

# Sustainable Lifestyles Innovations Brief



## Why do we need Sustainable Lifestyles?

Today we have a choice. To create places, policies and practices that improve the quality of life for all. To encourage interactions and conversations that educates and enriches lives. And do all this in a way that meets global challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss, which increase social tensions and resource shortages. We can work towards encouraging and creating sustainable lifestyles. Or we can continue on with business as usual, and all that will bring.

The time to make this choice is now. Energy consumption is accelerating at unprecedented rates. In developed countries the energy consumption of a simple dishwasher increased 26.7% between 1990 and 2000.<sup>1</sup> Very surprising considering the policies and investments made over recent years to improve the energy efficiency of appliances. In fact, the international Energy Outlook report 2009 predicted that global energy consumption is set to surge 44% between 2006 and 2030, with non-OECD countries seeing a 73% increase.<sup>2</sup> Against the backdrop of climate change, these statistics highlight the urgency with which we need to find new approaches and solutions to meeting our needs.

The Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production was established to help us seize this choice and the opportunities it represents.<sup>3</sup> Sweden's Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles has supported nine unique projects working towards sustainable lifestyles. The work found that from celebrities in the Philippines to South American nuns, German businesses and Brazilian favelas, every sector of society is involved, in some way, with sustainable lifestyles. This brief presents some of the findings from this work, including global surveys of attitudes, studies of what is already happening, how we can encourage more and what happens when we succeed.

As we enter this second decade of the Millennium, one of our key challenges is to help developing countries meet their basic needs. "Development" and "prosperity" have become synonymous with increasing consumption, as countries aspire to move along the same path as developed nations. According to the WWF, resource consumption could increase to 200% of global carrying capacity by 2030. Incremental improvements of eco-efficiency are not enough. As recommended in the last report of the World Economic Forum,<sup>4</sup> there is an overwhelming need to rethink both how we produce and consume goods. Innovation and cooperation must sit at the heart of our efforts to tackle the global economic, social and environmental challenges that we face.

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<sup>1</sup> US Energy Information Administration (2009) *International Energy Outlook* (<http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/index.html>)

<sup>2</sup> US Energy Information Administration (2009) *International Energy Outlook* (<http://www.eia.doe.gov/oiaf/ieo/index.html>)

<sup>3</sup> For more information: <http://www.unep.fr/scp/marrakech>

<sup>4</sup> *Redesigning Business Value: A Roadmap for Sustainable Consumption*, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu and the World Economic Forum, January 2010

New ways need to be found to live that don't erode the very foundation of our livelihoods. More efficient ways of meeting people's needs are required. New lifestyles are needed. This is both a responsibility and an opportunity.

## What are Sustainable Lifestyles?

Lifestyles define and differentiate us. They are the way we live our lives; what we do, with whom, where, how and what we use to do it. Everything from the food we eat, to how we interact and the way we get around.

Lifestyles are part of our identity; people express their social position, political preferences and psychological aspirations to others through them.

Sustainable lifestyles are shaped by a whole host of factors. Their roots are in culture, politics, economics and social norms. For sustainable lifestyles to enter our cultures and societies, to become part of our everyday life, they must develop at all levels. They need to be helped and supported by the social and technical systems and institutions that surround us. For instance, designing more efficient public transport systems will help people leave their car at home, reducing their carbon footprint.

We don't operate independently of others. We are part of groups and communities that help give our lives meaning, purpose and shape our lifestyles. These interactions create social capital, which is a crucial foundation for a sustainable future. Just as a screw driver (physical capital) or secondary school education (human capital) increases individual and collective productivity, social contacts affect a society's productivity.<sup>5</sup>

### Sustainable Lifestyles

For the Taskforce, sustainable lifestyles means rethinking our ways of living, how we buy and how we organize our everyday life. It is also about altering how we socialize, exchange, share, educate and build identities. It means transforming our societies and living in harmony with our natural environment.

As citizens, at home and at work, many of our choices – on energy use, transport, food, waste, communication and solidarity – contribute towards building sustainable lifestyles. Every sector of society has something to contribute. Governments have a key role to play by creating the appropriate frameworks and infrastructures (regulatory instruments, technological innovations, new public services) to enable citizens to change. The business sector can develop innovative solutions for sustainable lifestyles. Information and education are essential, as well as the full participation of civil society in the movement.

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<sup>5</sup> Putnam, Robert. (2000), *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Simon and Schuster).

## The impact of consumption

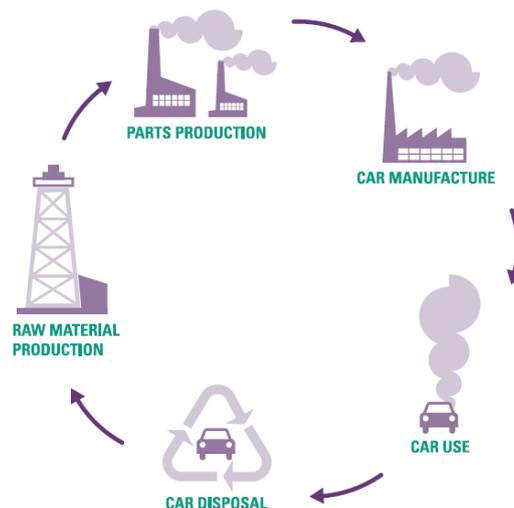
In today's consumer world, the products and services we choose to, and aspire to consume play an essential role in how we express our identity and values.

At a national scale, consumption is traditionally seen as the engine of growth and development, and therefore stands at the heart of our economies. Today, the global environmental, economic and social challenges we are facing show us that our consumption and production patterns are not sustainable. We must develop alternative paths for development and more efficient and simpler ways of living our lives in balance with our communities and nature.

Unsustainable patterns of consumption impact on the world around us creating challenges like climate change, waste generation, air pollution and water shortages, to list just a few. The global consumer class now stands at 1.7 billion, with nearly half coming from developing economies<sup>6</sup>. But consumption is a power that remains unevenly distributed, reflecting immense imbalances between developed and developing countries. Billions in the world cannot consume enough to meet their basic needs: **60%** of the 4 billion people living in the global south lack basic sanitation; **25%** do not have adequate housing.<sup>7</sup>

Within the finite constraints of one planet, continuing consumption in its current form will only make these challenges more damaging and severe.

The impacts of consumption stem from every stage in a product's lifecycle, as illustrated in the diagram. From the sourcing of raw materials, to the energy required during use, to the waste produced through disposal. This approach is called the **product lifecycle**.



The product lifecycle illustrates the potential of steering production processes and consumption patterns towards a Green (resource efficient) economy: reducing waste, pollution, emissions energy and raw materials, can revitalize and diversify economies. A green economy will create employment opportunities, promote responsible trade, reduce poverty, and improve equity and income distribution.

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<sup>6</sup> EEA (2005). *Household consumption and the environment*. Copenhagen, European Environmental Agency: 72

<sup>7</sup> UN (2006). *The 2nd UN World Water Development Report: 'Water, a shared responsibility'*. Paris, UNESCO: 601

## Development challenge and opportunity

The world faces complex and interlinked development and lifestyle challenges. We live in an interconnected world. Our lifestyles are influenced by the desires of people in other countries, foreign and domestic government policies, even the weather in different parts of the world impacts on the food we eat, the prices we pay and the cultural movements we are swept along by. The recent financial crisis demonstrates just how quickly the effects of events can spread.

Our world is becoming increasingly more populated – density of population increased by more than 250% in the last 50 years, in the last 5 years it increased 6.7%<sup>8</sup>.

The economies and societies in which all these people live are focused on growth. The measure of growth (GDP) has become the default for measuring well-being and progress. Unfortunately, these measures do not include the very things that make us human and make us do what we do; emotions, aspirations, well-being and happiness.

For individuals, consumption has always been seen as a means of self-fulfillment and social recognition – a prerequisite for happiness. Research now shows us that, beyond a point, increasing consumption and GDP does not make people happier and more satisfied. According to the New Economics Foundation's 2009 Happy Planet Index, the UK ranks as only the 108th happiest country, Sweden the 119th and the US the 150th. Costa Rica, Vietnam and the Philippines score in the 20 happiest countries.

In the developed world, as a result of such research and resource constraints the very notion of growth is being questioned.

In the developing world the challenges are more immediate. About 800 million people are hungry in the world today – that's more than the entire population of Europe. Meeting basic needs is a priority, but in a globally connected world, the aspiration is to live the life those in the developed world do, as quickly as possible.

Scientifically, achieving this aspiration is impossible.

"A world in which things simply go as usual is already inconceivable. But what about a world in which nine billion people all aspire to the level of affluence in the OECD nations [today]? Such an economy would need to be 15 times the size of today's global economy by 2050 and 40 times bigger by the end of the century"<sup>9</sup>.

We would need 5 planets, for everyone to adopt the consumption patterns and lifestyles of the average citizen in North America<sup>10</sup>. We only have one, which is being degraded, contaminated and eroded with every passing second. About 60% of the Earth's ecosystems' services have been degraded in the past 50 years<sup>11</sup>.

Sustainable lifestyles also have a role to play in the opportunity for developing countries to "leapfrog", a term used to describe the possibility to bypass inefficient, polluting, and ultimately costly phases of development. Leapfrogging offers countries the opportunity to jump straight onto a resource efficient sustainable development path. For example, "leapfrogging" might involve the use of sustainable or solar energy in rural areas where unreliable or limited sources of energy previously existed. The

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<sup>8</sup> UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs <http://esa.un.org/unpp/p2k0data.asp>

<sup>9</sup> UK Sustainable Development Commission (2009) *Prosperity without Growth*, United Kingdom Sustainable Development Commission, March 2009

<sup>10</sup> WWF *Living Planet Report*, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> WBCSD *Sustainable Consumption Facts and Trends: From a business perspective*. 2008.

objective is not only resource efficiency but also the creation of new business models, new social aspirations, initiatives that demonstrate that sustainable lifestyles is part of the solution and is feasible.

Sustainable lifestyles can become instruments for development that will have positive impacts on our environment, societies and communities while advancing us towards the UN Millennium Development Goals and universal human rights.

## The complexity of lifestyles

What enables, influences and encourages lifestyles is a complex matter. Manfred Max-Neef developed a matrix to model human satisfaction, with nine fundamental human needs, each with four dimensions.<sup>12</sup> These range from physical and material needs (the state of our local environment, sufficient food, clothing and shelter), through to social and psychological needs (including strength of relationships, depth of social interactions, level of education, sense of control over our lives etc.).

Recognising this complexity is the first step to creating more sustainable lifestyles. We need to look beyond economics when considering policy, infrastructure, services and products. In order to capture every element of sustainable lifestyles we need to involve people from a variety of professions, cultures, and specialisms.

“Understanding (mainstream) consumer behaviour is a pre-requisite for understanding how to motivate or encourage pro-environmental behaviour” Tim Jackson, 2005<sup>13</sup>

Grasping this complexity, what influences, constrains and motivates our behaviour, why we consume and what, will help identify what needs to change to increase the adoption of more sustainable lifestyles.

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<sup>12</sup> Manfred A. Max-Neef with Antonio Elizalde, Martin Hopenhayn. (1991). *Human scale development: conception, application and further reflections*. New York: Apex. Chpt. 2. “Development and Human Needs”, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> Jackson T (2005) *Motivating sustainable consumption: a review of evidence on consumer behavioural change, a report to the Sustainable Development Research Network*. P 9

# Approaches and initiatives

There is a great deal happening in the area of sustainable lifestyles. Communities are mobilising, governments are creating policies and businesses are producing products that all contribute to a more sustainable future. Younger generations, in particular, are finding that sustainable lifestyles are a new and exciting opportunity for them to shape their future. Young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow, but the innovators of today.

Achieving sustainable lifestyles requires innovation. The young have traditionally been a key catalyst of not just social and cultural change, but technological innovation too. The new generations are natives of the digital world. This level of familiarity and understanding has already reshaped industries (file sharing has dramatically transformed the entertainment industries and dematerialised music) and revolutionised social interaction, influence and campaigning (from the Iranian Green Revolution's use of social media to Facebook campaigns and Twitter feeds on climate demonstrations). With global efforts to reduce the digital divide, more and more young people all over the world will be connected and able to share their ideas and initiatives.

In recognition of their importance, the young generations have been a particular focus of international forums; WSSD Plan of Action, UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development, and the Marrakech Process. The majority of the Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles' projects positioned young people at the core of their engagement strategies.

The following section briefly explains the Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles before splitting into four parts: social innovation, education, communication and business. These are the four core areas of the Taskforce. We will attempt to illustrate their value using examples from the Taskforce projects.

## What is the Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles?

The Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles, with valuable support from UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE), was established in 2005. It explored ways to engage, exemplify, enable and encourage people, civil society organisations and government to further sustainable lifestyles. This was done by gathering best practice examples from developed and developing countries from ongoing work around the world and supporting new projects to fill gaps in knowledge. The lessons learnt can be applied to other countries and cultures. These lessons, along with new areas for further work, are the Taskforce's contribution to the 10 Year Framework of Programmes on SCP.

Nine Taskforce projects cover activities in 43 countries across every region of the world, producing materials in 11 different languages, adapted to local cultures and conditions. The Taskforce's work focused on how to guide and enable sustainable lifestyles in the fields of social innovation, communication, education, marketing, advertising and research. The projects cover a broad spectrum of activity, detailed in the next section. The Taskforce has also participated in international and regional meetings to engage with other relevant audiences and further promote sustainable lifestyles and consumption.

## The nine Taskforce projects

Sustainable living is not an abstract concept. It's happening in communities all over the world right now. The Creative Communities project found the same eight ideas for sustainable living had evolved completely independently of each other in Brazil, India, China, mainland Europe and Africa.

### The Marrakech Process

In 2002, participants at the World Summit on Sustainable Development called for the international community to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP). The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation that came out of the Summit encourages and promotes the development of a ten-year framework of programmes (10YFP) to support regional and national initiatives to accelerate this shift.

A range of stakeholders gathered in Marrakech in 2003 to generate support for SCP and the development of the 10YFP. They launched the Marrakech Process which set off a series of consultations, forums, dialogues, partnership projects and Taskforces.

Since 2005, seven international Task Forces have been launched on specific SCP themes in order to encourage action, support SCP implementation and provide inputs into the 10YFP. One of these is the international Marrakech Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles, led by the Swedish Ministry of the Environment.

The 10YFP will be considered by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) at its 2010 and 2011 sessions.

The nine Taskforce projects were:

- *Sustainable Entrepreneurship in African Universities*: Combining sustainable lifestyles education with business development skills to promote successful, sustainable, entrepreneurship in Universities across Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Mauritius.
- *Communicating Sustainability*: An evidenced-based guide to support national and local governments to create effective public campaigns for change.
- *Creative Communities*: Research to identify policy recommendations to create best-practice grassroots social innovations for sustainable urban living. Focused on rapidly developing countries where some of the most exciting innovations are being developed in response to new economic, social and environmental challenges.
- *Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles*: The first research project on sustainable lifestyles to be conducted on such a large scale. A 20-country survey covering all regions that gathers insights from young adults (18-35) in urban areas on their current lifestyles, aspirations for the future and reactions to sustainable lifestyles.
- *Intercultural Sister Classrooms*: Raising awareness of lifecycle thinking; a key aspect of sustainable lifestyles among teachers and students across American regions using new learning methods.
- *Literature Review on Sustainable Lifestyles*: Developing a clear understanding of what lifestyles are and what influences them, and gathering the tools and methods available to further sustainable lifestyles.

- *Making the business case for Sustainable Lifestyles*: A series of seven booklets that explain why and how businesses can take advantage of the opportunities sustainable lifestyles present.
- *Toolkit for advertising and marketing courses*: Giving the next generation of marketing, advertising and communications professionals the understanding and tools to incorporate sustainability into their professional careers.
- *Scaling up, UNEP-UNESCO YouthXchange Programme*: Engaging young people on sustainable lifestyles and empowering them to take action on the issues important to them.

# Understanding what people want

We want to create a better future. To do this we need to know, to some degree, what this future looks like. What the vision, or range of visions of this future are. This vision needs to paint a compelling picture of what we are trying to create. To motivate us to act, it has to be something that we all aspire to achieve.

Visions are powerful things. Dr Wayne Dyer, author of *The Power of Intention*, says “It is a truly scientific phenomenon that when you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”<sup>14</sup>

The work of the Taskforce shows that these visions are beginning to be formed in young people’s minds.

## Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles

The Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles asked young, middle-class adults (18-35 years old) from urban areas in 20 countries, about their current lifestyles. Respondents gave feedback on a number of visions of sustainable lifestyles. It is the first research project of this scale focused on sustainable lifestyles.

The survey has gathered unrivalled insights into the way that sustainable living is perceived by young adults, from a variety of cultural, political and economic circumstances.

The respondents were from a broad range of cultural, political and country contexts. From Sweden, Vietnam or Mexico to South Africa or Egypt, everyday habits, perceptions, aspirations and fears for the future, levels of sustainability awareness are very diverse. However, preliminary results also show a number of shared values across nations.

### People are most concerned about poverty and the environment

Poverty and environmental challenges are identified as the most important global priorities among young adults. The impact of current development models, as well as climate change is well recognized. However, improving an individual’s standard of living and social conditions understandably remains a top priority in developing and emerging countries.

“I think we’re in a transition period. People are finally aware that they can and must change things from day to day and that has a global impact... if they don’t change we’ll continue to walk towards a slowdown of the planet”. (Portugal, GSSL 2010)

“Very little can be done towards climate change because there are so many more immediate problems in my country (wars, political instability, etc...) making this problem appears in the eyes of society, as secondary. The new generations are much more sensitive about this”; (Lebanon, GSSL 2010)

### People value quality of life and agency

For all, quality of life and a sense of agency are strong aspirations for the future; but sustainability is not always recognized as a way to achieve these aspirations. However, when survey respondents

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<sup>14</sup> Dyer W (2004) *The Power Of Intention: Change The Way You Look At Things And The Things You Look At Will Change: Learning to Co-create Your World Your Way*. Hay House UK

were presented with scenarios for more sustainable ways of living they reacted very positively, both rationally and creatively.

The scenarios focused on mobility, food and housekeeping. Those surveyed were very clear that well adapted policies and infrastructure were needed to turn these scenarios into reality.

“In the future I see myself working from home, living in a house that provides its own energy and leaves a small foot print. Working from home, reduces my fuel bill, reduces pollution and road rage, stress and car maintenance fees. I hope my country will devise plans to be sustainable and independent from the rest of the world”; (Lebanon, GSSL 2010)

“Instead of investing heavily in inefficient municipal services and bulk infrastructure projects, the government should make use of the tremendous energy of the people, to build new housing projects, operate local systems of service delivery, promote self-governance, and harvest resources available to the local community.” (Egypt, GSSL 2010)

### **The opportunity**

There is an opportunity to transform what often remains a passive demand for sustainability into a shared project. Empowerment and education are now essential to provide young adults with concrete and workable solutions, so they can fully become actors in the design of sustainable societies.

# Social innovation

*“Many of us – from individuals to politicians, entrepreneurs and organizations – have ideas about what could be done; suggestions that could lead the way forward. But we don’t meet, we don’t interact, we don’t synergize.” ([www.ideasforchange.tv](http://www.ideasforchange.tv))*

Social innovation is characterised by new strategies, concepts, projects and organisations that meet social needs in the context of sustainable development. The Taskforce has found a lot of exciting and innovative activities already happening across the world. There is a real desire for people to improve their lifestyles in more sustainable ways. However, few people know about them. The move towards sustainable lifestyles has been a quietly developing, but global movement.

## Common areas of community led social innovation

One of the Taskforce projects, Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles, identifies best practice and makes policy recommendations on grass root social innovations for sustainable urban living. Its research covers social innovation in Europe and the rapidly developing countries of Brazil, India, China, and parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

The team identified eight common areas of community led sustainable lifestyle projects.

- 1) **Cooperative purchasing groups**, where people buy in bulk directly from suppliers.
- 2) **Local trading exchanges**, where people exchange services and skills with each other.
- 3) **Children centers**, where children and parents can meet and play together.
- 4) **Car pooling**, where individual cars are shared between groups.
- 5) **Community agriculture exchanges**, connecting urban and rural producers.
- 6) **Elderly community care**, run by and for senior citizens to support each other.
- 7) **Urban vegetable gardens**, run by community groups.
- 8) **Community nurseries**, where mothers run small, local nurseries for children.

See <http://www.sustainable-everyday.net/SEPhome/home.html> for inspiring projects and scenarios.

### Rede Ecologica, Ecological Network

Website: <http://www.redeecologica.org/>

Location: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Urca, Santa Teresa, Tijuca, Copacabana, Jacarepaguá)

*“The small producer is the ultimate ecologist.”*

The service provides a direct distribution model for ecological food purchasing. The model encourages healthier nutrition and lifestyles, which also benefits the environment by reducing the use of pesticides and other chemicals in food production.

The initiative supports a sustainable lifestyle through the promotion of biological (chemical free) food products. Through the creation of an ecological purchase group the Network also assists small producers and family based agriculture. Suppliers are carefully selected by the Network; many are affiliated with ecology initiatives and are actively involved in agrarian reforms.

*“The network brings to participants the sense of belonging, of being active, of doing something for the common good, against the usual sense of impotency.”*

The initiative is locally based, at city level. There are currently six centres across regions surrounding Rio de Janeiro with over seventy partner organisations. Ecological Network not only supports a healthier lifestyle but also allows consumers to purchase biological food products at lower prices than in supermarkets. Products are divided into fresh and dry categories. The fresh produce such as vegetables are delivered on a weekly base and are sourced from local producers while dry produce such as grains regularly come from more distant sources and are delivered monthly.

# Education

Education is vital to encouraging sustainable lifestyles. Having an understanding of the way we impact on the world around us will enable people to make better personal and professional decisions. “Education for Sustainable Consumption” is another of the Marrakech Process taskforces, led by Italy, and because so much of it overlaps with sustainable lifestyles the two taskforces have worked closely together. The Taskforce on Education for Sustainable Consumption’s publication *Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption. Recommendations and Guidelines* can be found here: <http://www.unep.fr/scp/marrakech/taskforces/pdf/Here%20and%20Now%20Layout%2028Jan09.pdf>

## What is Education for Sustainable Consumption?

*ESC aims to provide knowledge and skills that enable individuals and groups to become actors of change striving towards more sustainable consumption. The objective is to ensure that the basic needs of the global community are met, quality of life for all is improved, inefficient use of resources and environmental degradation are avoided. ESC is therefore about providing citizens with the appropriate information and knowledge on the environmental and social impacts of their daily choices, as well as workable solutions and alternatives. ESC integrates fundamental rights and freedoms and aims to increase people’s participation in public debate and the economy in an informed and ethical way.*

Creating sustainable lifestyles will not be possible without the participation of future business leaders and entrepreneurs. As a result, a number of Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles’ projects concentrated on education for sustainable consumption and production. The Toolkit for Advertising and Marketing, developed by UNEP’s Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, Sustainable Consumption and Production Branch, is a flexible, interactive resource for educators training future marketing, advertising and communications professionals.

The project combines theory, practice and case studies to engage students with sustainability issues in a business context. UNEP wanted to change established practices in the advertising and marketing sectors by highlighting best practices and by inspiring young students and professionals to combine sustainability and communications to deliver positive change. The toolkit is being used by some business schools and universities to improve or design new courses. In 2009 The University of Montreal launched a new course based on the toolkit material that explores the role communications plays in corporate social responsibility.

Another project, *Smart Start Up: Introducing sustainable lifestyle and sustainable entrepreneurship into African universities*, combines sustainable lifestyles education with business development skills to promote successful, sustainable, entrepreneurship. Universities in Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Mauritius are provided with materials to motivate the next generation of African sustainable lifestyles entrepreneurs. The Project is run by the UNEP/Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP).

Engaging people in sustainable lifestyles early in their lives through targeted and participatory education makes a lasting impression. It is therefore a crucial step to building a more sustainable future led by a new global generation of responsible individuals.

# Communication

We have shown how public awareness is growing globally. Public communications has a key role to play to build on these emerging movements and make sustainable lifestyles understandable, approachable and most importantly, desirable.

Traditionally, communications around sustainable lifestyles have come from government or environmental groups. They have often been prescriptive, patronising or disapproving. Rather than turn people on to the vast opportunities and enjoyment sustainable lifestyles can bring, they have turned people off. More recently a new approach to communications, using positive messages and more creativity, is being used to engage people in discussions around sustainability.

The Taskforce has sought and tested best practice in sustainable development communications, drawing on experience from around the world. And the overwhelming evidence has been that sustainability targets and aspirations are reached more easily when the communications is creative and rigorously planned.

One Taskforce project in particular, addressed these issues. *Communicating Sustainability* identified principles and best practice for running effective public campaigns on sustainability, and developed a foundation for outreach across a wide range of audiences.

The *Communicating Sustainability* guide, developed by Futerra Sustainability Communications and UNEP DTIE, is a step-by-step guide to building a communications plan. This clear, practical format also included 'myths and facts' on communications principles, sixteen case studies from around the world, and resources for further education.

Many of the principles enshrined within the guide were demonstrated to great effect by another project scaled up by the Taskforce, the UNEP/UNESCO YouthXchange Programme. The projects supported by the Taskforce engaged young people on issues of sustainable consumption in Latin America and the Caribbean, West Asia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Philippines. The YXC initiative promotes alternative behaviours and lifestyles and supports the mainstreaming of more resource-efficient and environmentally friendly products and services through awareness-raising campaigns, communication and education.

YXC supports knowledge-building and sharing through training workshops and joint projects among youth in different countries and cultures. The toolkit consists of a paper guide (translated into 23 languages), a bilingual website (French/English) and related pedagogical resources on sustainable consumption. At the national and local level, the implementation of training activities is secured through a diverse network of motivated partners - ranging from youth NGOs, eco-schools, green campus organizations to consumer organizations and Ministries of Environment and Education.

In Latin America over 2,000 youth leaders were engaged through the workshops. In the Philippines, celebrity fronted media campaigns and art exhibitions reached urban youth. A bicycle tour reached up to 20,000 people in rural communities. The project is currently being adapted and implemented in northern Africa as well as Vietnam.

YouthXchange initiatives, along with the case studies found in *Communicating Sustainability*, demonstrate the extraordinary power of communications, not simply to inform, but to challenge, and to inspire.

# Business

The business sector possesses unique skills sets and resources to catalyse the move towards more sustainable lifestyles. But this needs to be driven further. Networks like the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, whose members include the 200 largest companies in the world, are supporting this drive. However, more businesses need to be brought on board. The business case needs to be sold and best-practice work demonstrated more widely.

The market for more sustainable products is growing. The number of people considering sustainability in their purchase decisions has been rising over the years. With markets in developed countries becoming increasingly competitive, the 'bottom of the pyramid' or 'markets of the poor', offer great opportunities. More companies are responding with locally developed and adapted products and more inclusive business models.

At every single stage of a product's life there is an environmental impact. Sustainable production aims to minimise the environmental impact at all times. From reducing the amount of water used in production through to designing a product for re-use and recycling.

Value is not just limited to new markets and production methods though. SCP strategies offer new knowledge and insights, unexplored partnerships, the potential for breakthrough innovations, and improved brand reputation.

As the UNEP /Wuppertal Institute Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production highlights in its booklet series, it is this whole picture - consumption, production and wider value - that must come together in the business case. *Making the Case for Sustainable Lifestyles* is a series of seven booklets that explain why and how business can take advantages of the opportunities within sustainable lifestyles.

Booklets cover the following topics:

*Booklet 1* – What are the business opportunities and challenges behind the sustainable consumption agenda?

*Booklet 2* – How to drive business value through sustainable consumption business strategies?

*Booklet 3* – What does sustainable consumption mean for major business sectors?

*Booklet 4* – What are sustainable consumption business strategies?

*Booklet 5* – What public policy framework is required to encourage sustainable consumption business strategies?

*Booklet 6* – What sustainable consumption opportunities are there in developing countries?

*Booklet 7* – Which partnerships are required for sustainable consumption?

You can access these booklets at <http://www.encourage-sustainable-lifestyles.net>

One of the elements of the Marrakech process is the *Business Forum*, established to offer businesses a platform to discuss the role they have in promoting SCP and to broaden business engagement in the Marrakech Process, <http://www.unep.fr/scp/marrakech/business.htm>. The business community is starting to realise the value of consumer knowledge in terms of sustainability. More and more products are being produced that meet the desires and needs of people across the world as found in the Global Survey on Sustainable Lifestyles,

*People will change their lifestyle only in exchange for a better one. By knowing how people think, we can design choice environments that make it easier for people to choose what is best for themselves, their families, and their society – and people’s everyday habits or lifestyles that impact negatively on the vision and their own lives can be overcome. Companies can nudge people in beneficial directions without restricting freedom of choice. There is an urgent need for products and services that make sustainability easy and transparent for the consumer, hyper efficient through collaboration and innovation in value chains, and resilient by applying understanding of human behavior motivations and triggers.*<sup>15</sup>

### **Exploring the Role of Business through Vision 2050**

The WBCSD’s Vision 2050 Project connects twenty-nine leading companies, with the objective of developing a fresh intellectual platform with a focus on eco-efficiency and innovation. The end goal is to revamp business thought leadership by positioning sustainability as a core element as well as to identify opportunities for businesses to reinvent themselves; along with the products and services they produce.

Participant companies are due to tackle thought provoking questions such as ‘what are the robust actions, policies and investments needed to move rapidly onto a sustainable pathway?’ in a series of interactive workshops and virtual working groups. The project is expected to end in February 2010.

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<sup>15</sup> ABC for SCP, UNEP publication, forthcoming (2010)

## Next steps

The Taskforce for Sustainable Lifestyles ended at the end of 2009. The results, findings, insights and learnings have been evaluated and are being communicated to key stakeholder in order to affect greater change.

The findings, ongoing and off-shoot projects of the Taskforce will be continued under the *Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living* (PERL).

PERL is a partnership of researchers, experts, educators and practitioners that will contribute to the Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production, and the UN Decade for education for sustainable development.

Supported by the Swedish and Norwegian Governments, the European Union and other donors, the partnership will drive sustainable lifestyles forward through six working groups:

- Reflection and implementation
- Enabling sustainable lifestyles
- Social innovation
- Education for responsible living
- International dialogue
- Communications and media

Governments will soon negotiate the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production. The Task Force has developed specific recommendations based on its experience and will seek to influence stakeholders within the Marrakech process. The recommendations are based on the Task Force's projects and experience.

The Taskforce has only scratched the surface of what is possible in the field of sustainable lifestyles. One of its key findings shows that policies and enabling tools are a prerequisite for sustainable lifestyles. It therefore recommends more work in and support for five programme areas:

- Governance and enabling framework at national and local authorities level
- Marketing oriented actions – business sector
- Education – training
- Research
- Everyday enabling actions

Horizontal relationships between innovative groups of people in different places and countries must be encouraged. There is still a lot to be done to demonstrate the benefits of sustainable lifestyles, explore new perspectives and development paths, motivate policy-makers, civil society organizations, scientists, the business sector and everyone of us to take part. Building constructive and equitable relationships is the key to achieving change.

There is a great challenge ahead of us all.

## Further resources:

- Social innovations conversations: <http://sic.conversationsnetwork.org/>
- Creative Communities for Sustainable Lifestyles: <http://www.sustainable-everyday.net/SEPhome/home.html>
- YouthXchange: [www.youthexchange.net/main/home.asp](http://www.youthexchange.net/main/home.asp).
- WBCSD: <http://www.wbcd.org>
- A literature review on sustainable lifestyles and recommendations for further research: [http://sei-international.org/mediamanager/documents/Publications/Future/sei\\_sustainable\\_lifestyles\\_evidence\\_report.pdf](http://sei-international.org/mediamanager/documents/Publications/Future/sei_sustainable_lifestyles_evidence_report.pdf)
- Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles website: <http://esa.un.org/marrakechprocess/tfsuslifestyles.shtml>
- Making the Business Case for Sustainable Lifestyles: <http://www.encourage-sustainable-lifestyles.net>
- PERL: <http://www.hihm.no/Prosjektsider/CCN/PERL>
- *Here and Now! Education for Sustainable Consumption. Recommendations and Guidelines:* <http://www.unep.fr/scp/marrakech/taskforces/pdf/Here%20and%20Now%20Layout%2028Jan09.pdf>
- The Marrakech Process: <http://www.unep.fr/scp/marrakech>