

18th INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF NGOs IN OFFICIAL PARTNERSHIP WITH UNESCO

***“GREENING EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP :
NGOS ENGAGED FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPACT”***

Background

Over the years, UNESCO has built up a valuable network of cooperation with NGOs having expertise in its fields of competence. This cooperation is framed by the Directives concerning UNESCO's partnership with NGOs, adopted by the UNESCO General Conference at its 36th session (36 C/Res.108).

In accordance with section XI.2 (g) of the Directives, the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee – composed of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO elected by the International Conference of NGOs – is entrusted to organize, in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat, international forums of NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO on priority issues of the Organization.

Previous international forums for NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO have served as effective platforms for raising awareness and mobilising support around UNESCO's priority areas. They have also enabled knowledge exchange, peer learning and capacity-building, strengthening NGOs' understanding of UNESCO frameworks and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, particularly in education, sustainability and innovation.

Developed through the joint efforts of the Liaison Committee, NGOs and the Secretariat, these forums have demonstrated strong value in building partnerships, reinforcing organizational and technical capacities, and better aligning global priorities with local action.

The Theme

The International Conference of NGOs, held from 17 to 19 December 2024, recommended that the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee develop initiatives in support of the Greening Education Partnership (GEP) and consider the organisation of an International Forum dedicated to this priority.

The Greening Education Partnership is a global initiative launched at the UN Transforming Education Summit in 2022. The GEP is rooted in the longstanding work in Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), empowering learners with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to take transformative action to shape green, resilient and just societies.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and climate change education build on a strong and well-established foundation of global initiatives, including the UN Decade of ESD (2005–2014), the Global Action Programme on ESD (2015–2019), and the ESD for 2030 framework. The UN General Assembly Resolution 72/222 (2017) noted ESD as an integral component of SDG 4 on education and a key enabler of all other SDGs (in particular SDG 13 on climate action). This orientation was further reinforced by the Berlin Declaration (2021) and UNESCO General Conference Resolution 41GC/16, which called for climate action to be embedded as a core element of curricula. In parallel, Article 6 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate

Change (UNFCCC) and Article 12 of the Paris Agreement emphasize Action for Climate Empowerment, including climate change education.

By advancing green education, the Partnership directly contributes to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda - particularly SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 13 (climate action) - as well as to the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

The Partnership is structured around four main pillars :

1. Greening schools to ensure a whole-institute approach, including greening teaching and learning, climate-ready school facilities and operations, inclusive governance, and community engagement;
2. Greening every curriculum to ensure relevant and quality of learning content and pedagogy on climate change education;
3. Greening teachers training and education systems' capacities to strengthen policy, planning, finance, and implementation;
4. Greening communities to become climate resilient through lifelong learning

As of June 2025, the Partnership includes 97 countries and over 1,900 stakeholders, encompassing a wide range of representation, including NGOs.

In 2024, the GEP published its first two global resources to create a common standard and support monitoring of progress. Under Pillar 1, the **Green School Quality Standard** was launched, targeting 50% of schools aligned by 2030. Under Pillar 2, the **Greening Curriculum Guidance** was issued, aiming for 90% of national curricula to include climate change. At COP30 in 2025, the **Greening Communities Guidance** was published under Pillar 4, further strengthening lifelong learning efforts. A policy tool placing educators at the heart of greening education (Pillar 3) and the GEP Global Monitoring Platform are currently in development to reinforce the Partnership's objectives.

An important cross-cutting aspect of the GEP is its recognition of young people as key agents of change. Their perspectives, priorities, and lived experiences are actively sought and integrated into the design, implementation, and monitoring of actions, ensuring that education responses to climate and sustainability challenges are relevant, inclusive, and future-oriented.

In addition to the focus of the GEP outlined above, the development of skills, competencies, and capacities across social, technical, and systemic levels is gaining traction as an integral element within this discourse. Education systems, including higher education and research institutions, can only become greener and more resilient if educators, learners, and communities are equipped not only with knowledge and values, but also with practical, technical, and problem-solving skills that enable the translation of sustainability principles into real-world solutions. This includes abilities to address complex challenges, innovate, and implement sustainable practices in schools, communities, and wider societal systems. Within this context, teachers and educators play a crucial role. Women, who represent approximately 70% of the global teaching workforce and an even higher proportion in early childhood and primary education, are key agents of change in embedding sustainability knowledge, values, and skills across education systems. Strengthening teacher capacity therefore requires attention to gender dynamics, non-formal and community-based learning contexts, and continuous professional development supported by NGOs and professional networks.

Role of NGOs

NGOs play a complementary and strategic role alongside public institutions across all levels and forms of education - formal, non-formal, and informal. They expand access, address educational inequalities, and foster innovation, particularly in underserved and marginalized communities and groups.

Beyond service delivery and advocacy, NGOs build capacities by developing the social, technical, and organizational skills necessary for systemic and lasting change. Through training, mentoring, peer learning, and applied practice, they strengthen the abilities of teachers, professors, educators, community leaders, entrepreneurs, and organizations themselves. The ethical and responsible use of digital tools and AI can support these efforts, enabling personalized learning, data-informed decision-making, and practical application of sustainability principles.

Their added value is reflected across multiple dimensions: bridging public policies and local communities; fostering pedagogical innovation, including experiential approaches that build sustainability competencies; strengthening professional skills through teachers' capacity building; transforming schools and campuses into laboratories for sustainability; promoting the inclusion of marginalized populations, including refugees, girls, young people, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, and remote communities; enabling intersectoral collaboration across education, sustainability, engineering, entrepreneurship, and community development; fostering international cooperation partnerships grounded in ethics and co-development practices; and contributing practice-based insights to national and international policy processes. NGOs also link green education with sustainable livelihoods, green entrepreneurship, and innovation, helping learners translate sustainability knowledge into applied skills and real-world solutions.

Additionally, NGOs contribute to scientific knowledge through citizen and civil science, complementing academic research, translating complex findings for the public, and countering climate-related misinformation. This strengthens trust in science and supports evidence-based policy and societal action.

Taken together, this whole-system approach - combining education, technical and social skills, research, digital innovation, and community engagement - reinforces NGOs' credibility and effectiveness as strategic partners of the GEP.

The Forum

In accordance with the aforementioned Directives, the Forum is organised by the NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee in close cooperation with the UNESCO Secretariat (Education Sector – Section of Education for Sustainable Development - and the Unit for Civil Society Partnerships), with the active participation of UNESCO's partner organisations.

The Forum is conceived not only as a space for dialogue, but also as a platform for collective learning, competence development, technical upskilling and alignment among NGOs engaged in green education, innovation and sustainability implementation, as well as in cross-sectoral fields that contribute to the effective achievement of GEP goals (e.g., culture, heritage, etc.)

Objectives and Expected Outcomes

Over two days of discussions, the Forum will provide an opportunity to explore and strengthen understanding of the GEP among NGOs and their role in its implementation. It may highlight the importance of skills and competencies at pedagogical, technical, and engineering levels, and recognize the central role of women as educators, mentors, engineers, and green

entrepreneurs. It may also emphasize the importance of green infrastructure, green curricula, and engagement with local communities. Discussions could also examine potential NGO-led contributions to green education across formal, non-formal, TVET, and community-based learning, including research and knowledge production through citizen and civil science initiatives. The Forum may explore the responsible and ethical use of digital and AI-enabled tools in education and NGO operations, and consider opportunities to foster collaboration, peer learning, and follow-up actions such as pilot initiatives, working groups, or joint contributions to UNESCO processes. In summary, the Forum aims to:

- Exchange good practices in greening education within the NGO space
- Enhance collaboration among NGO stakeholders in the context of the GEP, fostering more synergistic and strategic implementation of programmes and resources
- Raise awareness of, and strengthen advocacy for, the valuable role of NGOs in greening education

Target Group

The Forum is primarily designed for NGOs in official partnership with UNESCO. Participation is also open to NGOs members of the GEP, other international, regional, and national NGOs, as well as to institutions, academic and scientific communities, youth and student representatives, and Member States interested in contributing to the objectives of the GEP.

Format

- Two online sessions of 2.5 to 3 hours each
- Each session will cover 2 out of the 4 GEP pillars

The proposed format aims to combine knowledge sharing, peer learning, and participatory methods, enabling NGOs to actively contribute their experience and co-create solutions.

Day 1

- **30 minutes** – Opening Session: General presentation
- **1 hour** – GEP Pillar 1 - Greening Schools: presentation of the pillar, followed by one or two NGO-related experiences (*45 minutes presentation - 15 minutes Q&R*)
- **1 hour** – GEP Pillar 4 - Greening Communities: presentation of the pillar, followed by one or two NGO-related experiences (*45 minutes presentation - 15 minutes Q&R*)

Day 2

- **1 hour** – GEP Pillar 2 - Greening Curriculum: presentation of the pillar, followed by one or two NGO-related experiences (*45 minutes presentation - 15 minutes Q&R*)
- **1 hour** – GEP Pillar 3 - Greening Teacher Training and Education Systems Capacities: presentation of the pillar, followed by one or two NGO-related experiences (*45 minutes presentation - 15 minutes Q&R*)
- **30 minutes** – Closing session

Dates : 11–12 February 2026

- **Approximate number of participants : 200–300**
- **Working languages: English, French and Spanish**