

Individual approaches —building nationwide sustainability

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Introduction

Sustainable Development cannot be achieved without the awareness and actions of each of us as individuals, in our daily lives and economic activity. This requires that each of us be aware that we have interdependent relationships with people around the world, with future generations, and with the environment. Education for Sustainable Development creates opportunities for us to change our behavior through education that fosters an awareness of the issues and leads to action.

Given the importance of human resource development in achieving sustainable development at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, Japan put forward a proposal that the 10 years between 2005 and 2014 be declared the “United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” (UNDESD). As a result, the proposal was adopted at the 57th General Assembly of the United Nations. Since then, ESD initiatives have been implemented by a variety of entities in Japan and other nations/regions around the world.

In 2005, UNESCO formulated the International Implementation Scheme, which set out policies for ESD promotion by individual countries, the United Nations, and other international organizations in DESD. Based on this, Japan formulated Japan’s Action Plan for the UNDESD in 2006 (revised in 2011) as part of government efforts to promote ESD.

UNESCO World Conference on ESD

Meeting overview

In November 2014, the final year of the UNDESD, the UNESCO World Conference on ESD was held in Japan, which had originally proposed establishing the UNDESD. During the conference, stakeholders including international organizations, researchers, and educators came together to exchange opinions at Stakeholder Meetings, which were held in the Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture, from November 4 to 8. The outcome of these discussions were later reflected in the Ministerial Round Table and in Plenaries hosted by Japan and UNESCO in the City of Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, from November 10 to 12.

During the Ministerial Round Table and Plenaries, these representatives vigorously discussed how to promote the Global Action Programme on ESD (GAP), a set of policies for promoting ESD in 2015 and beyond. Following the discussions at both of these meetings, on November 12, the final day of the conference, participants adopted the Aichi-Nagoya Declaration on Education for Sustainable Development, which calls on individual countries to promote GAP and to incorporate ESD in the policies they establish in 2015 and beyond. It was officially announced that GAP would commence in 2015.

Japan's initiatives on ESD

Following the World Conference on ESD, GAP was passed by a resolution at the 69th General Assembly of the United Nations. Based on the achievements of the World Conference on ESD and GAP, Japan has now added momentum to its ESD initiatives for 2015 and beyond. The Ministry of the Environment is doing even more to promote ESD based on GAP, bringing both global and local perspectives to key initiatives including development of human resources, development of educational materials and programs, and creation of a structure for cooperation and support. By streamlining and implementing Japan's Action Plan for the UNDESD, also based on GAP, the government of Japan is working to build a sustainable society.

The power of ESD

As was seen in Chapter 3, in the process of regional revitalization, people are once again recognizing the core value of local resources, including unique historical, natural, cultural, and social resources, and are moving to build attractive future communities that make maximum use of these local resources. Incorporating the ESD perspective in their activities, which are already underway in areas around Japan, will enable these regions to expand the scope of their activities to include efforts to build sustainable communities.

The following two examples describe how individuals, NPOs, students, and various other entities are working to build sustainable communities through ESD.

The “Mori wa Umi no Koibito” movement

The NPO Mori wa Umi no Koibito (literally, “the forest is longing for the sea, the sea is longing for the forest”) was founded by Shigeatsu Hatakeyama and is located in Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture.

Rivers flowing from the mountains to the sea supply nutrients that are essential for nourishing phytoplankton, which serves as food for oysters. However, the environment in Kesennuma Bay, a precious breeding ground for oysters, deteriorated in the years between 1960–1970. Hatakeyama started a movement to plant broadleaf trees in the mountains along the upper reaches of rivers feeding into Kesennuma Bay and thereby improve the marine environment.

The NPO has since expanded its activities and is putting ESD into practice in the tidelands that emerged following the March 2011 earthquake, raising awareness of environmental issues among local residents through disaster preparedness and environmental education.

Elementary school students surveying tideland clams as part of environmental education



Photo: NPO Mori wa Umi no Koibito

The “Takabe Misoshiru Genki-Ippai” project

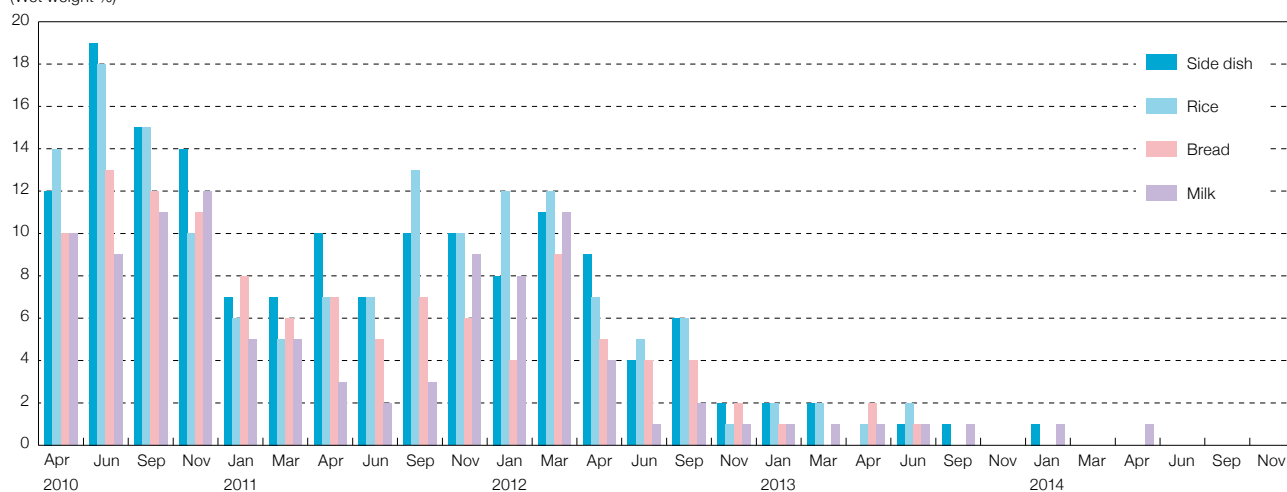
At Takabedai Elementary School in Osaka Prefecture, approximately 200 people from university clubs and a diverse range of other local entities are working together to teach children how to plant crops and make miso (fermented soybean paste). Every February, the children make soup from the miso they make and the crops they raise, and enjoy the soup together with local residents.

Since the start of the Takabe Misoshiru Genki-Ippai project (literally, “Takabe’s empowerment project through miso soup”), the amount of food wasted in school lunches has declined. The project’s achievements are being communicated to local residents, university students, and others, and have become a driving force in further promoting the project.

Through this project, promoted not only by the children of Takabedai Elementary School but by diverse local entities, citizens have become more aware of the significance of building a sustainable society through food education, with the result that the community has succeeded in reducing food waste, an excellent example of an ESD initiative driven by community cooperation.

Transition of food leftovers for school lunch at Takebedai Elementary School

(Wet weight %)



Source: Takebedai Elementary School