



Asia Good ESD Practice Project

**Okayama Kyoyama ESD Activity - Community
Empowerment Lead by Kids' Wonder**

2006

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(ESD-J)

Japan

A Case of Environmental Education Progressing to ESD **~ Okayama City Kyoyama District ESD Environment Project**

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[A] EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Okayama Kyoyama ESD Environment Project (Okayama KEEP) is an ESD operation run by children and conducted in cooperation with people in the community from all walks of life. The regional issues and problems that came to light from children's environmental education evolved into ESD by linking with other issues such as global warming, tradition and modernization and everyday life and by probing for feasible ways.

In this article the activities of Okayama KEEP and its background, their practical viewpoints, and the process which led to ESD will be outlined. Then the challenges faced by Okayama KEEP as well as the efforts to overcome them will be reviewed, and the empowering process of the participants will be analyzed.

[B] ATTRIBUTION

1. Implementing Bodies

Okayama KEEP is carried out not by a specific organization but by various groups including social institutions, schools and academies, community organizations, NGOs, NPOs, private companies, the media, and the local government.

Organizations Participating in the Project

Social Institutions :	Okayama City Kyoyama Community Center
Schools :	Okayama City Ijima Elementary School Okayama City Tsushima Elementary School Okayama City Kyoyama Junior High Science Club Okayama Prefectural Okayama Industrial High School
Academies :	Okayama University Environmental Dept. ECOLO Okayama College of Science Kitaoka Research Lab Notre Dame Seishin Womens' University
Community Organizations :	Okayama City Kyoyama Junior High Alumni Neighbourhood Associations Women's Group Senior Citizens' Group
NGOs, NPOs:	Okayama UNESCO Kyoyama IT Supporters Okayama Video Club Asahikawa Valley Network
Private companies:	Environment Assessment Center, Western Japan Office

Ozaki Trading Company
 Media: Sanyo Shinbun
 Government: Okayama City Water Works

2. Person in Charge

Mitsuyuki Ikeda (Mr.)

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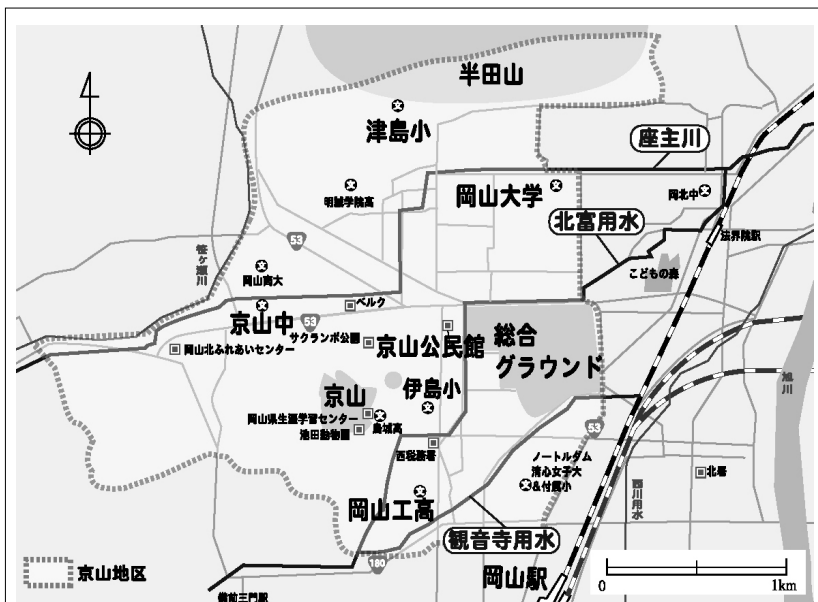
[C] PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. Project Title

“Okayama City Kyoyama District ESD Environmental Project”

1. Contents

Outline of the Project District



The Kyoyama District is in Okayama Prefecture located in southwest Japan, facing the Seto Inland Sea. The mean temperature is 16.3 degrees Celsius and the region enjoys a four season cycle. The population is about 24,000 (with approximately 10,000 households). The district has numerous educational facilities - 3 elementary

schools, 1 junior high, 3 senior highs, 3 universities, the Prefectural Life-long Learning Center and Children’s Center, Okayama Prefectural General Grounds, Okayama City Kyoyama Community Center and Exchange Center, Okayama University Farm, and Ikeda Zoo.

The district is home to a large number of government and university faculty and employees, many of whom reside here with their families. The average IQ of junior high students is top level nationwide. The area is also known as a “Brand District,” due to the high qualifications, economic and social status and cultural awareness of its residents.

In the Kyoyama District, irrigation canals such as the Zasu River, the Kanonji Canal, and

the Kitatomi Canal, all drawn from the Asahi River, characterize the natural environment. The town flourished as did these waterways and their many subsidiary streams, which were originally established in the 8th century. For a long period, residents used these waterways in their daily life and for agriculture without polluting it. However, the rapid post-war economic growth and modernization, changed people's lifestyles dramatically, and toppled well-maintained balance with nature. Maintenance of sewage systems could not keep up with the changes, and chemical pesticides were used regularly to exterminate mosquito larvae as the waterways were contaminated by household sewage. The last 10 years has seen all waterways other than the Zasu River, Kanonji Canal and Kitatomi Canal, converted into underground waterways, changing the town landscape considerably. Presently, only 60% of the district has a sewage system and in some areas domestic waste water directly pours into the three main waterways.

People's life in this region was traditionally supported by the Residents' Association. In the past, this residents' association was in charge of ceremonial occasions and reciprocal help, acted as communications medium for the community. However, recently, 70% of the population has become rather mobile mainly due to work transfers, the residents' association is losing their raison d'être. The structure of the Resident's Association became fixed and they face serious aging problems.

Background of Project Application

In the late 1990s, increasing awareness of education aimed at creating sustainable societies was seen among environmental education researchers and activists in and among UNESCO and other UN organizations. Mitsuyuki Ikeda (current leader of KEEP) became involved in promoting ESD in Japan as a trustee on the board for Okayama UNESCO and through its activities. As president of Kyoyama Junior High's alumni association, he happened to meet several influential local educators. Among them were Yoko Sugimura, Community Center Chief, who promoted social education, Shigeko Inukai, Principal of Kyoyama Junior High and Rika Fujiwara, a teacher at the same school.

In 2002, Mr. Ikeda stood in for the mayor, and participated in the Johannesburg Summit and made a joint proposal of 10 years of ESD with Japanese government and NGOs. This started ESD in the Kyoyama district, and on his return to Japan, he introduced the concept of ESD to the local community who had been making attempts at cooperative efforts. With Mr. Ikeda at the forefront, began to raise interest and foster awareness in people through schools and social educational facilities, for citizens' cooperation, to solve for the region's environmental issues and to nurture the people to succeed in the

activities.

Those efforts united the separate society and environment workshops run by the region's schools, community centers and NGOs, in that they adopted an ESD approach. In 2003 they set up the "Childrens' Waterways Exploration Project" as a test project.

The Kyoyama Community Center was the headquarters for this project, and junior high students planned and carried out the activities with cooperation of citizens of all age groups and made presentations. At the planning stage, the participants learned the state of the region's waterways through environmental education like the "Life in Harmony with the Town River" project set up by Asahi River Network (AR-NET), and Okayama UNESCO's "Lifestyle and Culture in Harmony with the River" (UNESCO) both set up in the 1990s -- and issues to be addressed in further projects were made clearer.

In light of the fact that in the Asahi River's upstream region traditional knowledge on how to cook and clean without contaminating the rivers still prevails today, the high level of contamination of the Kyoyama downstream waterways led to the question of why residents in downstream Kyoyama could not maintain a lifestyle similar to that of residents upstream where the water was cleaner. This question led to the set up of two research projects. One was a survey of the water, forests, and air quality by seasons. The other interviewed elderly residents of the Association and the Senior Citizens' group who in the past lived near the waterway and the natural environment. The continuation of this test project led to the establishment of Okayama KEEP in 2004.

2. Participants and Structure

Okayama KEEP was set up with children ranging from Grade 4 elementary school (10 years old), to 1st year high school (16 years old) and with adults who took on coordinator or support roles. These adults were members of the previously mentioned organizations which were collaborating under the Okayama KEEP project.

Children



While the children were the beneficiaries of the project, they were also the main players in the "planning → preparation → application → results → presentation → review" process. In other words, they were not simply passive participants, but rather active independent central players. These children were students from Ishima and Tsushima Elementary schools, Kyoyama Junior

High's Science club (including some alumni), and Okayama Technical High School students. They had numerous discussions with adult coordinators, and they proceeded with a variety of advice and support.

Voice of Participant: Children's Independent Participation

In Japan there are many children-centered events, but what was unique was that in this case, the children played a vital role through the whole process right from the planning stages. When left to decide among themselves, the children's ingenuity was impressive. In the course of discussions I'd get so engrossed, and forget my own age and that it was kids we were dealing with.

Kyoyama Community Center Staff Yoko Maekawa

Coordinators

It was the duty of the adults acting as coordinators to provide orientation, location, finance and to liaise with the media and outside ESD-related network collaborators, coordinating the children's participation in official international conferences as well as facilitating their queries regarding the activities. Here are the coordinators.

Mr. Mitsuyuki Ikeda (Leader of Okayama KEEP)



Born and raised in the Kyoyama District, Mr. Ikeda left his hometown to go to university, but he came back again to set up his company. On his return to Kyoyama, he became the president of the Kyoyama Junior High Alumni association and made acquaintance with people in the local Residents' Association and Community Centers. While forming good relationships with the local people, he became central to ESD efforts in Kyoyama, trying to strengthen their sentiments towards their hometown and revive in them the need to do something about the waterways. He is the chair of Okayama UNESCO, vice chair of ESD-J. He is active to connect Okayama KEEP with other activities in Japan and abroad.

Ms. Yoko Sugimura (Kyoyama Community Center Chief)



Ms. Sugimura, originally a resident of Okayama Prefecture, accompanied her husband on a transfer to the USA in the 1970s, where the Civil Rights movement and other movements aimed towards affirmative action, piqued her interest in adult education. On returning to Japan, she underwent study to get qualifications in Social Education, and started to work at the Community Center. Finding herself subjected to gender biases, she learned to use her job to overcome them. She dealt with a range of social education issues, like age, gender, DV

and children's rights and environment, and opened the prefecture's first women's learning institute. Five years ago she became the Community Center Chief. Recognizing Okayama KEEP as another means of social education, she began to promote it as a Community Center effort.

Ms. Shigeko Inukai (Principal of Kyoyama Junior High)

A resident of Okayama Prefecture, Ms. Inukai was appointed principal of Kyoyama Junior High in April 2004. Acknowledging the indispensable role played by the local people in the children's upbringing, she was interested in forming some kind of link between the people and the children. She decided for the Kyoyama Junior High Science Club to participate in Okayama KEEP, and presently, via this club, is striving for ESD efforts and awareness through the whole school. She also set up collaborative workshops and conferences for students, teachers and local people.

Ms. Rika Fujiwara (Teacher at Kyoyama Junior High, supervisor of the Science Club)

Originally from Okayama Prefecture, while working as a teacher at Kyoyama Junior High school, Ms. Fujiwara also participated in the Local Rice Field Learning Experience run by the Community Center. And through her role as supervisor of the Science Club, she came to be involved with Okayama KEEP in its initial test project days. Ms. Fujiwara's interests go beyond the simple transmission of knowledge, to teaching methods that bring out the best of the children's abilities.

Ms. Yoko Maekawa (Kyoyama Community Center staff)



Originally from neighboring Kagawa Prefecture, Ms. Maekawa worked voluntarily for Okayama KEEP before being appointed to work at the Kyoyama Community Center. Part of her job there, was to coordinate for Okayama KEEP's activities.

Voice of Participant : Thoughts on coordination of activities

“My home was surrounded by waterways. I crossed a bridge over one such waterway to go outside. The waterway was dirty with household waste, and it was a part of my life. When I was a child, we would go exploring downstream of the waterways, helping myself to the fruit on the trees alongside. Recently, these waterways have been filled in and the town seems rather dry. With a not-so-clean environment in front of me, an awareness has somehow arisen in me with regards

to water. Children today don't have a clue as to what Kyoyama was like before with its waterways.€ 35

Mr. Mitsuyuki Ikeda KEEP Leader in his 40s

Supporters

Using their own personal experience as well as the expertise of the organizations to which they belong, the adults act as supporters assisting the children's efforts. Here are some of these supporters.

Mr. Takeshi Noguchi (NGO NHK Okayama Video Club)

Mr. Noguchi is documenting/editing Okayama KEEP activities on film for production of a DVD.

Ms. Reiko Shimizu (journalist for the Sanyo Shinbun Co.)

Ms. Shimizu is introducing the concept of ESD as a case study for ESD in her articles. She also acts as a counselor for children with problems in school or at home.

Mr. Hiroyuki Ishii (Okayama City Waterworks Chief)

Mr. Ishii acts as an advisor with technical insight into sewage and water pollution.

Ms. Narumi Saiki (NGO Kyoyama IT Supporter)

Ms. Saiki provides IT assistance, helping create data for presentations, etc.

Voice of Participant: with regard to Supporting activities

Okayama KEEP became my raison d'etre.

Mr. Takeshi Noguchi Documentary Video Producer/Editor in his 70s

3. Activities

The purpose of Okayama KEEP is to build a society where humans and nature coexist in harmony, and cultivate individuals who can sustain such a society. With Kyoyama Community Center as its headquarters, a variety of activities were carried out under two main categories – the Natural and Living Environment Category and the Culture and Society Category. With the outcome of the studies, we created education materials, host workshops, and participated and proposed official conferences. Here are some of the activities.

Studies under Natural and Living Environment Category

<Exploring the Local Environment>

Children carried out surveys of the local natural environment by seasons, and wrote reports on their findings. They divided into three groups – ‘water’, ‘vegetation’, and ‘living creatures’. After the survey, they presented their findings. They discussed issues and thought about possible solutions. The following is one example, outlining the environmental exploration survey contents and results.



‘Water’ Group

Activity contents: Survey of water quality of the Zasu River, and Kannonji and Kitatomi Canals, followed by brainstorming on measures necessary to regain and restore the clean water, and revised lifestyle patterns and how to put them into practice.

Survey contents: utilizing pack test and other special equipment, water quality was surveyed through tests to measure pH, COD, NO₂-N, hardness, electric conductivity, and clarity levels. Fish and insect species were also studied, as were garbage levels.

‘Vegetation’ Group

Activity contents: Survey of air, greenery and garbage of urban areas, hillsides and parks, and brainstorming on reform measures.

Survey contents: Determining amount and type of garbage, studying air and foliage for information on the amount of dust, wind direction, wind speed, temperatures, and vegetation types. Measurement of traffic levels, negative ion levels and CO₂ density.

‘Living Creatures’ Group

Activity contents: Study of living creature in urban and hillside regions. Brainstorming on coexistence of humans with nature.

Survey contents: Photographing bird, insect and mammal species, recording their characteristics and determining their correct biological names.

Example of presentation contents and issues raised

Winter Environment Exploration

Date: 29th Jan., 2005 Participants: 50 members Weather: Sunny

‘Water’ Group

Survey venues: Zasu River, Kannonji Canal, and Kitatomi Canal (upstream, midstream

and down stream)

Zasu River: Traces of oil found in the river water.

Kannonji Canal: Living creatures fewer than in summer or fall findings. Flow of water slow.

Kitatomi Canal (upstream): Large numbers of Kawamutsu and Oikawa fish (both carp species)

(midstream) : Water not clear, with peculiar smell. Unable to observe presence of living creatures

(downstream): garbage found in river, but presence of Aburabote and Yaridanago fish (both carp species)

‘Greenery/Vegetation’ Group and ‘Living Creatures’ Group

Survey venues: General Grounds, National Highway 53, Taiyo no Oka, Ijima Elementary School, Sakuranbo Park

General grounds: Sudaji and Akagashi Beech trees, Cherry Trees. A lot of garbage in the area.

Sakuranbo Park: findings of stinkbug type eggs.

National Highway 53: Daffodils in bloom. A lot of garbage in the area.

Issues raised:

- investigate sources of water pollution and seek solutions
- Involve as many local people as possible in KEEP activities

調査地点	時間	気温 (C)	水温 (C)	川幅 (cm)	流速 (cm/s)	水深 (cm)	雨量 (mm)	pH	COD (mg/l)	重碳酸塩 (mg/l)	硝酸体積 (ml)	全窒素 (mg/l)	全リン (mg/l)	透明度 (cm)
座主川	10:19	29	23.5	4	0.75	0.33	0.67	7.8	4	0.006	0.0165	28	106	100
北富	11:00					0.3		7.03	11.5	0.15	0.272	50	66	100
観音寺	11:25	31	25	3.62	0.4	0.32	0.46336	7.9	3.6	0.006	0.044	31.3	103.7	100

Studies under Culture and Society Category

<Upstream Experience Eco-tour>



Visiting the Kyoyama region’s upstream towns and villages, participants communicate with local residents while enjoying the river and snow. They learn and experience the way to maintain clean water in the life with waterways. They learn traditional wisdom and practice for environmentally-friendly lifestyles which became rare in downstream areas.

<Meeting to Discuss the Region's Past Present and Future>

In addition to hearing about traditional customs and practices from the Senior Citizens' Group and the Resident's Association members, this was a chance to learn from their traditional wisdom.

Development of Activities based on this Learning

<ESD Day Festival>

As well as providing publicity for ESD to the whole community, an overnight ESD Day Festival for local people was held at the Kyoyama Community Center, also providing means through which the community could adopt ESD practices. An Executive Committee was set up to organize the event, with Okayama KEEP at the core, and the event, enabled participation of members of the Residents' Association, Senior Citizens' Group and Women's Group and other organizations, who thus far had not yet been involved.



<ESD Day Festival Program Contents>

Opening

Program 1 : ESD Regional Town Meeting

Introduction and view sharing on International and National ESD planning

Program 2 : Subcommittees

Committee1 : Discussion on global warming strategies

Committee2 : Game aimed at providing experience of traditional lifestyle to ease global warming

Program 3 : Overall meeting

Presentation of school and community activities, reports from ESD Day Subcommittees, reports regarding strategies to fend off global warming, and a concluding summary.



Other program agenda

- ESD round-table discussion: Discussion with researchers from U.N. University

- Kyoyama Regional ESD Summit: representatives of City Office, Board of Education, U.N. University researchers, elementary and junior high school principals.
- star watching
- Regions cultural folklore
- Eco-cooking

<Opening Workshops>

Workshops were held in classes and school festivals and other events at elementary and junior high schools.

<Participation in Meetings and Symposiums>



Opinions were exchanged and presentation of activities were held through participating in meetings such as the Aichi World EXPO Citizens' Village ESD Symposium, 'Symposium for Discussions between Parliamentary Members and Elementary School Children' held by GLOBE Japan (Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment), the 'Sewage

Environment Forum in Okayama' held by the Japan Sewage Associations Chugoku and Shikoku branches.

<Top Level Discussions on Activities>

Participants visited political leaders including the late ex-Prime Minister Hashimoto, former Prime Minister Koizumi, Environmental Minister Koike, Minister of Education Kosaka, former Mayor Ogiwara of Okayama City to introduce the activities and propose the region's ESD activities to gain further momentum to its efforts.

<Educational Materials Creation>

A challenge sheet focused on preventing global warming, a brochures to raise awareness on global warming.

5. Funding for the activities and its position

Okayama KEEP is supported volitionally by various organizations and individuals. It is not a project run by the government or local administration. Almost all the participants are involved in activities for no returns. Participants provide activity venues, video

documentary equipment, computers, etc. Also, running costs incurred for remunerating speakers and specialists, and for creation of education materials and pamphlet must be covered by Kyoyama Community Centers budget, subsidies from local groups, public trust funds, and donations from private companies and individuals. There is no membership fee other than collections to cover expenses for events such as workshops, symposiums, and the eco tour.

[D] PROJECT REVIEW

1) Evaluation by Participants

20 members of Okayama KEEP were asked to share their opinions about the project activities favorable and unfavorable aspects.

Favorable Aspects of the Activities

(comments from children)

- the discovery of new sides to my personalities different from when at home or school
- I experienced a sense of belonging and could enjoy exchanging views and ideas, and making friends with whom I could share a healthy competitiveness
- I could work alongside people of various age groups
- I could communicate with other residents of the region
- I feel relaxed and be myself, with no pressure to maintain scores and appearances for fear of being bullied like at school
- Existence of people who recognize my existence
- They praised me for my presentations
- I learned more about their hometown
- I could experience nature firsthand.



(comments from adults)

- I could experience the pleasure of being passionate towards their hometown and spreading this sentiment
- I could express their affection for the children
- I witness the lively exploits of the children
- I saw fairness in the relationship between the adults and the children
- I made friends with children
- I saw children and adults from all walks of life working together towards a unified

cause

- I felt that their presence made a difference to society
- I learned more about their hometown
- I could broaden my thinking skills and felt I'm useful

Unfavorable Aspects of the Activities

(comments from children)

- nothing in particular
- difficulty to distinguish whether the aim was the environment or education
- few participation of younger children (elementary students) than me
- sometimes it was difficult to organize the survey data well
- the activities did not spread well in the region
- classmates did not understand them and their intentions
- some people see me doing something unusual

(comments from adults)

- they depended to heavily on Mr. Ikeda
- IT supporters do not possess sufficient PC skills
- it was difficult to participate in activities held on the weekend
- it was difficult to coordinate everyone's busy schedules
- it was not easy the publicize their efforts within the region
- it was hard to gain understanding of their efforts from family and colleagues
- it was hard to get my organization to involve
- ESD was not spreading and becoming the norm in the community
- nothing in particular



2. Challenges

There are some challenges to carry out Okayama KEEP's activities.

Social Restraints on Participation in Activities

Children participate in activities over the weekend and after school when they have to study at home and cram school. Adults also find time to participate in the circumstances where overtime and weekend shift is common. Both adults and children need special efforts to find time to participate, but they always feel difficult to join longer hours or consecutive days.

Lack of a Social Mechanism to Support ESD Activities

Because Okayama KEEP is supported by the free will of the participants, we always face the risk of abrupt halt when people lose interest. Particularly due to the lack of recognition

of ESD and the social mechanism to support organizations' activities, some coordinators experience mental and financial strain.

Limitations to Publicizing ESD

The community's overall participation is crucial to solve the problem. But the fact is that the PR activities are conducted only by the Okayama KEEP participants, and they feel the limitation to prevail their significance. There were also cases of bias towards members, who came to be seen as 'otaku' which has negative connotations of being geeky and too fanatically engrossed in one specific field. In the case of adults, they often fail to invite more people to join the activities because they can't fully explain the significance of it. Children often fail too because their friends were more inclined to give preference to cram school and extracurricular club activities. They fear that they may have to load more burden and that idea hampers wider groups participation.

Lack of Funding for Activities

Resources and funding for the activities had to be covered by subsidies and donations from some participating organizations. But as activities broadened in scale, continued funding leads to a bigger financial burden.

[E] ESD IMPLICATION

1. From the viewpoint of the activities

The activities of Okayama KEEP are based on the following views.

Respect for the Children's Rights

Okayama KEEP adheres to the Convention on the Rights of the Child' as the basic ideology for its activities. While the children are treated as an individual human, they take part in discussions on the same level as the adults. The adults respect any opinions of the children, regardless of either party's age or social standing, without biases like ' .because they're kids!' or 'what would a kid know?' Some adults who look down authoritatively on children at first gradually learn the attitude of equal treatment.

Hands-on Learning

Most of the learning was obtained by the five senses and physical experience. For example, children actually immerse themselves into the water to survey, meet and talk directly with longtime local residents, and experience their traditional practices, and enjoy games in the river. This provided a direct link between the participants and subject of study and was conducive to see things from their own perspective.

Cultural Relativism

In their quest to find the best lifestyle practices to ensure a balanced harmony between

nature and mankind, the participants of Okayama KEEP distanced themselves from scientific evidence corroborating the concept of traditional methods as being obsolete as opposed to their modern counterparts. This objective outlook, piqued interest in cultural experiences and learning supported by varied differences in values. And learning activities based on traditional wisdom, lifestyle patterns and folklore of the upstream regions of the Kyoyama district, came into practice.

Careful Listening

Okayama KEEP will provide all children with the opportunities for discussion and activities. During the activities, children will never be stopped from expressing themselves. All the others were to listen carefully. Our intention was to listen to all opinions. There is no absolute assessment by performance of presentation and the content of opinions.

Voice of Participants: Careful Listening

It feels really good to be able to express my opinion at Okayama KEEP. It is obvious to see that I was really being listened to.

Yusaku Yukiya 1st Year High School Student

Utilizing the Media

Local newspaper journalist took the initiative to outline and introduce activities and ESD concepts in her articles. ESD was not yet fully recognized in society, and sometimes it is hard to gain the understanding and support from surrounding people. Through official media, people get to know and gain interests about the ESD. Subscribers' reactions such as "I read about you in the paper" give great confidence to the children and these influx of feedback make the momentum to the organization.

Voice of Participant : Role of the Media

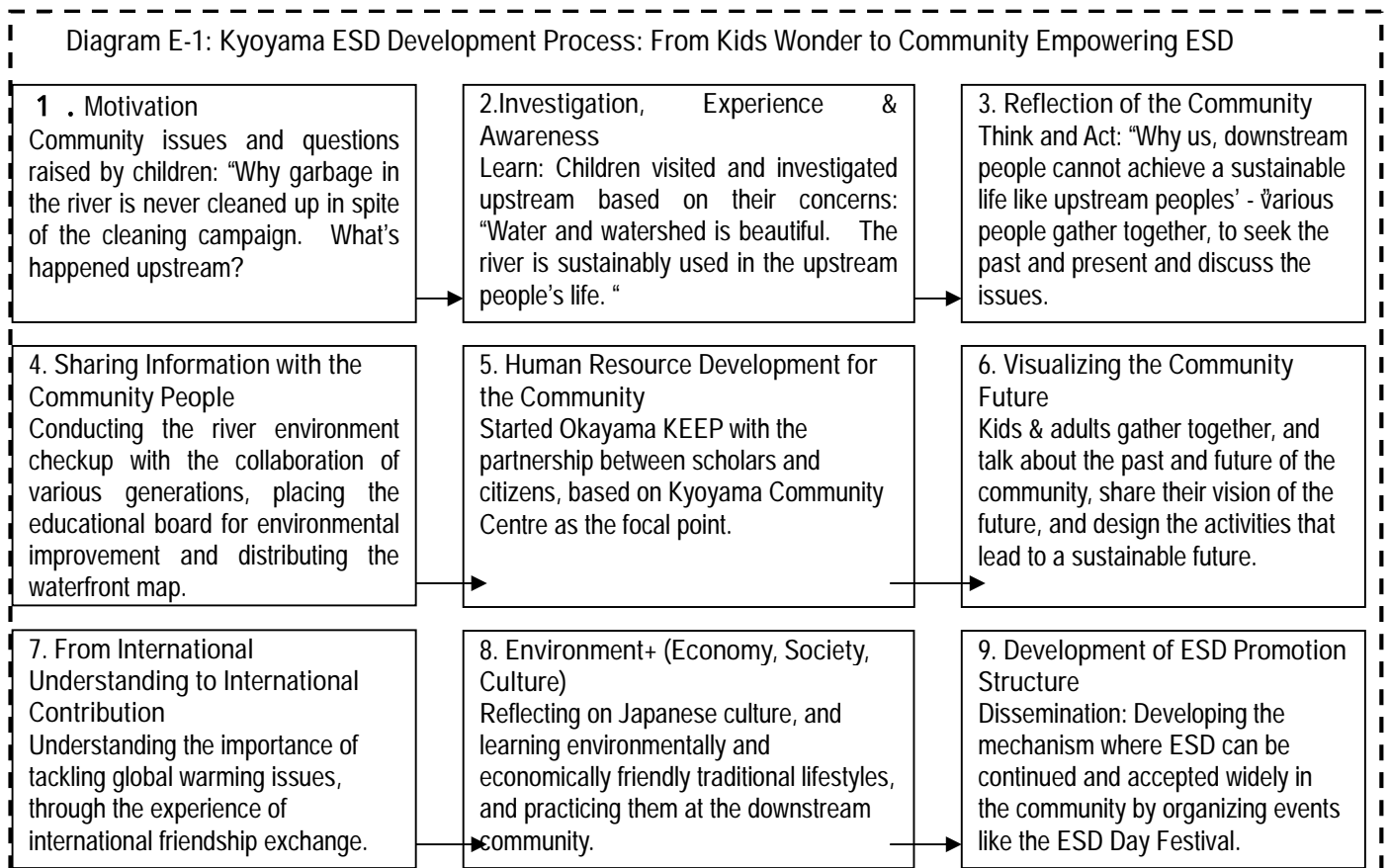
No matter how small a matter, if you don't speak out about it, you'll see no change. No matter how lonely, if I know there is someone who understands me, I can keep going. The media coverage encourage our participants.

Kyoyama Junior High Principal Ms. Shigeko Inukai

2. Execution of Activities

Okayama KEEP repeated the steps - recognition of issues discussion and research into their causes and solutions action to solve problems. In these steps, with Okayama KEEP's views in mind, and participants learned comprehensive approaches. In working towards resolving issues, participants found connections between the

environment, economy, values, lifestyle habits, modernization, ecological cycles, and expanded their views and networks. In these ever-spreading activities, the activities of Okayama KEEP developed from Environmental Education to ESD. (See Diagram E-1)



Voice of Participant: Comprehensive viewpoint of Participants

Mr. Ishii, the Okayama City Sewage Department Chief joined us to help with the spring Environmental check. At the regular check at the Zasu River, traces of an oily substance were found floating on the water surface, and at some points discoloration of water was observed. When elementary students touched this, they reported that it felt slippery. At the same time it was noticed that a pipe drained into the river, and no such pipe had been observed at other waterways. On returning to the Community Center we all thought about that oily substance, and came to the conclusion that household sewage was draining form that pipe, into the river.

We asked Mr. Ishii about sewage systems and about how Okayama City maintained its sewage system and about the advantages and disadvantages of the system. We learnt that many households around the Zasu River had no proper sewage drainage systems. We split into groups and discussed and presented ideas on how to stop polluting the water and make the river the place where children would want to play at. Suggestions like

not pouring oil down the drain, but rather absorbing it with old newspaper, or wiping plates with mandarin orange skins before washing then after school lunch, were brought up. Also from the fact that the choice to install drainage systems was up to the householder (due to financial reasons), conclusions were drawn for the city to finance set up of sewage systems.

Kei Seno 13 years old

Voice of Participant: Comprehensive viewpoint of Participants

We participants of Okayama KEEP came to believe that if society changes, so will the environment. And we believe that this idea is an ESD idea. Close to all of us is the social problem of bullying. On hand we want to look out for our friends, on the other we find it hard to stand up for them due to pressure from busy lifestyles due to studying for entrance exams. 'People's hearts' and 'competitive society' - at the root of the bullying problem lies in this 'competitive' system. Our predecessors lived their lives striving for a prosperity. But as a result of this, environmental problems and issues such as bullying cropped up. Here and now, we need to look back on society and then think of how to proceed.

Yuichi Morimoto 15 years old

3. Results of the Activities

In their search for comprehensive solutions to the various issues, participants of Okayama KEEP found they had established collaborated efforts with many of the local people. The activities united the people who had no connection before. And this connection fed back to the empowerment of Okayama KEEP participants.

Japan's traditional rural areas were the places to accept each other to nurture, to recognize themselves. They are the places to establish and learn relationships with others and with nature. Also the children had their own mini societies where they could gather with other children to play and fight, intervene, watch out for each other, thus experiencing and learning the basic rules of human society and as well as feelings of hurt, sorrow, happiness. Watching over the children, adults helped one another in their daily lives as they fulfilled their roles, carrying out agricultural tasks, participating in traditional events and ceremonial occasions.

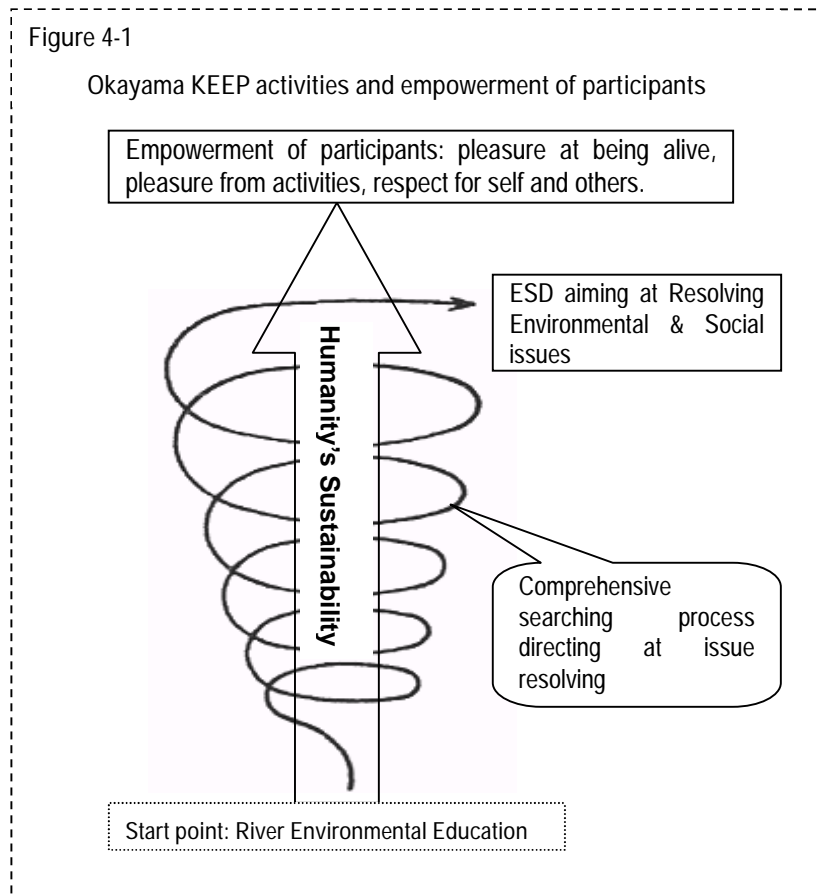
After the post-war period of rapid economical growth, the nuclear family system, and self centeredness became more prominent. As a result the importance of the local community decreased in the everyday life of the people. The local community lost its role, as a place for people to come into contact and support each other, and as a place for growth and learning as human beings. Traffic accidents and crimes targeted at children increased,

exam cramming and computer games took precedence. As a result, children stopped gathering to play together and the children's mini-society is gone. Now, cram school, school and home are only places for children, and for adults, home and the workplace. In this restricting values, chances to meet with various people and share a variety of values have diminished and there is no means by which to gain a sense of existence.

In addition, in Japan today, with competition and a surplus of luxury material goods, people face many problems everyday. The environment for children is extremely harsh, due to demands and judgment based on exam results and grades from adults. Many also face judgment from peer kids based on character cards and computer games. In the restrictive school atmosphere, when children find themselves faced with bullying, parents and teachers fail to understand and deal with the problems and the children find themselves in even harsher circumstances, which lead increased cases of suicide.

Okayama KEEP welcomes children as they are, and provides them with a place other than the home and school, where they can come into contact with various people and their various values. Through contact with a variety of people, the children can come to see that no single opinion is the correct one, and can learn that there is a huge variety of people in the world, each with their own way of thinking. Even if they cannot express their opinions for fear of judgment, criticism and bullying, if they know that there is someone out there who welcomes them, they can experience a boost in self-confidence. Welcoming and listening to the children, via the Okayama KEEP activities, leads the adults to find a pleasure and a 'sense of self-worth,' through participation in the activities.

In the past Okayama KEEP had little contacts in the community, participating children and adults were not able to fulfill their desires – 'to be useful to those around them' and 'to have someone listen to them.' They faced with the problem all humans face, that of enduring 'hardships.' Not sticking to fixed ideas, respecting each other as individual human beings, and with 'listening' as a key concept, they were able to link the ideas of the children and adults to recreate the traditional community based society. Okayama KEEP's continuous efforts for a sustainable Natural Environment led to revival of a sustainable humanity. And so through directed learning about 'sustainable natural environments,' the issue of sustainable humanity was also cleared and this led to the empowerment of participants, in other words, it boosted their self confidence, and allowed them to define themselves, it allowed them to gain pleasure from their participation efforts, as well pleasure from simply being alive, it also led them to respect those around them and increase their sentiments for the region. (See Figure 4-1)



4. Universality of Activities

In answer to the question as to whether the Okayama ESD Activities were universal or not, one of the coordinators, Ms. Shigeko Inukai answered as follows.

In all people, there is the desire to think about life and living. And it is necessary for them to have the power to answer that desire. In all people there is the desire to be of use. That is the essence of human beings. If they are able to be of use to others, then they can experience pleasure. People need support from others. These links with others form a circle. The foundations of Okayama KEEP's activities are linked with human lifestyles. Regardless of country boundaries, lifestyles are basically the same no matter where. From the viewpoint of making improvements from the origins, by enlarging the circle of links with others who welcome our opinions ESD can be possible anywhere.

Based on the above statement, we made a formula based on universality of ESD activities with the community as a foundation:

(desire to be of use to someone+having someone to welcome our opinion) × circle of links+lifestyle viewpoint=ESD

[F] FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION AND RECOMMENDATION

In order to solve the issues face in the ESD activities under Okayama KEEP, without simply depending on the will of the participants, and with aims such as building structures to continue the community activities, establishing society maintenance systems, and raising of new coordinators, in 2006 'the Okayama Kyoyama ESD Promotion Consultancy' (hereafter referred to as the Promotion Consultancy) was set up. The Okayama Kyoyama ESD Executive Committee set up the previous year for the Kyoyama ESD Day Festival was a base for this new consultancy. As well as carrying on ESD activities across the whole region, within the Kyoyama region the Promotion Consultancy will form links in non-environmental fields too, and will deepen collaboration with outside these ESD networks from now own.

Planned Promotion Consultancy Activities

Aiming to promote ESD activities in the region, the Residents' Association also participating in the consultancy, agreed to include a newsletter from the Promotion Consultancy in its monthly publication for November 2006. Through this, information on ESD and Okayama KEEP was transmitted to 10000 households in the Kyoyama Region. And this region-wide publicity, was expected to result in a deeper understanding on the part of the residents of the region as well as more participation from them in ESD activities. Also, from December 2006 onwards, there are plans to set up a round-table conference, for people connected with national and regional governments, the board of education, social education and citizens' movements, to discuss regional ESD issues and furthering of environmental education as well as plans to set up training courses for future ESD Coordinator training courses.

Outside ESD Groups, Collaboration with the Networks

The Okayama Kyoyama ESD Promotion Consultancy collaborates with the various groups listed below. Its aim is to implement activities, as well as to publicize them to the people of the Kyoyama region, in order to make them more widespread.

- Okayama Prefecture Education Office Life-long learning Department
- Okayama City Board of Education
- Okayama Region ESD Promotion Consultancy (OkayamaRCE)
- Okayama ESD Researcher Group
- United Nations University Research Office
- (Special Activity) Okayama Prefecture International Association
- Asahi River Area Network

- ESD-J

◆ **Collaboration with activities based on non-environmental fields**

Kyoyama Community Center provides space on weekday afternoons, for the 'After School Relax Space,' where children can spend time, with volunteers ranging from high school students to people in their 70s. This 'After School Relax Space,' can be visited by the district elementary school students, those under care of Protective Shelters for abuse and neglect reasons, as well as children with special needs. The inclusion of children with special needs was based on the opinion of parents with special needs children, that other than their homes and the special needs facilities, their children had nowhere else to go.

This 'space ' provided a place where a large varied group of children and adults could come in contact and accept each other as they were, and not simply be in the charge of fixed caregivers such as those at regular child-minding services. From last year, this 'relax space' and Okayama KEEP collaborated and started the Eco-Tour on a trial basis. From now on, also as a part of Kyoyama region's ESD activities, further planning for developing of these other activities is also underway.