

# Education for Sustainable Development- Needs and Challenges

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## Abstract

It is an absolute necessity today to have “a new education discourse” in order to effectively address the world’s rallying cry where education plays a unique role in meeting the UN 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) championed by the United Nations for the period 2015-2030. Our world is changing at a remarkable pace, where 40% of the world’s population and three-quarters of the world’s poor, mostly rural population, continue to be vulnerable to poverty, malnutrition and poor health, gender inequality, lack of education, ecological disasters, and food insecurity. Although there are some improvements, the figures that depict the status of the world’s poor continue to reveal an unacceptable reality. Globally, 1.2 billion people (22 percent) live on less than \$1.25 a day; 98 percent of those killed and affected by natural disasters are from developing countries, and by 2025, more than half the people in developing countries may be vulnerable to floods and storms. By the same time, water scarcity affects more than 1.8 billion people—hurting agricultural workers and poor farmers the most. There are 58 million children out of school; 781 million adults and 126 million youth worldwide lack basic reading and writing skills in 2012, and more than 60 per cent of them are women; and rural primary school-aged children are twice as likely to be out of school compared to their urban counterparts.

In the conclusion of the outcomes from the 2010 Education for Rural Transformation (ERT) Symposium in Stockholm (in V..Chinapah, 2011:xiiv), the authors argued that “(D)eveloping countries have been struggling to address the challenges in education that may be described as the triad of a) access with equity b) quality and relevance, and c) efficiency and accountability. Although progress is made in every country, the shortfall in achieving the 2015 education goals in many countries indicate that the national plans and programs have to be re-assessed and re-examined to ensure that the rural dimensions of the educational agenda are adequately and specifically reflected in these efforts. The dynamics of rural transformation in the “globalized” world of the 21st century have created new educational imperatives which go beyond the traditional concerns regarding rural communities and need special attention”.

Education is central to fostering sustainability and plays an important role in the development of societies, both locally and globally. Education for sustainable development is an educational model that seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future. By using a holistic approach to learning, the learners are encouraged to construct their own knowledge and understanding through active participation, allowing them to discover facts, ideas and meanings first-hand. In this way, educating the learners for sustainable development will provide the skills, perspectives, values and knowledge to live in a sustainable way.