



Education for Sustainable Development is at the frontline of Shanghai's future

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) empowers learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society. It is therefore key to the future development of cities such as Shanghai, People's Republic of China, which is a member of the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) and recognizes the importance of implementing ESD locally. With an aim to advance ESD in partner cities of the UNESCO GNLC, Shanghai representatives hosted a webinar in February 2021 to showcase its framework for promoting ESD and other environmental, health education and skills training initiatives. Over 70 participants, including learning city officials worldwide and representatives of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), attended the event.

Implementing ESD at the local community level

UIL's Lifelong Learning Policy Development and Capacity Building Programme Team Lead, Mr Raúl Valdés-Cotera, opened the webinar by defining the term 'local community', which, he explained, was much more than a specific geographical region or location. Instead, Mr Valdés-Cotera stressed, a local community should be regarded as a living thing within which its members engage with the environment. He highlighted the importance of local ESD initiatives to help people confront global challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, immigration and public health crises. Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of community awareness of and responses to marginalized groups in the promotion of ESD. Mr Bernard Combes, Programme Specialist, UNESCO ESD Section, then presented 'ESD for 2030', UNESCO's global ESD framework for action, detailing its objectives, key features, priority areas for action, and implementation points.

Framework for promoting ESD in Shanghai

Deputy Director of the Shanghai Municipal Institute for Lifelong Education (SMILE) Mr Jiacheng Li next welcomed participants on behalf of the Shanghai ESD team and introduced Mr Minjing Ni, Deputy Director of the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, who spoke about Shanghai's commitment to building a learning city and advancing ESD. He underlined his hopes for more in-depth research, practice and innovation in ESD as well as increased cooperation with global partners.

Ms Min Zhu, Researcher at SMILE, presented Shanghai's Community Action Plan on ESD (2020–2021) and the progress that has so far been made in its implementation. She explained that Shanghai has established a community education system, which provides a good foundation for ESD, and called attention to the role of the action plan, administrative support, and work and research groups in promoting ESD at local level in Shanghai.

Community Environmental Education

Ms Qing Li, Head of Sanlin Community School in Pudong District, Shanghai, and her colleague, Ms Pan, presented efforts to strengthen the community's ecological literacy through 'green courses', which teach residents how to shape an ecological living environment and contribute to ecological protection. Mr Jian Du, Head of Xuhui Institute of Community Education, spoke about Xujiahui Park, a 70,000 m² park that was part of Shanghai's urban renewal project undertaken in 2000, and the importance of promoting sustainable development and lifelong learning. He stressed the importance of a strong research basis, inspiring educational methods and feasible educational practices for high-quality ESD programmes.

Community health education

Ms Jun Li, Deputy Director of Development Planning Research Office of Vocational and Adult Education Institute from the Shanghai Academy of Educational Sciences shared the concept of community health education and the District of Xuhui's 'cross-profession alliance of family health education' project, which was implemented to promote health knowledge and improve health in families. Moreover, she explained, in Songjiang District, a 'health preservation' courses have been developed to improve residents' well-being.

Community harmonious development

Mr Qihui Song of Jing'an District Community College presented the college's efforts to meet the learning needs of older people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prioritizing inclusiveness, openness and fairness, the college held regular lectures and developed new online courses.

Ms Aixia Liu of Jinshan District Community College shared similar recent initiatives: the 'Hundred Herbs Garden' and 'Hundred Herbs Hall' programmes comprise lectures and well-being advice to help older people acquire gardening skills along with health knowledge.

Community vocational skills

Finally, Ms Xiaofang Pang, Director of the Social Education Department of the Minhang Community College, Shanghai, shared how the competencies of migrant workers in Minhang District are being built through vocational education and training courses. This includes the upgrading of academic qualification of millions of on-the-job personnel in Shanghai and in-depth research on enterprise needs and as well as training in enterprises.

The next webinar from the UNESCO GNLC ESD Cluster will take place on 22 April 2021, hosted by the learning city of Hamburg, Germany. For more information on the UNESCO GNLC, visit its [website](#).