

## **Invitation to Join Working Groups on *Ethics of Energy Technologies in Asia and the Pacific***

UNESCO Bangkok, on behalf of project partners, invites interested individuals and organizations to participate in working groups for the Ethics of Energy Technologies in Asia and the Pacific project. This document is a brief update of May 2008 on the status of the project.

### **About the project**

Energy is intimately related to our environment and use of its resources, as well as to almost every sphere of economic activity. As policy makers around the world grapple with climate change, choices about energy generation and consumption will have a significant impact on levels of greenhouse gas emissions and on environmental health, as well as people's ability to access energy to heat and cool their homes, travel, work and enjoy leisure time.

This project is not intended to duplicate the numerous meetings being held on energy and environment, but to open up ethical and value questions that have often been neglected. It aims to encourage science and value-based discussions on environmental ethics to produce substantive cross-cultural and multidisciplinary outputs that will be relevant for long-term policy making.

The Asia Pacific region is experiencing the fastest annual growth in energy demand in the world and meeting this demand over the next two decades will be a tremendous challenge. As oil prices continue to climb, countries face increasing pressure to articulate their energy policies and achieve energy security. The ethics of all energy choices, including fossil fuels, biofuels, nuclear energy, fuel cells, renewables, etc., need be considered holistically. How will energy production affect the environment and other living organisms? How will rising energy prices affect the poor? What are our ethical obligations for consultation with local people? What are our ethical obligations to future generations and what vision for the future do we hold? Do environmental values held in Asian philosophical and religious traditions affect the sustainability of our relationships with our environment?

The project was launched in September 2007 with a three day conference at the Imperial Tara Hotel, Bangkok. Hosted by UNESCO Bangkok in collaboration with the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Energy, Thailand, it was attended by a hundred people from about 20 countries, from many sectors and backgrounds, with a range of views on these issues (report and abstracts are on the website).

### **About the working groups**

Following on from the conference fourteen provisional working groups have been formed on the following topics (more details below):

- Universalism and environmental values
- Ethical worldviews of nature

- Visions and hopes of the future
- Representation and who decides
- Community engagement
- Stakeholder responsibilities
- Energy equity and human security
- Cost-benefit analysis and economic constructions
- Adoption & development of energy technologies (state of the art review)
- Ethical frameworks for research agendas and policy
- Educational frameworks for environmental ethics
- Nuclear dialogues
- Energy flow, environment, and ethical implications of meat production
- Water ethics and water resource management

The aim of the working groups is to develop dialogue around these particular issues with a focus on environmental ethics and human security. Each group will produce a report with policy options that can be used by policy makers, philosophers, scientists and researchers to consider the ethical dimensions of energy policy.

### **Who are we looking for?**

We are looking for people interested in participating in the working groups with a diverse range of experience in energy and environmental ethics, from fields including but not limited to engineering, government, institutional advisory bodies, civil society organizations, energy-related industries, education, and academia. The people participate as individuals in the highest standards of intellectual vigor and integrity, and the reports will be subject to peer review, and will not represent the views of partner organizations.

We are also looking for organizations with an interest in this project to help support the process of deliberation, consultations and dialogue.

Working group members are not paid for their time although we are seeking funds through UNESCO Bangkok and project partners for physical and virtual meetings and other resources.

### **Want to know more?**

For further information on the project please examine the regularly updated working group webpages on the website, <http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=energyethics>, and contact Dr. Darryl Macer, Regional Advisor in Social and Human Sciences in Asia and the Pacific, Regional Unit in Social and Human Sciences in Asia and the Pacific (RUSHSAP) at UNESCO Bangkok on +66(0) 2391 0577, extension 147 or email [rushsap@unescobkk.org](mailto:rushsap@unescobkk.org).

There is also a yahoo group, [unesco\\_eet@yahoogroups.com](mailto:unesco_eet@yahoogroups.com)

## **Description of Working Groups and current meeting schedule**

### *Universalism and environmental values*

Environmental values in the Asia Pacific region are drawn from a diversity of rich philosophical and religious heritages. To what extent can common ground be found within a United Nations system that seeks to implement universal rights and dialogue among different values? Is it appropriate to seek universal or pluralist environmental values? Is there such a thing as an 'Asian environmental ethos' that might be the foundation for building and promoting a more sustainable economic growth?

### *Ethical worldviews of nature*

Are there worldviews inherent in philosophical and religious traditions of the Asia Pacific that shape ethical relationships with the natural world? Are these anthropocentric, biocentric, ecocentric or cosmocentric worldviews? How do our worldviews allocate value and meaning to people, plants, animals and the biosphere? What are the relationships between such worldviews and actual decisions made by policymakers or the daily lives of the people they represent?

**Next meeting: UNESCO Conference on Ethics of Energy Technologies: Ethical Views of Nature (Working Group 2), 3 August 2008, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea**

### *Visions and hopes of the future*

What is the most appropriate timescale to consider problems of environmental ethics – years, decades, centuries, or generations? Is there a common vision of where we would like society to go beyond MDGs? How to balance economic growth, quality of life, and other future aspirations in a holistic vision?

### *Representation and who decides*

What are the rights of nation states to decide on energy technologies for their people, when such decisions may pose an environmental or security risk to neighboring countries, to the region or to all countries? What are rights of provinces, communities and ethnic groups with regards to energy infrastructure in their geographic area?

### *Community engagement*

How can we engage communities in the decision-making process? Are communities being given a chance to articulate their environmental values? Do communities have adequate access to information about energy technologies and their risks and benefits? What is the role of education in assisting communities to make decisions about their future? Are women and young people being engaged? What are the appropriate stages of an energy project for community consultation? Is there a trade-off between adequate consultation time and expedient implementation of a project? How can we develop the 'not in my backyard' view when it comes to large-scale energy infrastructure? How can community engagement reflect the emerging paradigm shift from principles of paternalism through those of informed consent to informed choice?

### *Stakeholder responsibilities*

What are stakeholders' responsibilities towards the environment and to future generations? Is a rights' based framework really appropriate for environmental ethics, when an emphasis on responsibilities may be more important? When regional or global consensus cannot be reached, do countries have a responsibility to do what is 'ethically correct', even if no-one else will? The group will articulate the responsibilities of scientists, policy makers (funding and regulation), the public (including consumers and non-consumers of different products), investors, companies, institutions, particular interest groups (e.g. geographically close to a power plant, occupational groups, faith groups), and other living organisms, as examples in a cross-cultural perspective.

**Future meeting under planning in National Science Foundation, Sri Lanka**

### *Energy equity and human security*

While energy generation supports economic growth and a higher standard of living, it also has financial and environmental costs. How do we reconcile the disproportionate consumption of energy by developed countries with increasing demand for energy in developing countries, and particularly across the Asia Pacific region? Is it appropriate for rich countries to encourage less developed countries to limit their energy consumption and shun luxury lifestyles? Is there a way for developing countries to access the technology and expertise that permits more efficient energy generation in the developed world? At the social level, should governments provide concessions to make energy more affordable and accessible for lower-income people? Do government subsidies for energy run the risk of subsidizing inefficient use of energy?

**Next meeting: UNESCO Conference on Ethics of Energy Technologies: Energy equity and human security (Working Group 7), 22-23 September 2008, The Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University, Chennai, India**

### *Cost-benefit analysis and economic constructions*

How can environmental and cultural values best be incorporated into cost-benefit analyses for energy projects? What are the real costs of 'cheap energy'? What are the costs of any form of energy if we consider the opportunity costs of infrastructure construction or land surface area, and total energy costs over the lifecycle of a product, including waste, disposal and security?

### *Adoption & development of energy technologies (state of the art review)*

This review of energy alternatives for local and national scale projects will focus on the ethical implications inherent in different research options for energy production and delivery. It will include development of innovation in new science and translational research, diffusion of technology, and energy diversity. It will also consider global networking and IT. It will analyze points of different alternatives.

**Next meeting: Adoption and Development of Energy Technologies - State of the Art review (UNESCO Ethics of Energy Technologies Working Group 9), 9am-3:30pm, 12 June 2008, NSTDA building at Yothee, room 103, Bangkok**

*Ethical frameworks for research agendas and policy*

What criteria do policymakers use in deciding to adopt energy technologies, and how are ethical considerations taken into account? How should policy makers identify and employ the precautionary principle? How can they ensure appropriate gender-sensitive aspects in policy formulation from planning through implementation and impact assessment, emphasizing that all people in a society are assets in environmental and energy management? This group will examine the different understanding of ethical frameworks by looking at critical ethical issues including: codes of ethics for researchers, societal values, rights of all participants (stakeholders), rights of indigenous peoples, religious values, legal issues and take account of the conclusions of the specialized working groups above. After a review of all policies it will analyze the ethical frameworks inherent in the documents to draw up a model ethical framework.

*Educational frameworks for environmental ethics*

This working group will link to ongoing efforts to develop and test environmental ethics education materials and strategies with pilot trials. The topics link to the coverage of all the above working groups.

**Future meeting under planning in Vietnam**

*Nuclear dialogues*

This group will look at the particular sensitivities of the nuclear energy debates from an ethical perspective.

**Next meeting: Joint UNESCO-UNITAR Dialogues on Ethics of Nuclear Energy Technologies, 25 and 27 July 2008, UNITAR, Hiroshima, Japan**

*Energy flow, environment, and ethical implications of meat production*

Meat, as a food, is a form of energy for humans, but in order to produce enough meat to satisfy global demand huge reserves of energy are required in the form of feed, fertilizers, pharmaceutical production, transport and refrigeration. This group will examine the consumption of energy, particularly fossil fuels, in the meat production industry, and ethical implications for humans and the environment.

**Next meeting: UNESCO Ethics of Energy Technologies Conference on Energy Flow, Environment and Ethical Implications for Meat Production (Working Group 13), 9am-4pm, 24 July 2008, at UNU-IAS, Yokohama, Japan**

*Water ethics and water resource management*

The ethical issues associated with water resource management, including its uses in energy and other domains are a priority area in many countries. There are also issues over equity of access, ways to conserve water, and privatization of what many consider to be a common resource.

**Next meeting: The Second Joint UNESCO-Beijing University Conference on Water Ethics, 22-23 October 2008, Beijing, China**