

A House with Twenty-five Front Doors: Practical Teaching and Learning for Sustainable Development in Africa

The existing educational programs and structure of African universities were not designed to address the environmental and sustainability challenges now confronting the continent. To partially address this problem, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Environic Foundation International partnered on development of *Sustainable Societies in Africa: Modules on Education for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Societies in Africa)*. *Sustainable Societies in Africa* is a university level course that can be used to introduce sustainability and environmental issues to students in all faculties in African universities.

Sustainable Societies in Africa explores the twenty-five biggest social, economic and environmental sustainability issues in Africa and examples of the types of approaches being used to effectively address them. Objectives of the course are to substantially increase student understanding of Africa's biggest sustainability challenges and develop students' abilities to design sustainable solutions for problems in their own communities.

Recognizing the pressures of student to faculty ratios in universities and the need to develop students who can solve problems independently and think creatively, *Sustainable Societies in Africa* uses a learner-centered pedagogy. In *Sustainable Societies in Africa* the student has primary responsibility for the learning process with the instructor serving as the facilitator of that process. The course is the result of three years of research and development including input from throughout Africa, international review and classroom testing. *Sustainable Societies in Africa* is a modular course about Africa's challenges and opportunities that can be used in its complete form, or can be locally adapted for students in a particular region.

Sustainable Societies in Africa is intended to complement and enhance existing discipline-based education and has been designed to facilitate sharing of materials developed in multiple regions.

The *Sustainable Societies in Africa* project is a part of the ten-year, Mainstreaming Environment and Sustainability into African Universities (MESA) Partnership initiative begun by UNEP and supported by the AAU and UNESCO. *Sustainable Societies in Africa* was officially launched in November of 2008.

The paper will examine *Sustainable Societies in Africa: Modules on Education for Sustainable Development's* structure, development, testing and use.