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Ministers of Education
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MEXT

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
CULTURE, SPORTS,
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY-JAPAN

In partnership with UNESCO



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SEAMEO-Japan **CALL FOR ENTRIES** ESD Award



Theme for 2026

**Learning and Well-being for Sustainable Futures:
Leveraging the Power of AI**

“The Government of Japan has contributed and supported the organization of SEAMEO-Japan ESD Award through the collaboration of MEXT and SEAMEO since 2012”.

Full Information: <https://link.seameo.org/ESD2026>

Email: seameojapan.award@seameo.org

I. INTRODUCTION

In 2002, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 57/254 and declared the period 2005-2014 as the “United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” (DESD).

The UNESCO General Conference at its 40th Session and the UN General Assembly at its 74th Session in 2019 endorsed *Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)* as the global framework for implementation of ESD from 2020-2030.

ESD for 2030 builds upon the lessons learned from the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP, 2015-2019), in response to the increased importance placed on ESD to promote the contribution of learning content to the survival and prosperity of humanity. ESD 2030 places emphasis on education’s contribution to the achievement of the SDGs. It aims to review the purposes and values that underpin education and reorient all levels of education and learning to contribute to sustainable development and to strengthen education and learning in all activities that promote sustainable development.¹

While ESD is implemented worldwide under the GAP, in support of further promoting ESD in Southeast Asia, the **Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO)** and the **Government of Japan through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan (MEXT)**, in cooperation with the **UNESCO Bangkok**, have shown their collective commitment to promote best practices in ESD in schools across Southeast Asia, by organising the **SEAMEO-Japan Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Award**. The award has been held annually since 2012.

The objectives of the SEAMEO-Japan ESD Award are:

1. To raise awareness of ESD in schools and communities across Southeast Asia;
2. To promote ESD best practices in schools and communities across Southeast Asia;
3. To share and exchange knowledge and best practices on ESD in schools across Southeast Asia and Japan;
4. To encourage networking among schools and communities which implement ESD practices in Southeast Asian countries and Japan; and
5. To support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of United Nations.

¹ <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000374802.locale=en>



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) consist of 17 integrated and interdependent global goals with associated 169 targets, which aim to shift the world on to a path towards sustainable and resilient development. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>

The Award adopted the following themes and participated in by the following number of schools in Southeast Asia.

Year	Theme	Number of Participating Schools	Participated Countries in Southeast Asia
2012	Education for Disaster Risk Reduction	69	7 Countries: Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam
2013	Values Education	126	8 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam
2014	Fostering Global Citizenship for Sustainable Future	63	9 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam
2015	Safeguarding our Cultural Traditions	90	10 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam
2016	Saving Energy	43	8 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand
2017	Improving Health and Nutrition	56	8 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam
2018	Applying Local Wisdom for Environmental Conservation	94	7 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand

Year	Theme	Number of Participating Schools	Participated Countries in Southeast Asia
2019	Building Peace in Schools and Communities	79	9 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam
2020	Addressing Plastic Problems for Transforming Communities	181	9 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam
2021	Securing Educational Opportunities in COVID-19 Crisis	282	8 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam
2022	Education Transformation through Partnership	278	8 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Thailand
2023	Promoting Environmental Education through Utilising Renewable Energy	115	8 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand
2024	Promoting Lifelong STEM Learning through Community Engagement	161	10 Countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam
2025	Fostering Schools and Surrounding Communities' Resilience through the Revitalisation of Local Wisdom in Disaster Risk Reduction	141	10 countries: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam

II. THEME FOR 2026

“Learning and Well-being for Sustainable Futures: Leveraging the Power of AI”

As schools are uniquely positioned to prepare learners for equitable, resilient, and sustainable futures, they serve as community hubs where values, relationships, and a shared sense of responsibility are cultivated, alongside the knowledge, skills, and agency needed to drive sustainable development within communities and beyond.

In the age of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies, schools have access to powerful tools that open new possibilities for learning and well-being. When used thoughtfully and ethically, these tools not only foster critical thinking, creativity, and ethical judgment but equally important can strengthen human connections, positive relationships, and the well-being of learners and their communities.

This year's SEAMEO-Japan ESD Award "Learning and Well-being for Sustainable Futures: Leveraging the Power of AI" draws on the full breadth of Education for Sustainable Development, recognising that ESD-aligned initiatives — whether addressing environmental stewardship, climate resilience, social equity, or community health — all contribute to the shared goal of sustainable futures. **Within this broader ESD framework, the theme places particular emphasis on two closely interconnected dimensions of**

sustainable development: Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which emphasises inclusive, equitable, and quality learning that fosters future-ready skills and supportive environments, and Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), which promotes physical, mental, and social well-being across all stages of life. Together, they affirm that quality learning and holistic well-being are inseparable **foundations through which ESD creates lasting** impact — extending beyond the classroom to shape healthier, more resilient, and sustainable future of communities.

Schools that have developed programmes reflecting this theme — leveraging AI tools to engage learners with real-world **ESD** challenges across environmental, social, and local contexts — are invited to submit their initiatives to the 2026 SEAMEO–Japan ESD Award. The Award recognises approaches that leverage AI and digital technologies to enhance learning and well-being in ways that are meaningful, ethical, and impactful for students, schools, and communities. More specifically, this year's Award aims to:

- to promote learning and understanding of ESD and well-being in the age of AI through practical, action-oriented school programmes, including fostering learners' critical understanding of AI, its potential benefits, and its limitations;
- to encourage collaboration among schools, families, and communities in addressing sustainability challenges within local contexts;
- to support the sharing and exchange of effective ESD practices between Japan and Southeast Asia, strengthening knowledge, innovation, and collective learning;
- to showcase exemplary school-based ESD initiatives from Southeast Asia and provide opportunities for wider recognition and international learning exchange.

Under the theme of “Learning and Well-being for Sustainable Futures: Leveraging the Power of AI”, the school entry should cover the following areas:

- The entry should be relevant to the theme and within the scope of “Learning and Well-being for Sustainable Futures: Leveraging the Power of AI,” as defined above.
- The school’s programme should be primarily student-led, with collaboration among teachers, other students, parents, and the wider community.
- The programme should demonstrate continuity and impact. Both ongoing programmes and newly initiated programmes are eligible, provided they demonstrate clear impact or strong potential with early evidence.
- The entry should demonstrate how the theme is meaningfully integrated into school practices and culture — including policies, planning, curriculum, teaching and learning, partnerships, and engagement with parents and the wider community.

III. ELIGIBILITY OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

ALL SCHOOLS IN SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES ARE INVITED TO ENTER THE COMPETITION

All public and private **kindergarten / elementary / secondary / vocational and technical (up to Grade 12) schools** in 11 Southeast Asian countries – namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam – are invited to submit information about initiatives that are related to the theme of this year’s competition.

Remarks:

1. Institutions operating at the higher or tertiary education level — including universities, colleges, and post-secondary technical or vocational institutes — are not eligible under any circumstances.

2. To encourage wider regional participation and ensure that more schools have the opportunity to be recognised, the SEAMEO-Japan ESD Award applies a participation rotation arrangement for recent prize-winning schools.

Under this arrangement:

- **1st Prize winners will be eligible** to reapply after two years.
- **2nd and 3rd Prize winners (including special prizes)** are eligible to reapply.

Based on the eligibility rules, **first-prize winners from the 2024-2025 cycle** are not eligible to apply this year.

IV. PRIZES

1st Prize Winner

- USD\$1,000
- A study tour to Japan for students and teachers involved in planning and implementing the school’s initiative for this award.

(The organiser will sponsor the travel expenses for six persons — two (2) teachers and four (4) students with meaningful involvement — including round-trip airfares, accommodation, domestic transportation in Japan, interpretation services, and visa fees).

2nd Prize Winner
USD\$600

3rd Prize Winner
USD\$400

- All winning schools (1st–3rd prize) will receive a Plaque of Recognition, and Certificates of Appreciation will be presented to the teachers and students involved in planning and implementing the school’s initiative.
- All winning schools may be invited to participate in a post-award webinar to share their ESD efforts.
- All shortlisted schools will receive Certificate of Recognition for the school.
- All participating schools that submit entries relevant to the theme will be recognised on the SEAMEO website (school name, project title, and country) and will receive one Certificate of Participation after the official announcement of the winners.

V. JUDGING CRITERIA

The judging committee will consider the following criteria in selecting the winning schools:

1. Strategy and Modality of Implementation (20%)

- The school demonstrates clear plans, policies, strategies, and programme components for effective implementation.
- Appropriate methods and resources are used to support implementation.
- Monitoring and evaluation processes are in place to track progress, assess outcomes, and support continuous improvement.
- Participatory processes involving students, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders are evident in planning and implementation.

2. Teaching and Learning Approaches (20%)

- The programme is integrated into teaching and learning practices and school activities.
- Learning experiences enable students to connect knowledge and skills to daily life, local environments, and community contexts.
- Teaching approaches encourage critical thinking, collaboration, and responsible decision-making.

3. Innovation and Creativity (20%)

- The programme demonstrates innovative practices aligned with the theme.
- Creative use of available resources enhances learning and programme effectiveness.

4. Engagement with the Community (15%)

- The school engages community partners such as neighbouring educational institutions, local authorities, and parent associations.
- The programme promotes public awareness and collective action related to the theme.
- Students actively contribute to community improvement and sustainable development through programme activities.

5. Impact and Sustainability (15%)

- Evidence demonstrates positive outcomes for students, teachers, parents, and the wider community.
- The school presents a clear plan to sustain, expand, or scale up the initiative.
- The initiative shows potential for replication or adaptation in other schools or contexts.

6. Interrelationship with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (10%)

- The school has demonstrated that the school's programme has integrated the improvement of other SDGs, not the individual pursuit of each SDG, but has interrelation with other SDGs.

VI. THE JUDGING COMMITTEE

The Judging Committee consists of experts in the areas of education for sustainable development, and education from Japan and the Southeast Asian region.

The decision of the Judging Committee is final and challenges/appeals are not allowed.

VII. GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES

1. The sharp deadline of entry submissions is **15 July 2026**. Late submission is not accepted.
2. Each school can submit **only one (1) entry**; if multiple submissions are received from the same school, **only the latest submission will be considered**.
3. Entries must be submitted by schools that meet the eligibility requirements outlined in Section III: Eligibility of Participating Schools.
4. Schools must submit the following requirements to the SEAMEO Secretariat through the google form provided:
 - A. A completed **submission documents of 2026 SEAMEO-Japan ESD Award** which have to be made in .docx or .pdf format, maximum file size is 10 MB. The submission form can be downloaded from the SEAMEO website: <https://link.seameo.org/ESD2026>
 - B. **A 3-minute video clip** presents the school's programme in English. If it is produced in local language, please add subtitles so that the judging committee can understand it.

5. (Optional) All submissions can be attached with a maximum of **two (2) supporting documents** which can be written in local language. However, a brief translation in English should be provided. Only specific file types of supporting documents are accepted which are .docx, .pdf, .xlsx, and .ppt. If the supporting documents are made in .docx or .pdf, it should be less than or equal to **twenty (20) pages** each.
6. **How to Submit the Entry:** Please send the completed submission form of 2026 SEAMEO-Japan ESD Award and a link of three-minute video clip together with supporting documents to the following google form:



<https://link.seameo.org/ESD2026/Submission>

7. After submitting the google form, you will receive a copy of your responses via the responder's email immediately. Your responses can be edited after submitting by clicking the 'Edit response' button in the email you receive after submitting the google form. Please note that edits can only be made before the deadline: 15 July 2026. If you cannot find the email from the Google form, please re-submit the submission again.
8. If your school programme is shortlisted, we will arrange an **online presentation and Q&A session**. This allows the judging panel to speak directly with the school and ask for more details about the programme. The session will take place in August, **subject to the availability of the judging committee**, and we will confirm the exact date and time with you in advance. Please note that the presentation and discussion must be in English. To ensure fairness, schools from non-English-speaking backgrounds may arrange their own interpreter (such as a staff member, English teacher or a volunteer). **The school will be responsible for any costs incurred.**

VIII. IMPORTANT DATES

May - 15 July 2026	Entry Submission Period
15 July 2026	Deadline for entry submissions
August 2026 (TBC)	Online presentation and Question-and-Answer (Q&A) session for shortlisted entries
1 October 2026	Official announcement of winning schools
October – November 2026	Distribution of prizes and certificates to winners and participating schools
TBC in 2027	Study visit programme in Japan for the 1 st prize winner of 2026 SEAMEO-Japan ESD Award

IX. CONTACT INFORMATION

Ms Chunkan Benchaporn
 Programme Assistant
 SEAMEO Secretariat
 Bangkok, Thailand
 Email: seameojapan.award@seameo.org
 Website: www.seameo.org