UNESCO Bangkok promotes international co-operation, sets standards and disseminates information in the fields of education, the natural sciences, the social and human sciences, culture and communication in the Asia and Pacific region.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was established in 1946 to contribute to world peace and development by focusing on education, science, culture, and communication and information. The General Conference, composed of 193 Member States and six Associate Members, is UNESCO’s decision-making body and meets every two years to determine the policies and work of the Organization. In between the sessions of the General Conference, the Executive Board, comprising 58 Member States, meets twice a year and supervises the execution of the two-year programme.

UNESCO programmes focus on promoting education for all (EFA); supporting cultural diversity; protecting and enhancing the world’s natural heritage; developing and promoting social policies; promoting the free flow of information, press freedom and the development of a pluralistic media; strengthening communication capacities in developing countries; and mobilizing science knowledge and policy for sustainable development.

UNESCO also promotes literacy as a basic human right and as a necessity for development. It is the co-ordinating agency for the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012), Education for All, and the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014).

UNESCO’s activities globally concentrate on three priority groups: women, African countries and the least developed countries. The organization is, above all, committed to ensuring that the people of the world are able to live together in peace and with respect for cultural diversity. UNESCO therefore insists that education for good citizenship and for values which promote peace and the fulfillment of human rights is at the core of its work.

The appointment of Koïchiro Matsuura as Director-General at the end of 1999 led to reform and decentralization within the Organization. This in turn created a new network of field operations with strengthened multi-sectoral, sub-regional cluster offices and regional bureaux for Education in Bangkok and Science in Jakarta.

As part of the restructuring and reform of UNESCO, the office in Bangkok has assumed two roles. As the Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (covering 47 countries), it is the technical advisory body to all field offices and Member States of the region and the site of regional programmes in most areas covered by the Education Sector.

As a cluster office, UNESCO Bangkok is also the principal coordinator of UNESCO activities, across sectors, in the Mekong region, working directly with UNESCO National Commissions and other partners in Lao PDR, Myanmar, Singapore and Thailand (countries for which the office is the officially designated UNESCO Representative office). It also indirectly supports UNESCO country offices in Viet Nam and Cambodia, to develop and implement programmes across the sectors of UNESCO’s expertise. UNESCO Bangkok also houses regional advisory units in Communication and Information, Culture and the Social and Human Sciences, and the Regional Office of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

In carrying out its mission, UNESCO Bangkok takes into account the immense size of the region, including almost two thirds of the world’s population, its diversity and cultural pluralism, and its great potential and persistent problems.

Together with its sister agencies in the United Nations system, UNESCO contributes to the achievement, by 2015, of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the ideals of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.
ASIA-PACIFIC PROGRAMME OF EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (APEID)

Strengthening Member States’ capacity for creating and using educational innovations for sustainable socio-economic and human development

APEID was launched as a UNESCO inter-country programme in 1973, with a mandate to strengthen Member States’ ability to create and use educational innovations for achieving national development goals. APEID’s main objectives are to:

• encourage and facilitate innovative activities to enhance equity and quality in education,
• strengthen the capacity of Member States to undertake innovative actions in all programme areas, and
• promote inter-country technical cooperation and the sharing of successful innovative experiences in areas such as teacher training, technical and vocational education and training, and higher education.

A cross-cutting area within APEID is the ICT in Education programme, based on the premise that innovative and appropriate use of ICT in education can help to reduce disparities in educational access; improve the quality of teaching and learning; and promote creativity, critical thinking, and learning how to learn. The programme is largely supported by the Japanese Funds-in-Trust.

EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD)

Developing partnerships and synergies with education stakeholders through all forms of learning to make informed decisions for our future

ESD works to develop educational opportunities for everyone to benefit from and learn the values, behaviours and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation. The ESD unit is coordinating with other UN agencies and NGO partners to consolidate the Asia-Pacific regional contribution to the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which UNESCO leads globally.

The key activities undertaken by the ESD unit are:

• Supporting and strengthening national leadership and political will for the Decade in line with national sustainable development plans,
• Reorienting of education curricula,
• Promoting quality learning through on-going cross-sectoral initiatives including indigenous knowledge, climate change and education for disaster risk reduction, and
• Addressing challenges to engage all teaching and learning partners in the development of national and regional monitoring systems.
ASIA-PACIFIC PROGRAMME OF EDUCATION FOR ALL (APPEAL)

Promoting literacy, primary education and continuing education

The Asia and Pacific Programme of Education for All, APPEAL, is a regional cooperative programme designed to promote literacy, early childhood care and education (ECCE), primary education and continuing education as integrated components of basic education and lifelong learning under the guiding principle of a human rights based approach to education. APPEAL's strategies stress gender mainstreaming, community participation, inclusion, networking, utilization of appropriate ICTs, and innovations in both formal and non-formal approaches to education, especially to reach disadvantaged groups. APPEAL promotes mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE) as a powerful tool to enhance the quality of education as well as to help provide minority speakers with an effective bridge to society at large.

In implementing its programmes, priority is given to reaching out to excluded and disadvantaged groups: women and girls, the poor, minorities and the disabled.

Networks have been established in APPEAL's work in specific areas. These include ARTC (in literacy and continuing education), GENIA (in gender) and EENET (in inclusive education).

EDUCATION POLICY AND REFORM (EPR)

Supporting operational research to inform national policy and building capacity for development and reform in the education sector

The unit for Education Policy and Reform focuses on human resource development, promoting policy-oriented research and providing information and advice to governments on education policy and reform. Activities which are undertaken in a participatory fashion include coordinating/conducting operational research on policy-relevant topics; organizing training workshops and producing materials to help strengthen institutional capacity for better policy formulation and implementation at central and decentralized levels; and providing technical advisory services for education sector analysis, reforms, and resource management to governments and development partners. EPR helps to mobilize resources for education throughout the region and to maximize their utilization by working in close partnership with UN agencies, development banks and bilateral donors.
Mobilizing the education sector to deliver effective policies and programmes

The HARSH Unit promotes effective and appropriate HIV, reproductive/sexual health and school health policies and programmes for adolescents in and out of school. In partnership with UN agencies, it builds the capacity of Ministries of Education to conduct strategic planning, policy development/reform, curriculum development, teacher training, research and monitoring and evaluation.

HARSH runs a regional programme to improve the sexual health of men who have sex with men, aiming to set standards for peer and outreach programmes and provide policy advice. HARSH promotes access to HIV, drugs and trafficking prevention services tailored to the needs of ethnic minority populations.

HARSH is working with the National Science Museum of Thailand to mount the innovative “Healthy Sexuality: The Thai Story” exhibition, bringing accurate and comprehensive information about sexuality to adolescents.

Finally, HARSH’s clearing house provides information to subscribers in the field; it also provides capacity-building services.

Transforming society to realize justice and dignity

The Social and Human Sciences Sector seeks to advance knowledge, standards and intellectual cooperation to facilitate social transformations where the values of justice, freedom and human dignity can be fully realized.

RUSHAP develops and promotes social policies that uphold peace and human rights with many partners in the Asia-Pacific region, with priority programmes in bioethics and the ethics of science and technology. This includes bioethics education and implementing and considering international ethics standards. Attention is given to philosophical dialogues between different regions to rediscover their ethical and cultural values as they face modernity. The unit’s focus areas also include human security and social development, poverty alleviation, migration, environmental ethics, and youth, as well as research and training.
UNESCO is the UN agency specifically mandated to promote creativity and safeguard the world's rich and diverse cultural and natural heritage. In the rapidly changing Asia-Pacific region, UNESCO plays a unique role in ameliorating the negative aspects of globalisation while promoting sustainable social and economic development based on a strategy that maximises each community's distinctive assets of cultural and human capital.

Globally, UNESCO’s Culture Sector programme has three interrelated strategic objectives:

- Supporting the drafting, adoption, and enforcement of standard-setting instruments in the cultural field, particularly for the protection of cultural heritage,
- Protecting cultural diversity and encouraging pluralism and dialogue among cultures and civilisations, and
- Enhancing linkages between culture and development through capacity-building and the sharing of knowledge.

IOC/WESTPAC, the regional subsidiary body of UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), develops and implements regional research programmes, ocean observations and services, and capacity building. Among its recent work has been the planning and implementation with Member States of ocean observation systems and scientific projects which contribute to its newly adopted strategy covering natural hazards, climate change and healthy ecosystems.

The “UNESCO/IOC Regional Network of Training and Research Centers on Oceanography in the Western Pacific” was developed to address the disparity in capacity and capability among the Member States. The Seventh WESTPAC international Scientific Symposium, May 2008, consolidated its role as the regional platform for sharing marine scientific knowledge, stimulating new ideas and imparting experience and lessons gained from various projects.

In collaboration with the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science in Jakarta, UNESCO Bangkok also implements a limited number of Science Sector projects and programmes in the Mekong region for which it serves as the sub-regional office. These focus on science education, hydrology, and biodiversity conservation.
COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION (CI)

Building inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication

Following the strategy and recommendations of the UNESCO World Report Towards Knowledge Societies, CI assists countries to promote a free flow of ideas, universal access to information and freedom of expression. The unit supports improvement of information and media infrastructure, services, and training of information and media professionals. CI also supports community access points and community radio and TV to use ICTs to enhance rural communities’ access to information and knowledge as well as to increase their contribution to building Knowledge Societies. Encouraging freedom of expression, CI collaborates with educators and librarians in implementing information and media literacy programmes to empower young people with the skills needed for their participation in Knowledge Societies. Availing of ICTs, traditional knowledge in old documents is not only preserved, but also more widely disseminated in new formats.

INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT (IKM)

Promoting UNESCO Bangkok

Information management is the preoccupation of the IKM Unit. Using its in-house expertise and facilities, it designs, edits and publishes up to 40 monographs a year in print and pdf versions. The latter is an important collection on our website’s e-library which also provides access to UNESCO databases and clearing houses and links to many reference tools. Through its Public Information Group, the messages and expertise of UNESCO reach a wide audience via the print and broadcast media and in conferences and exhibitions. IKM also manages the UNESCO Bangkok website, the main source of news about the work of the Regional Bureau: www.unescobkk.org.
Providing technical advisory assistance across all sectors of the UNESCO mandate

Assessment, Information Systems, Monitoring and Statistics (AIMS) assists Member States within the region in strengthening capacity for the monitoring and assessment of national education; promotes the development and use of reliable educational statistics and information systems which are relevant for informed decision-making at all levels of government; links Member States within the region into a network of educational statisticians, planners, and policy makers; provides advisory services across all sectors of the UNESCO mandate for issues related to statistics, indicators, information systems, and monitoring and assessment; and represents the UNESCO Institute of Statistics in Montreal (UIS) in the Asia and Pacific region on assessment issues related to Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Common Country Assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF).