustainability” is one of the seven priority areas in the ASEAN – UNESCO FAC which builds upon the ASEAN Vision 2020, calling for “a clean and green ASEAN”, with fully established mechanisms to ensure the protection of the environment, sustainability of natural resources, and high quality of life for people in the region.
Towards Economic Resilience in the Pacific and Southeast Asia: Reducing Risk of Loss & Damage in the Tourism and Agriculture Sectors from Extreme and Slow-Onset Events through Improved Assessments and Education

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report on Managing the risk of extreme events and disasters to advance climate change adaptation (CCA) (IPCC 2012) as well as recent disasters, such as Cyclone Evan in Samoa and Fiji in December 2012 all underscore the necessity to revisit and enhance knowledge and understanding on how to reduce and prevent the risk of loss and damage (L & D).

The project will provide a systematic and in-depth review and evaluation of best practices and lessons learned for reducing risk of L & D due to key drivers namely climate change and urbanization related trends. The project will develop and strengthen measures and priority DRR (e.g. risk assessments, Early Warning Systems (EWS), institutional capacities) and CCA tools for reducing climate change associated risk under different adaptation and development pathways.

Knowledge Generation and Dissemination to Support Education Reforms for 21st Century

As many countries in the Asia-Pacific region make progress in expanding access to education, issues of education quality, effectiveness, and efficiency remain critical. This project aims at supporting Member States in reforming their education systems to meet the demands of the 21st century.

More specifically, the project will facilitate:

1. knowledge generation and dissemination of innovative and effective education policies; and
2. capacity building and mutual learning in conducting technically-robust education policy research for government officials and researchers in the Asia-Pacific region.

At the end of the project, it is expected that the project will produce: 1) a knowledge-base on innovative policies to improve quality, equity and efficiency of education created by research institutes in the region and policy makers; and 2) comparative information on national education systems in the Asia Pacific Region, including their achievements and challenges, compiled and made available.

South-South Cooperation for Enhancing Science, Engineering and Technology Standards In Asia and the Pacific

Responding to the needs for interdisciplinary expertise in areas of applied sciences as well as strengthening learning in the basic sciences, the project is implemented within the science and engineering human resource developmental and research institutions addressing both traditional, formal ways of teaching and learning science and technology. The modular curricula will be on varying levels and topics and adapted to a virtual (e-learning) mode of delivery. The project is in line with the strategic programme objectives as articulated in the draft Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 (37 C/4).
PROJECT SNAPSHOT

MALAYSIA-UNESCO Cooperation Programme
Promoting South-South Cooperation for Sustainable Development

Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for Improved Skill Outcomes in the Asia-Pacific Region

In the face of the rapidly changing world characterized by greater regional integration, demographic shifts, technological advances, persistent disparities and spiralling youth unemployment, it is widely acknowledged that more attention should be given to skills development, which is considered a key instrument that can empower youth and adults with competencies and competitiveness to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

To strengthen the role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development for socio-economic development, the Asia-Pacific Conference on Education and Training (ACET), “Making Skills Development Work for the Future”, was held from 3 to 5 August 2015 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, with around 1,000 participants in attendance. Ministers overseeing education and training in the region joined representatives from bilateral and multilateral organisations, the private sector, unions, youth organisations, and researchers in discussions on TVET-related issues such as Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) in TVET, greening TVET, partnerships, quality assurance mechanisms, TVET teacher training and TVET networks.

The Conference concluded with the adoption of the Kuala Lumpur Declaration, which was endorsed by ministers, and heads of delegations responsible for education from 26 countries. The Declaration puts forward concrete and actionable recommendations that are expected to contribute to transforming technical and vocational education and training in the region in the years to come.

Fostering Tsunami Preparedness, Response and Mitigation in the Indian Ocean Small Island Developing States and African Coast Countries

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO is leading a global effort to establish ocean-based tsunami warning systems as part of an overall multi-hazard disaster reduction strategy. With strong collaboration with Member States, other UN agencies and NGOs, the IOC Tsunami Unit is supporting the countries in assessing tsunami risk, implementing Tsunami Early Warning Systems (TEWS) and in educating communities at risk about preparedness measures. It operates through Regional Tsunami Warning Systems in all basins where SIDS are present. These regional warning systems are in operations in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, North East Atlantic/Mediterranean and Pacific.

Through strong scientific basis research and expertise that are applied in this project, as well as adaptation to the local context, the benefiting countries would be able to develop their Tsunami Disaster Management Plan (TDMP), transfer their knowledge to their people and to other SIDS and African Coast Countries that share similarities on their social, economic and demographic conditions.

Strengthening STEM Curricula for Girls in Africa and Asia and the Pacific-Phase I

Responding to the ASEAN needs, the project develops strategies to protect the environment and the sustainable use and management of natural resources essential to the long-term economic growth and social development of ASEAN member states. It is aligned with the ASEAN-UNESCO Framework Agreement of Cooperation (FAC) and associated Indicative Joint Programme of Action (2014-2018) and UNESCO Regional Bureau’s Science Support Strategy: Meeting Society’s Needs with Science-based Solutions.

“Environmental Sustainability” is one of the seven priority areas in the ASEAN – UNESCO FAC which builds upon the ASEAN Vision 2020, calling for “a clean and green ASEAN”, with fully established mechanisms to ensure the protection of the environment, sustainability of natural resources, and high quality of life for people in the region.

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Improving the Quality of Education Through Better Alignment of Assessment, Curriculum and Pedagogy

The project supports the implementation of activities of the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific (NEQMAP), a regional platform on learning assessment that is coordinated by UNESCO Bangkok. NEQMAP was established in 2013 and aims to improve the quality of learning in the region through enhancing the use of student learning assessment. At present, NEQMAP counts 34 members from 21 different countries/jurisdictions of the Asia-Pacific region. Members include assessment or evaluation units/divisions from Ministries of Education, examinations and testing bodies, universities and research institutes and NGOs.

This project, implemented by UNESCO Bangkok which serves as the Secretariat of the NEQMAP network, works with these members institutions, representatives of other countries/jurisdictions of the Asia-Pacific region and partner organizations and aims to improve the quality of learning through enhanced student learning achievement. In order to do so, the project focuses on knowledge sharing, research and capacity building. In this regard, the main achievements of the project thus far have been the following:

1. Establishment of a knowledge portal
2. Systematic review research piece on the use of learning assessment in terms of policy and practice
3. Organization of two regional capacity building workshops, on introduction to large-scale assessments of learning and design and development of large-scale learning assessments

The project is innovative because it leverages on an existing network, with dedicated members who are active participants in all project activities. The network was founded on the principle of promoting South-South (as well as North-South and North-North) cooperation, and this has been evidenced by the linkages formed between members in the course of project implementation. In terms of sustainability, the ongoing cooperation between the members over the last two years and the firm institutional grounding of the network imply that it will continue serving as a platform for implementation of activities in this area even after this project concludes. In addition, it is also worth noting that members of the network have been generous in terms of contributing both financial and human resources towards the implementation of the project activities, suggesting that the activities initiated under this project will continue even after the project’s end.

Strengthening the Ministry of Education Leadership in the Implementation of Education Policy and Reforms

During the past 50 years South and East Asia witnessed massive demographic changes, resulting mainly from falling fertility rates and migration. Other trends impacting on the provision of education services include urbanization that has contributed to reduce densities in rural areas, thus increasing the costs of reaching the remaining rural school age population. Counterbalancing these trends have been the massive increases in participation in schooling, most countries in the region achieving universal basic education.

While the education sector has been relatively well served in terms of resource allocation in past decades changes in the populations’ age structure across the region as well as a slowing global economy are likely to contribute to changes in resource allocations. Education may not be treated as generously in the future. At the same time it is important to recognize the institutional challenges associated with reorganizing education service provision. The redeployment of education personnel for example is an issue likely to yield high political costs for any government, and school closures remain difficult as local schools are seen by rural communities as a core component for a viable community life.

For these reasons it is vital for education policy makers and planners to understand the directions and assess the impact of demographic changes, migration and urbanization in their country. This assessment underpins the planning of future education services and resource allocation decisions. The Malaysian Government-UNESCO/IIEP project aims at providing Ministries of Education with an analytical framework and an information base needed to reflect these crucial dimensions in plans and guide education policy, investment decisions and institutional reforms.
Support in Preparation of Bhutan School Education Sector Blueprint

Bhutan currently offers free education up to Class 10 and the public expenditure on education as percentage of GDP is 4.7% in 2011. Putting education as top priority, the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGB) has succeeded in boosting the Gross Enrolment Ratio of the secondary education from 27% to 70% and the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) of the primary education from 56% to 89% in-between 1999 to 2011. The Gender Parity Ratio (GPI) is in favour of girls at both primary and secondary levels (UIS online data accessed in March 2014). The survival rate of grade 5 is 97% with an average repetition rate at primary level of 6% in 2011. However, there are still 19,958 out of school children at primary and lower secondary levels.

The Royal Government of Bhutan continuously embarked upon numerous initiatives and reforms to improve the teacher quality and create high performing schools. However, due to rise in expectations as well as the general concerns regarding the system’s ability to adequately prepare the young Bhutanese for the challenges ahead, the education system has not only come under increased public scrutiny and debate but also come to acknowledge that there exists a real concern about the overall quality of education system.

Given the nature of the education system and its complexity as a public sector undertaking with multifaceted stakeholders, unless an ambitious and practical yet far-reaching corrective approach is urgently put in place, it is going to take several years, if not decades, for fundamental changes to be felt. It is only through continuous education reforms to improve quality and relevance of learning that national challenges like youth unemployment and economic development can be addressed effectively both in the medium and long-term period. The comprehensive review will provide critical and insightful elements to prepare a time bound Blueprint for a rapid and systematic reform of the education system of the country is expected to further boost the education system improvement.

Skills Development through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

With greater regional integration, technological advancement, and globalization, young people are currently confronted with rapidly changing and competitive labour markets which favour technically-skilled workers who can successfully deal with a range of non-technical challenges in their daily working lives. Skills development is a key tool that can help young people adjust to these changing trends and help them benefit. Through its Strategy for TVET, UNESCO endeavours to boost the role of technical and vocational education and training in addressing issues of youth unemployment and deep-rooted social inequalities. UNESCO’s TVET Strategy (2010-2015) supports Member States through three core areas: (i) provision of upstream policy advice and related capacity development; (ii) conceptual clarification of skills development and improvement of monitoring; and (iii) acting as a clearinghouse and informing the global TVET debate. By adopting this approach, UNESCO Bangkok is leveraging Malaysia’s experience and expertise in TVET to support other Member States in strengthening their education and training systems through this project.

The Project consists of the following three components:

• In-country technical support on TVET in two LDCs in Asia-Pacific;
• Conceptual clarification and in-depth study of transversal skills in TVET;
• Establishment of an information base on National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) in Asia-Pacific and support to the establishment of the ASEAN Qualifications Reference Framework;

The upstream policy advice, collaborative regional research and the establishment of the knowledge base in TVET are expected to have a direct and profound impact on the formulation and implementation of transformative TVET policies in the Asia-Pacific region.
Strengthening ASEAN Community 2015
Through South-South Cooperation, Foresight and Capacity Building on Inclusive Policy Development

This project is a unique initiative to advance in the ASEAN region the Sustainable Development Goal 16: to “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

It is based on the evidence-based idea that social inclusion can be attained through public policies that are designed with this specific objective in mind. To do so, policymakers must have the capacity to assess a policy proposal from the angle of social inclusion, and revise it to maximize the benefit of the policy to all.

This is an ongoing project with activities in three countries. The activity in Malaysia was launched in June 2015 with the Policy Initiation Workshop. Two national working grounds are currently working on the assessment of two policy areas – social innovation and higher education. In two other countries – Timor-Leste and Cambodia, UNESCO has been working with the national stakeholders to prepare ground for the launch of the Policy Initiation Workshop in November 2015.

The Power of Culture: Supporting Community-Based Management and Sustainable Tourism at World Heritage Sites in Malaysia and Southeast Asia

In order to support sustainable tourism at World Heritage sites, this project will introduce the UNESCO World Heritage and Sustainable Tourism (WH+ST) Programme developed by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre (WHC) which has been adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2012. The WH+ST Programme enables site managers and other key stakeholders to make positive changes to the way they pro-actively manage tourism for sustainable development. A successful implementation of this project will provide support to the national ministry of tourism and culture, the regional and local government, and site managers to manage the tourism at their sites more sustainably together with the communities and other stakeholders for a more holistic approach towards tourism, benefitting from having a network among other WH sites to strengthen the sub-regional cooperation.

Upscaling Water Security to Meet Local, Regional, and Global Challenges

The project provides solutions to the current global water challenges requiring upscaling of existing local approaches and knowledge of the interrelations between environment conditions and the state of waters. UNESCO’s International Hydrological Program’s Ecohydrology Demonstration Projects and Hydrology for Environment, Life and Policy (HELP) river basins networks are two innovative approaches, which involve engineering-based tools that integrate basin-wide human activities and changes in the hydrological cycle.

This project will contribute to HYD 37/C5 Expected Result 11 on Responses to local, regional and global water security challenges, strengthened links with IHP VIII as well as UCPD Programme 4: International Hydrological Programme, as well as the 10th Malaysian Plan (2011-2015): “Developing a Long-Term Strategy for Water Resource Management to Achieve Water Security”. 

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