



# STEPAN UPDATE

**STEPAN UPDATE**  
Newsletter of the Science and  
Technology Policy Asian  
Network

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## Sri Lanka takes over as STEPAN Chair

Sri Lanka began its tenure as STEPAN Chair on October 2008, and will hold the position for three years, till September 2011.

The selection of Sri Lanka followed a consultative process which culminated with the endorsement by members of STEPAN of Sri Lanka's chairmanship. Sri Lanka succeeds the Philippines, which held the post from October 2005 to September 2008.

The handover of the formal notification letter from the UNESCO Jakarta Office to the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka, confirming Sri Lanka's tenure as STEPAN Chair during the period October 2008 to September 2011, was done during the opening ceremony of the International Workshop on



Handover of formal notification letter from UNESCO Jakarta Office to National Science Foundation confirming Sri Lanka's tenure as STEPAN Chair.

Science Journalism. In Colombo. The Chairperson of the National Science Foundation, Prof. Sirimali Fernando, accepted on behalf on NSF and made the commitment to put their best effort in assuming

the responsibility.

In line with the STEPAN Constitution, the duties of the Chair are: (a) to provide lead-

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## Science Journalism Workshop in Colombo



Hon. Mr. Tissa Vitarana, Minister of Science and Technology of Sri Lanka, addressing the participants of the International Workshop on Science Journalism as chief guest at the event.

An International Workshop on Science Journalism was organized by the National Science Foundation (NSF) in collaboration with

the Science & Technology Policy Asian Network (STEPAN) from 8 to 10 September 2008 at the Ceylon Continental Hotel, Colombo.

Delegates from some of the STEPAN member countries participated at this workshop.

The objectives of the workshop were to train local and regional scientists to develop their skills in Science journalism and to provide a platform for the scientists and journalists to improve their skills, exchange ideas and build synergies and in general to advance the profession of sci-

ence journalism.

The theme for the above workshop was "Science Communication – A Gateway to the Future". Local participants included the scientists and journalists who were involved in science communication to the public.

The workshop commenced with the address of welcome delivered by Prof. Sirimali Fernando, Chairperson of the National Science Foundation. In her brief address she highlighted the importance of

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### Events of Interest

#### 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Technology Policy and Innovation

1-3 December 2008, New Delhi, India

Theme: Frontiers of Knowledge and Innovation: Blending Emerging Technologies with Inclusive Development

For more information, visit [www.ictpi08.in](http://www.ictpi08.in)

Forward queries to [ictpi@empi.ac.in](mailto:ictpi@empi.ac.in)

#### Global Research Seminar: Sharing Research Agendas on Knowledge Systems

28-30 November 2008

UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France

For more information, visit

[www.unesco.org/education/researchforum](http://www.unesco.org/education/researchforum)

Contact: [grs@unesco.org](mailto:grs@unesco.org)

#### Global Ministerial Forum on Research for Health

17-19 November 2008, Bamako, Mali

Theme: Strengthening research for health, development and equity

For more information, visit

[www.bamako2008.org](http://www.bamako2008.org)

Contact: [secretariat@bamako2008.org](mailto:secretariat@bamako2008.org)

#### Beyond Kyoto: Addressing the Challenges of Climate Change – Science meets Industry, Policy and Public

5-7 March 2009

Aarhus, Denmark

Contact: [lan@adm.au.dk](mailto:lan@adm.au.dk)

## UNESCO Regional Science Programme on Global Challenges in Asia and the Pacific

This is a condensed version of the strategy paper originally written by Prof. Hubert J. Gijzen, Director of UNESCO Office Jakarta, Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, for the purpose of defining new directions of the Japan-Fund-in-Trust (JFIT) Science Programme for the region. The strategy was adopted at the Annual Review Meeting of JFIT Science Programme held in Jakarta on 2-3 June 2008. It is emphasized that the strategy paper is a rolling document, to be revisited and revised as needed, to respond to changing times. It has been slightly modified for this publication to adjust to a more general audience.



Prof. Hubert J. Gijzen is the Director of the UNESCO Jakarta Office, Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, and UNESCO Representative to Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Timor

### **Sustainable development – a global challenge**

Global change is posing enormous challenges for humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The world's population is expected to grow from about 6.5 billion today to over 8 billion by the year 2025. Global energy requirements will continue to increase. Emerging economies in Asia and Latin America are experiencing rapid growth, which is accompanied by rapid increases in resource uses and corresponding environmental problems of air, water, and soil pollution.

The key challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century therefore is 'Sustainable Development', which the international community embraced at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development. Sustainable development seeks to reconcile environmental protection and development; it means simply that we should use resources no faster than they can regenerate themselves, and release pollutants to no greater extent than natural resources can assimilate these.

The reality of today, however, is that we are far from achieving such balanced global situation. The ecological problems caused by human economic activity are worsening and taking on global dimensions. Climate change, ozone-layer depletion, biodiversity loss, massive water resources destruction and loss of forest cover are just some examples.

Since their adoption by all United Nations Member States in 2000, the Millennium declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have become a universal framework for development addressing above problems. The MDGs therefore present a means for develop-

ing countries and their development partners to work together in pursuit of a shared future for all. In terms of actual number of people addressed under the MDGs, of all Regions in the World, the MDG challenges are biggest for the Asia-Pacific Region. (See Box on opposite page.)

### **The Role of Science and Technology**

The role of science and technology in enabling nations to attain sustainable development has been emphasized in international gatherings, for instance, at the World Conference on Science in Budapest in 1999, and in various Ministerial meetings on science and technology. In this respect it should be recognized that Science and Technology also have an important role in helping Nations achieve their specific targets as formulated in the Millennium Development Goals.

The MDGs, however, will not be achieved by simply a "more of the same" approach. In other words, the MDGs call for creativity and innovation (a key role for Science) and for a boost in capacity via training and education, but also applying innovation there (key role of education).

This is reflected in UNESCO's Medium Term Strategy 2008-2013 (34C/4), which identifies as its second overarching objective "Mobilizing science knowledge and policy for sustainable development."

This overarching objective would be attained through a number of strategic programmes, including leveraging scientific knowledge for the benefit of the environment and the management of natural resources, and fostering policies and capacity-building in science, technology and innovation. Although financial and economic markets are becoming more and more interconnected and we like to think in terms of a "global village," our efforts to enshrine environmental protection and development as the common task and responsibility of all countries have just begun to make headway.

The strategy of the Programme is based on two main elements.

Firstly, the programme identifies a limited number of well selected **strategic programme focus** areas, which are in line with the UNESCO Medium Term Strategy, relate to Global Challenges and which are of main relevance to the Asia Pacific Region.

The choice of programme focus areas will also be such that it directly contributes to the attainment of internation-

**Science and technology are increasingly recognized to be central to both the origins of sustainability challenges, and to the prospects for successfully dealing with them.**

*The International Council for Science (ICSU)*

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## MDG Challenges

**More than 1 billion people live in extreme poverty without sufficient food,**

**Over 1.1 billion people have no access to safe water (655 million in Asia and Pacific - ASPAC; or 62.5%),**

**Some 2.5 billion people have no appropriate sanitation facilities (1927 million in Asia and Pacific; or 74%),**

**More than 5 billion people live near polluted water resources, and**

**Millions of people, mostly children, die every year from diseases that could be easily cured or prevented.**

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ally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Secondly, the strategy identifies a set of optimal **programme delivery mechanisms**, which contribute to maximize programme delivery in terms of effectiveness, impact, and visibility.

### Strategic Program Focus

The key Global Challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is 'Sustainable Development'. Important sub-components of this, relevant for Asia and Pacific, include amongst others:

- (1) Alleviation of poverty, hunger and associated socio-economic divides;
- (2) Achievement of the MDGs and the subsequent challenge to address the large number of people not yet covered in the 2015 target;
- (3) Balance or close cycles of substances (e.g. N, waste management), and cleaner production mechanisms to abate pollution;
- (4) Stop and reverse the accumulation of green house gas emissions and adjust to the effects of ongoing climate change effects;
- (5) Develop new energies

that are less impacting on the environment;

(6) Balance human activities with preservation of water and associated ecosystems;

(7) Cope with the increasing number and impacts of natural and human induced disasters, including floods, droughts, tsunami, earthquakes, landslides, storms, volcanic eruptions and desertification;

(8) Reduce the spread and impact of disease;

(9) Address the increasing urbanization trends and develop livable cities with a substantially reduced city's footprint on the nearby catchments and ecosystems;

(10) Ensure the full application of ethical norms and standards in Science and Technology development and implementation;

(11) Enhance human security, especially for vulnerable groups; and

(12) Develop institutional and human resource capacity to fully support and sustain a science and technology for sustainable development agenda.

The role of science and technology in addressing above challenges is crucial, but in order to optimize the benefits we need to reposition and better plan S&T investments

and efforts. The aim would be to link S&T closer to development problems and to bring it closer to people. In other words we need to position S&T to support MDG achievement, and stimulate S&T education and awareness raising by focusing on local MDG challenges such as water, environment, hygiene education and food production in communities.

### Programme delivery mechanisms

The programme aims to maximize the effectiveness, impact and visibility of programme delivery by adopting a number of approaches, including:

- (1) aligning activities directly with the UNESCO medium-term strategy and biennium work plans;
- (2) South-South-North collaboration and establishment of strong partnerships;
- (3) Programme effectiveness (aiming at co-financing modalities, aim at development of larger projects/programmes);
- (4) Improving the presentation and visibility of activities and results to donors, member states, and the larger public.

### Partnerships and South-South-North collaboration

The quality of programme delivery under the UNESCO programme will be ensured via the development of quality partnerships. These partnerships will be tailored to the needs and focus of the individ-

ual activities. UNESCO will actively contribute to the establishment of such strong partnerships. Collaborative projects will also encourage staff exchanges between these partner institutions, as an effective means of capacity building and knowledge exchange.

### Programme effectiveness

In order to achieve optimal effectiveness the programme will consider, wherever possible, to engage in co-financing modalities. Such co-financing could come from either the UNESCO Regular Programme funds, and/or from other donors and partners. One approach that could contribute to effectiveness is to engage in pilot projects and feasibility studies, which could lead to the development of larger donor funded initiatives.

### Programme Implementation

The programme planning and implementation will be based on a 6-year rolling Strategic Plan (to be adjusted after 2 years, in harmony with the biennial programming and budgeting cycle of UNESCO), annual workplans, and annual activity reports.

The support of Japan Fund-in-Trust to provide seed funding for regional initiatives under this programme is gratefully acknowledged. But the full implementation of the programme calls for a pro-active search for other donors.####

## Sri Lanka takes over as STEPAN Chair

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ership of the Network and guidance to the Regional Network Resource Centre; (b) to propose and submit the agenda for meetings of the Coordination Board; (c) to propose a work programme; (d) to chair meetings of the STEPAN Coordina-

tion Board; and (e) to report on progress of implementation of the STEPAN work programme.

Sri Lanka plans to convene a Coordinating Board meeting within the first quarter of 2009 at which time it will propose a work programme for the period 2009-2011. ####

## STEPAN UPDATE

### Newsletter of the Science and Technology Policy Asian Network



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This newsletter is published by

UNESCO Jakarta  
Jl. Galuh II, No. 5  
Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta 12110  
Indonesia  
Phone: +62 21 739 9818  
Fax: +62 21 7279 6489  
E-mail: jakarta@unesco.org

The Science and Technology Policy Asian Network (STEPAN) is a high-level official network of people and institutions in the Asia Pacific region involved in research and training for national science and technology and innovation policy development and management. The network develops support programmes to assist the development of S&T management information systems, foster the linking of research with social and economic application, and promote associated human resource development. STEPAN operates under the auspices of UNESCO, which continues to provide substantial support for the network.

Visit STEPAN at [www.stepan.org](http://www.stepan.org)

## Science Journalism Workshop in Colombo

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taking science to the people and the role played by the NSF in achieving this target. She mentioned that NSF has taken leadership in conducting workshops/seminars on training of trainers to train the local scientists in science communication.

Prof. M.T.M. Jiffry, Chairman of the NSF Advisory Board on Popularization of Science stated that the scientists and the journalists should work together in taking science to the public. He mentioned that NSF is determined to bridge the gap between the scientists and the public and a separate Science Popularization division has been established at the NSF. Various activities have been conducted by this division under the theme "Science for All".

Dr. Linda Santiago Posadas, Programme Specialist, UNESCO Jakarta office addressing the inaugural session said that the STEPAN coordinating board identified Advocacy and popularization of science as a key area to be ad-

ressed by STEPAN. The proposal made by the National Science Foundation of Sri Lanka to host a science journalism workshop to address this issue was endorsed by STEPAN coordinating board. This workshop will provide a platform to the scientists and media personnel for better interaction and forging of commitment to help each other in building public awareness of Science & Technology issues and educating them to foster wide public debate and formation of understanding of such issues.

In his address the chief guest Hon. Minister of Science & Technology, Prof. Tissa Vitarana stated that there is a tremendous gap between the scientific community and the public. It is vital to bridge this gap for the national development. Today's global economy is at a transition stage towards a knowledge economy. Science communication will play a major role in contributing to the development of the country as a knowledge economy.

The Keynote address on "Why

scientists should engage in Science Journalism" was made by Prof. D. Balasubramanian, President of the Indian Academy of Sciences, India.

Dr. M.C.N. Jayasuriya, Director of the NSF proposed the vote of thanks.

The resource persons of the workshop were Dr. Anuj Singha (Head, National Council for Science & Technology Communication, India), Mr. Pallva Bagla (Chief Correspondent (South Asia) Science), Prof. Carlo Fonseka, Ms. T.V. Padma (South Asia Coordinator of the SciDev.Net) and Dr. Buddhi Weerasinghe.

The representatives from the participating countries made the country presentations. The papers described the communication mechanisms adopted, available expertise in communication within the agencies, training programmes implemented to strengthen the science communication skills, problems and difficulties encountered, success stories and

lessons learned.

The following topics were addressed during the technical sessions,

- Challenges in Science Communication – Scientists/ Journalists Point of View.
- Science News Writing – Hands on experience
- Basic Concepts of Science/ Public Communication
- Contemporary Communication Phenomenon Using New Media Technologies
- Script Writing for Science Documentaries/ Docudramas – Hands on Experience
- Science Feature Writing
- Impact of Science Communication
- Web Based Science Communication & SciDev.Net
- Interviewing Techniques – Media & Scientists ####