

# Reflect–Share–Act

A Guide to Community-based Education  
for Sustainable Development

With stories from five countries in the Asia-Pacific region

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# Reflect–Share–Act

## A Guide to Community-based Education for Sustainable Development

With stories from five countries in the Asia-Pacific region

### SHORT SUMMARY

This guidebook aspires to build a community where learning for sustainable development takes place everywhere for everyone as an ongoing practice. It introduces you to *Reflect-Share-Act*, a process to discover and define sustainable development in your own contexts together with others in your community. The guide compiles resources that can support this learning process, including stories of various communities' actual experiences. Join us on this journey to put sustainable development into practice for everyone in your community!



*'Since wars begin in the minds  
of men and women it is in  
the minds of men and women  
that the defences of peace  
must be constructed'*

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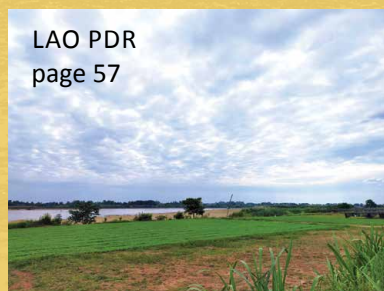
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## Foreword

In the complexity and uncertainty of today's world, transformative education is crucial as we grapple with the increasingly urgent challenges that humanity and the planet are currently facing. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) helps us to change the way we think and act to live more sustainably, creating a peaceful and resilient society for current and future generations.

It is with this impetus that, in 2020, UNESCO launched the international framework entitled 'Education for Sustainable Development: Towards achieving the SDGs (ESD for 2030)'. The framework aims to strengthen ESD's contribution to the achievement of all the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the year 2030. Its mission also corresponds with the core aspiration of the Target 4.7 under the SDG 4 on education, which is to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through ESD.

The ESD for 2030 framework stresses accelerating local level actions as one of its priority action areas. It underscores the importance of the community as the place where meaningful transformation and concrete action for sustainable development is most likely to take place.

The publication 'Reflect-Share-Act: A Guide to Community-based Education for Sustainable Development' introduces a transformative learning process that can be utilized for this very purpose – to help communities look within themselves in order to inspire significant change. In this guide, the reader will also discover how the process can be successfully employed in a diverse range of communities. The stories of its implementation exemplify how such communities were motivated and empowered to collectively take the necessary steps for sustainability at the local level.

I sincerely hope the principles, resources and examples detailed in this volume may serve as a valuable companion for those who seek to deepen their understandings of ESD and co-create change for the sustainable development of their respective communities. Through continued collaboration and transformative learning, together we can strive further towards a prosperous and sustainable future for all in the community and beyond.

Finally, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Government of Japan for their generous support in this endeavour.



**Shigeru Aoyagi**

*Director  
UNESCO Bangkok*

## Acknowledgements

This publication represents the culmination of exploration and learning pursued under the project *Promoting Community-based Education for Sustainable Development* implemented by UNESCO Bangkok. The journey began in November 2016 at a small meeting of a group of individuals interested in articulating how non-formal education and sustainable development can be brought together. We thank the DVV International Southeast Asia Regional Office for co-hosting this meeting and supporting the birth of the project.

A series of small meetings followed the first meeting, through which the Reflect-Share-Act framework was conceptualized, outlined and developed. We would like to express our profound gratitude to the following experts for their thoughtful engagement in and contributions to this process over the years: Anita Borkar and Cecilia (Thea) Soriano of the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE), Uwe Gartenschlaeger of DVV International, Jose Roberto Guevara of RMIT University and the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE), Fumiko Noguchi of the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability, Kiichi Oyasu of the Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) and Okayama University, Santosh Sutar formerly with the Centre for Environment Education, Batchuluun Yembuu of the Mongolian National University of Education, and Rika Yorozu who was then at the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning and currently at UNESCO Paris.

The Reflect-Share-Act framework was put into practice in communities in India, Japan, Lao PDR, Mongolia and Philippines, articulating itself in the process. The insights yielded through these experiences led the project to gain a renewed understanding of Education for Sustainable Development, which came into fruition as this guidebook. Our sincere appreciation and applause go to the project teams who made tireless efforts to continuously search for innovation to implement the project in these countries, in particular: Manjunath K. S., Madegowda Jadeyegowda, Vasudeva Ramesh, and Santosh Sutar (team leader) of the India team led by the Centre for Environment Education South; Mieko Ikegaya, Yoshie Nagasato, Kiichi Oyasu (team leader), Maho Shinoda, and Yoko Wakayama of the Japan team led by ACCU; Phoudthalith Keoudone, Soukanya Manivanh (team leader), Somchit Phonevilai, Beykham Saleumsouk and Somsy Southivong of the Lao team led by the Non formal Education Development Centre; Munguntsetseg Bumbaa (team leader), Bolortungalag Lkhagvajav, and Enkhjargal Purevdorj of the Mongolia team led by the National Centre for Lifelong Education; and Jestoni Babia (team leader), Lynnette Camello, Jennifer Paño, Annaliza Santillana, Helmae Tapanan, and Ionel Terogo of the Philippines team led by the University of San Jose-Recoletos.

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Last, but not least, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan for their financial support, which made this project possible.

# Introduction

Thank you for picking up and opening this booklet.

To see some of the existing resource materials on ESD, click or scan below.

[Selected ESD Resources](#)



To know more about the project under which this guide was developed, click or scan below

[Promoting Community-based Education for Sustainable Development](#)



That means you are interested in community-based Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and most likely you are already doing something about it even though you may not realize it.

We prepared this booklet to be a companion of someone like you, who is interested in embarking on an ESD journey in your community – whether at home or school, in your neighbourhood or workplace, with your family, friends, neighbours or colleagues. Put simply, it aims to guide you through a process to learn to discover and define sustainable development in your own contexts together with others. We know there are many quality ESD materials around, but what is different about this guidebook is that it wants to facilitate your learning process to understand, give meanings to and create knowledge on sustainable development with others in your community, rather than providing you with more knowledge about ESD. ‘Reflect-Share-Act’ is the name we gave to this learning process.

*Reflect-Share-Act* evolved through pilot projects implemented in India, Japan, Lao PDR, Mongolia and Philippines. Therefore, the guide refers to examples from the pilot experiences in these five countries in order to give concrete illustrations of the different aspects entailed in the *Reflect-Share-Act* process. Furthermore, when we started out with these projects, we were thinking of preparing a guide primarily for education practitioners in non-formal education and community learning centres. It is for this reason that the examples given in this guide take place in non-formal education settings. However, as we went through the

*Reflect-Share-Act* process in the five countries, we began to realize that it can be applied by anyone interested in sustainable development in other settings, such as formal schools, private sector organizations, and government offices.

We encourage you to use *Reflect-Share-Act* in a variety of contexts, and let us know how it worked. Your feedback will help us enrich our knowledge and understandings of community-based ESD.

When we say 'community' in this guide, it does not only refer to a group of people living in the same locality. It also refers to any group of people who are connected through common identities, interests, values, and experiences. This means, when you go through and experience the *Reflect-Share-Act* process described in this guide, you will join our community of community-based ESD! We hope you will enjoy this learning process, and look forward to hearing from you about your own stories of *Reflect-Share-Act*.

# How to use this guide

The guide is comprised of two components: this booklet and resource materials associated with this booklet. The booklet is available both in print and electronically. It serves as a learning module to guide you through the 'Reflect-Share-Act' process and consists of the following sections.

- *Reflect-Share-Act*, which provides an overview of the 'Reflect-Share-Act' process.
- *Reflect*, which provides a quick guide to the 'Reflect' process.
- *Share*, which provides a quick guide to the 'Share' process.
- *Act*, which provides a quick guide to the 'Act' process.
- *Stories*, which describes how 'Reflect-Share-Act' was put into practice in the pilot projects in India, Japan, Lao PDR, Mongolia and Philippines.

Each section of 'Reflect', 'Share' and 'Act' begins with an introduction and a case example that illustrates elements of the process. Reflective questions are then posed to encourage the reader to explore the process in relation to the case example and their own experiences. Finally, key considerations are suggested, which highlight the principles and requirements to be kept in mind while engaging in the process. The collection of stories in the second part of the booklet are aimed to help the reader deepen their perspectives and gain insights on the 'Reflect-Share-Act' process as it transpired in the local communities.

The resource materials are available only electronically, and include selected reference documents, guides and manuals, examples of teaching and learning tools and other materials that can be adapted and used as you engage in a 'Reflect-Share-Act' process. The different resource materials are associated with specific parts of this booklet. Inside the pages of this guide, you will find links and QR codes that take you to the resource materials that are relevant to the respective parts.

Figure 1. THE PAGE LAYOUT OF THIS GUIDEBOOK



The hyperlinks and the QR codes will take you to the resource materials that are relevant to the respective sections. You can go through these materials and, if interested, consider using or adapting them in your own context.

As stated in the Introduction, this guide aims to be a companion in your ESD journey. In other words, it aims to be something that stays with you on your side during your ESD journey—something that you can pick up from time to time when you need some ideas, or when you are not sure about something. It is not a manual that provides a set of activities and methodologies that you are expected to undertake. It does not present to you the right answers or the correct path for you to follow. All the examples, cases, stories, tools and materials that are included in this booklet are there to support you in exploring and developing your thoughts, ideas and actions. We invite you to consider adapting any of the tools and materials that interest you and to use the cases and stories as food for thought for you to explore further and deeper.

# Reflect-Share-Act

## An overview

To know more about the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, click or scan below.

[Selected online resources of the SDG](#)



*Reflect-Share-Act* is a guiding process to learn to discover and define sustainable development in our own community contexts. We came to be aware of the urgent need for all of us to learn this because, although we often hear the word ‘Sustainable Development’ in recent years, in particular in relation to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the concept is still foreign to the vast majority of us. Most of us are not sure what it means for us in our lives, and as a result, feel that it’s someone else’s problem.

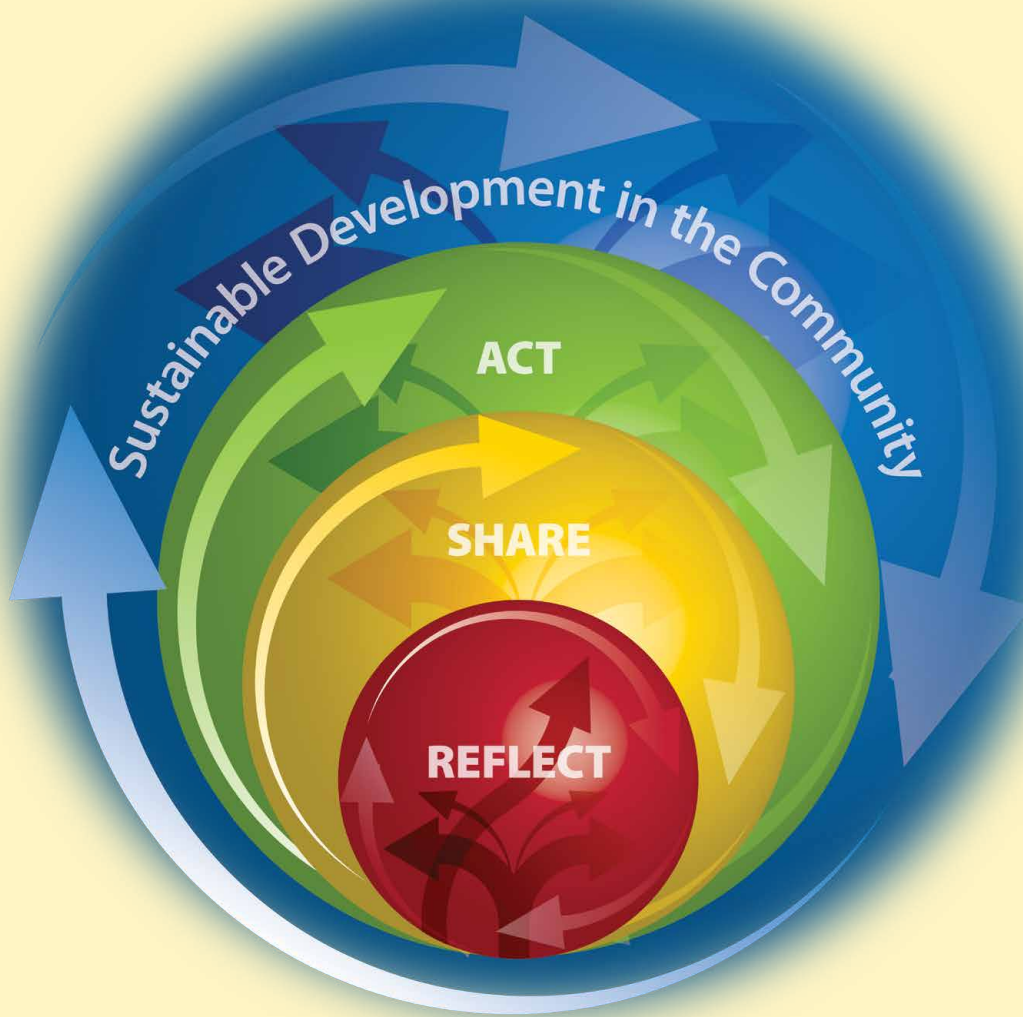
By learning to understand, give meanings to and create knowledge on sustainable development in our everyday lives in our own communities, we can begin to make sense of what it means for us in the context of the realities that we live in, and we can begin to put it into practice in our own lives. Put another way, *Reflect-Share-Act* is a learning process that, by promoting to define sustainable development in one’s own context, aspires to create a community where learning for sustainable development takes place everywhere and for everyone as an ongoing practice.

*Reflect-Share-Act* is comprised of three dimensions – Reflect, Share, and Act – which are not isolated from each other but together comprise the whole that leads to sustainability practices in a community. Dialogue and participation are the running threads that weave through this learning process.

In *Reflect*, learners engage in critical reflection to review and analyse their own experiences and practices from a sustainability perspective, and give meanings to the concept of sustainable development in their own community contexts. *Share* guides the learners to share their reflections

and understandings with others in the community and engage them in a *Reflect-Share-Act* process. *Act* helps learners put their understandings of sustainable development into action. *Reflect-Share-Act* is not a linear process that starts from reflection and ends with action. Rather, it is a dialogic and iterative process in which the three dimensions constantly inform, influence and shape each other. In this process, as the diagram shows, *Reflect* is always ongoing and is at the heart of it all.

Figure 2. REFLECT-SHARE-ACT



# REFLECT

Understanding sustainable development through reflecting on our own experiences

In *Reflect*, we develop our own understandings of sustainable development by looking back on and thinking critically about our experiences and practices. Through a continuous learning and sharing process, we—community people including community educators—reflect on our past, current and future practices.

This process may involve the following.

- Review and reflect on the knowledge, practices and experiences we have.
- Analyse our practices from a sustainability perspective, and step out of the understandings, knowledge, and beliefs that we have had.
- Based on the analysis, gain an understanding of the concept of sustainable development in the context of our own experiences and practices.

*Reflect* is not just a one-off step. It happens at any moment of your and anyone's practice in your community at various levels including individual and institutional levels. The process may take time and add tasks to day-to-day work, but it will improve the relevance of your work and the quality of your community life.

To see how *Reflect* can take place, let us look at the case of Hiratsuka Kominkans (Community Learning Centres) in Japan.

To consult some tools that can help facilitate this analysis, click or scan below.

[Selected resource materials for the analysis of our practices](#)



*Hiratsuka City in Japan has a well-organized network of twenty-six public Kominkans—one in each primary school catchment area. Here, a project was introduced with an aim to promote the idea of ESD in Kominkans and encourage the Kominkan staff to plan concrete activities to advance sustainable development. However, as their annual workplan had already been defined up to the following year, and because they did not feel that concepts like ESD or SDGs were relevant to their work, the idea raised little interest among the Kominkan staff.*

*In order to move forward, the Reflect process—reflecting on past and current practices for envisioning sustainable futures—was brought into the ongoing work of the Kominkan staff. More specifically, it was introduced in the process to prepare the details of each activity that had already been included in the annual workplan.*

*A case in point is a joint workshop for primary school children and their parents that had been in the workplan of two Kominkans. In preparing for this workshop, the Kominkan staff and local residents who joined the workshop as facilitators reflected and exchanged thoughts on how the concept of sustainable development could be incorporated into such activities as cleaning the coast and observing plant and animal species in the mountains. Hands-on activities were organized to explore sustainable development in a mountainous area and a coastal area of the city through experiencing and discussing the past and current situations, as well as implications for the future. At the workshop, the discussions and experiences during these learning activities inspired the children and their parents who took part in the workshop to connect different aspects of sustainability and link the present to the future and the local to the global. At the end of the activities, the workshop participants reflected on their learning through a questionnaire.*

*The Kominkan staff and facilitators also reflected on their own experiences and exchanged findings through review meetings. The experiences of this process were shared at regular forums of all the Kominkan staff. The series of reflection processes has contributed to the empowerment of the staff and facilitators to understand the usefulness of the concept of sustainable development for broadening their vision and the programmes of their Kominkans. Recognizing the positive outcomes of this experience, the Hiratsuka City Education Board decided to introduce a policy to include ESD activities in all the twenty-six Kominkans of Hiratsuka City from the following year.*

## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

To facilitate your reflection on Questions 3, 4 and 5, click or scan below.

[Starting with your own practice](#)



[Analysing your community practice](#)



1. What do you think helped the community educators of Hiratsuka to transform themselves with regard to the concept of sustainable development?
2. What do you think helped the City Education Board to adopt a policy to include ESD in all the Kominkans? How have the Kominkan staff, facilitators, participants and other stakeholders contributed to the policy-making?
3. If you were to design an ESD activity to implement in your community, what factors would you consider to make it a success?
4. Do you think that ESD needs to be integrated in community practices? If so, what do you think are some of the ways to integrate it effectively?
5. How would you share your ESD initiatives beyond your immediate community?

## KEY PRINCIPLES TO REFLECT

Now, let us begin a process to *Reflect* in our communities.

Below are some of the principles that you could keep in mind as you bring yourself and others in your community into a *Reflect* process.

- **Engage** – foster an environment of learning through building trust and space for dialogue for engaging different players in the community and building an appreciation of the past and current experiences.
- **Enable** – create an enabling process for everyone in the community—learners, educators and other community members. Provide specific capacity support to empower individuals and the community as a whole in order to develop a shared understanding and to create a common vision of sustainability.
- **Embed** – integrate the shared vision of sustainability into the community's ongoing activities or shared action.

To learn more about these principles, click or scan below.

[UIL, 2017, Community-based learning for sustainable development](#)



[Guevara, et.al, 2015, Communities in Action: Lifelong Learning for Sustainable Development](#)



# SHARE

Sharing our understandings of sustainable development with others in the community

To read more about motivating for change through advocacy, click or scan below.

[Share as Advocacy - 3Ps Framework](#)



At the heart of *Share* is the inspiration to share the understandings of sustainable development gained through *Reflect* processes. As educators, our motivation to share our ESD stories is not merely to teach but to inspire others to take action. The *Share* process can be manifested in practice through:

1. Inspiring others through our own community development ESD stories;
2. Allowing others to experience how learning and understanding ESD that is embedded within the *Reflect-Share-Act* process can be transformative;
3. Motivating for change through advocacy.

Let us look at the experience of a community extension project led by the Cebu Technological University in Argao in the province of Cebu, Philippines. Their story illustrates how different practices of *Share* can take place through deeper understandings of sustainable development that were gained through *Reflect* processes.

*This is a story about how we realized that our community extension project that aimed to save Hablon, the dying industry of weaving in Argao, addressed sustainable development.*

*Through a process of Reflect, we understood how our project embodied the concept of sustainable development. This realization has not only clarified what to share but has inspired us to Share our story as ESD. Furthermore, this understanding has motivated us to Act, by improving our own practice towards sustainability.*

*Initially, our idea was to share how to establish similar projects, like Hablon, in other communities in Cebu. What we realized later on was that we were not just sharing 'how to' save Hablon, but inspiring others, through our story, to discover what they are already doing that has elements of sustainable development. This is as much about motivating them to engage in a Reflect process to analyse how their own practices exhibit the concept of sustainable development. For example, there was another community extension project that taught urban poor women to sew cloth rags called 'trapo' from excess cloth clippings called 'retaso' and sell them in the local area. Sharing our Hablon as a sustainable development story inspired them to view their project not just as charity work to help the poor. Through Reflect, they realized the inter-linkages of the social, economic and environmental aspects around Hablon, hence the contributions of the Hablon project to sustainable development.*

*Sharing our Hablon story has also been conducted as advocacy. For example, since hearing about our story, the local government in Argao has prescribed that on certain days of the week, local government officials are to wear uniforms using Hablon material. Furthermore, sharing our Hablon story has inspired the private sector to become more engaged. Not only have they purchased Hablon material from the community, they have also started to organize trade fair exhibitions locally and nationally to further promote Hablon as an example of community-based sustainable development.*

To read the full story of the *Reflect-Share-Act* experience in Argao, Cebu, Philippines, click or scan below.

[Reviving a dying industry through community engagement](#)



## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

To facilitate your thinking on Questions 2 & 3, click or scan below.

[Starting with your own practice](#)



To facilitate your thinking on Question 4, click or scan below.

[Contextualizing your understanding in the community you work with](#)



1. How did the Hablon story inspire others to engage with ESD?  
What aspects of the Hablon story did you find inspiring?
2. Think about the times in the past when you were inspired by a successful community action story that someone else shared with you.
  - How was this story shared with you?
  - What aspects of the story inspired you?
  - Are there any aspects that relate to ESD in the story?  
If so, what are they?
3. Think about the times in the past when you inspired others by sharing your own successful community action story.
  - How did you share your story?
  - Why do you think your story inspired them?
  - Are there any aspects that relate to ESD in your story?  
If so, what are they?
  - If you are asked to share the same story today, would you do it differently? If so, how would you do it?
4. Think about the different people that you want to *Share* your understandings of sustainable development with.
  - How would you share your understandings to inspire them about sustainable development?
  - In your view, what education and communication strategies will be most effective to use?

## KEY ACTIONS TO CONSIDER TO *SHARE* WITH OTHERS

Before attempting to share our understandings of sustainable development with others, let us remind ourselves of the following underpinnings for facilitating learning processes with adults.

- Adult learners have life experiences and knowledge that are grounded in their lived realities;
- Adult learners are oriented toward real-life relevance;
- Adult learners are practical;
- Adult learners require respectful dialogue;
- Adult learners are autonomous and self-directed;
- Adult learners engage well through participatory approaches;
- We are all learners and we are all educators.

Building on the above, below are some of the key actions to consider as we share our understandings of sustainable development with others in our community.

1. Ensure the participation of the learners in identifying their learning needs.
2. Foster a trust-based relationship between the learners and the facilitators.
3. Facilitate and support the continuous engagement of learners in the learning process.
4. Recognize that cognitive (ideas), affective (feelings) and psychomotor (actions) aspects bear an equal significance for adults in learning.

To learn more about theories of adult learning, click or scan below.

[Bélanger, 2011, Theories in Adult Learning and Education](#)



To consult some resource materials on teaching and learning approaches in ESD, click or scan below.

[Key Teaching and Learning Approaches in ESD](#)



To consult some resource materials on methods and techniques that can be used in *Share* processes, click or scan below.

[Facilitation Techniques](#)



[UNICEF Knowledge Exchange Toolbox](#)



# ACT

## Putting our reflections on sustainable development into action

Building on *Reflect* and *Share*, in *Act*, we put our own understandings of sustainable development into action. At the same time, *Act* is the basis on which further *Reflect* and *Share* will fertilize and develop. Remember, *Reflect*, *Share* and *Act* are not distinct steps that happen one by one in a linear fashion, but they can take place at the same time and they build on, influence and shape each other.

Let us look at a story from Karnataka, India that illustrates how this may happen.

*I am a community educator in a village near Sirsi in Karnataka, India. Our village is surrounded by forest and receives heavy rainfall. However, for the past three years, we have been facing droughts. Because we usually had an abundance of water in the past and never felt the need to conserve it, the droughts hit us very hard, adversely impacting our agriculture, animal husbandry and our daily needs of water. In this situation, when some of us from the area attended a Reflect-Share-Act training workshop, we decided to address this issue and work on setting up water conservation structures in our villages.*

*I had seen a rooftop rainwater harvesting facility set up by one of the villagers using forest resources. Following that, upon my return from the training, I built a model of a rooftop rainwater harvesting facility by myself so we could demonstrate how it works to our fellow*

To read the full story of the *Reflect-Share-Act* experience in Sirsi, Karnataka, India, click or scan below.

[A community mobilizes to fight drought](#)



villagers. At the same time, I contacted the local forest officials, local administrators and community leaders to initiate work on rainwater harvesting. Although I faced reluctance initially, all the stakeholders came forward to discuss this issue in the end. We held a village meeting together with local administration and the village forest committee, chaired by the forest officer. At the meeting, we displayed a model of a rooftop rainwater harvesting facility that I made. The villagers were keenly interested in the facility, and after the meeting, many went to the house of the villager who had set it up to see it in use.

During the meeting, we learned that the central government has a scheme to give a salary for 100-days-worth of work per family for digging infiltration pits. It also emerged from the discussion that Ficus trees encourage infiltration. Fifteen people came forward and pledged to plant Ficus trees. Taking all these into account, we collectively decided to undertake rainwater harvesting in forest areas.

To begin, 37 trenches were dug, providing employment for 74 people. Furthermore, over 820 trenches were dug using machinery. Each trench can hold up to 1,812 litres of water. Ficus trees are also being planted along the trenches to facilitate rainwater harvesting. While forest officials are in charge of building infiltration pits and check dams, villagers are receiving additional income by working to dig pits. We are all united to put water conservation structures in place in our villages in order to be prepared for yet another drought that may hit us again.

To read more examples of ESD actions taken in communities in the Asia-Pacific region, click or scan below.

[Asia-Pacific winners of the UNESCO-Japan Prize on ESD](#)



## REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

1. In which part of the above story do you see *Reflect*, *Share* and *Act* taking place?
2. What do you think motivated the people of this community to take action?
3. What do you think are some of the factors that may have helped the people of this community to come and work together?
4. What do you think enabled this community to make the action happen and effect the change as envisaged?
5. Think about the times in the past when you took action with other people in order to change something.
  - What motivated you to take part in the action?
  - What factors helped bringing the people together to take the action?
  - What kinds of support helped the action to actually happen?
6. Think about an issue in your community that you would like to address.
  - What action can you take to address this issue?
  - With whom would you take the action? How would you engage their interest in working with you to take the action?
  - What kinds of support do you need to make the action happen?
  - Whom would you speak to in order to obtain such support?

To consult some resource materials that can facilitate your thinking on Questions 5 and 6, click or scan below.

[Selected guides and tools on community mobilization](#)



## KEY ASPECTS TO CONSIDER TO CO-CREATE COMMUNITY ACTIONS

Now, let us begin co-creating ESD actions with our community. The following are some of the key aspects to consider as we plan and prepare for successful community actions.

### 1. Vision of change

- We need to build and agree on a shared vision of change. What is the change that the community would like to see? How can we foster consensus in the community towards the change?

### 2. Community participation

- We need to ensure active and inclusive participation to bring about the change. What factors can motivate and activate community participation for the change? How can we engage everyone in the community and inspire community ownership towards the change?

### 3. Power dynamics

- We need to understand and analyse power dynamics in the community. In particular, an analysis of gender dynamics, which impact and shape every community, is critical. What are the power dynamics in the community that can support the change? What are the power dynamics in the community that can hinder the process of effecting the change?

### 4. Resources

- We need to identify and mobilize resources to bring about and sustain the change. What are the resources that are essential to effect and sustain the change? Which are the resources that can be mobilized locally, and how can we mobilize them? How can we access those resources that are not available in the community?

### 5. Opportunities and risks

- We need to be mindful of opportunities and risks in our environment that can sustain or endanger the process of bringing about the change. Identify the opportunities that can be capitalized on to effect and sustain the change. What are they? Envisage the risks that can endanger the sustenance of the change. How can we minimize or alleviate these risks?

To read some tips and tools that can support your thinking on the key aspects – vision of change, community participation, power dynamics, resources, opportunities and risks, click or scan below.

[Guides and tools for the key aspects to consider to co-create community actions](#)



To learn how to monitor and evaluate a community action, click or scan below.

[UNESCO, 2009, On target: a guide for monitoring and evaluating community-based projects](#)



# STORIES



1



ЯДУУРЛЫГ ҮСТГАХ

2



ӨЛСГӨЛӨНГ ЗОГСООХ

3



ЭРҮҮЛ МЭНДИЙГ ДЭМЖИХ

4



ЧАНАРТАЙ БОЛОВСРОЛЫГ ДЭМЖИХ

5



ЖЕНДЕРИЙН ЭРХ ТЭГШ БАЙДЛЫГ ХАНГАХ

6



БАТАЛГААТ УНДНЫ ҮС АРИУН ЦЭВРИЙН БАЙГУУЛАМЖААР ХАНГАХ

7



СЭРГЭЭГДЭХ ЭРЧИМ ХҮЧИЙГ НЭВТРҮҮЛЭХ

8



ЗОХИСТОЙ ХӨДӨЛМӨР БА ЭДИЙН ЗАСГИЙН ӨСӨЛТИЙГ ДЭМЖИХ



Shonan-Hiratsuka Tanabata Festival, Hiratsuka, Japan



Mangrove plantation, Cadiz City, Philippines



Elephant of BR Hills, Karnataka, India



Rice field of Hom Villages, Lao PDR



Sand dunes in Ummugovi, Mongolia. Credit: Shutterstock

# Raising the awareness of sustainable development across the country

■ UMNUGOVI AND ULAANBAATAR, MONGOLIA

By Suvdantsetseg Tsagaanbaatar

‘ONCE I READ that if everyone in the world lived like an ordinary Mongolian, we’d need four earths. But we can’t duplicate our planet. This thought aroused my interest in sustainable development,’ said G. Luvsandagva, a teacher at the Lifelong Education Centre in Dalanzadgad, Umnugovi. Together with his fellow community teachers, Luvsandagva is working towards spreading sustainable development concepts to his community.

Umnugovi is located 575 kilometers away from the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. The word ‘Umnugovi’ can be translated as ‘South Gobi’, referring to the vast Gobi Desert, the largest desert in Asia that covers parts of both China and Mongolia. South Gobi is a semi-desert region rich in natural resources such as gold, copper and coal. A decade ago, one of the world’s largest copper and gold deposits, Oyu Tolgoi mine, began its operations in

Umnugovi. Due to the mining industry, the province has been growing and developing fast. According to the statistics, its population has grown by 35 per cent in the last ten years. At the same time, sustainable development issues arose along with the mining industry growth. Dust, loose soil, and desertification are among the major challenges.



## Kindergartens bring sustainable development to the Southern Gobi

AS A COMMUNITY TEACHER in Dalanzadgad, the capital city of Umnugovi, Luvsandagva sought to advance his teaching skills and knowledge on sustainable development through the Reflect-Share-Act training for master teachers held in Ulaanbaatar. The training was organized by the National Centre for Lifelong Education under UNESCO’s project ‘Promoting Community-based Education for

Sustainable Development.’ After he came back to the town, he organized a workshop with kindergarten teachers to discuss Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) grounded in the contexts of their work. The kindergarten teachers initiated several ideas to integrate sustainable development concepts into their teaching for children from two to five years old and in the kindergarten environment.

Luvsandagva observed that ESD could be implemented more effectively when teachers, parents, and kids are all included. ‘People in Umnugovi are very busy and have less time to spend on other activities,’ he said. ‘Most of the parents work in mining-related companies. I had a thought that the kids and the kindergarten are the best way to reach their parents. So, when parents came to kindergarten



The 11th Kindergarten in Dalanzadgad, Umnugovi. Credit: Suvdantssetseg Tsagaanbaatar



Teachers at the Lifelong Education Centre in Dalanzadag, Umnugovi. Credit: Suvaranisetseg Tsagaanbaatar

to pick up their kids, we asked them to sit just a while and listen about sustainable development.’

‘We didn’t even understand what sustainable development and its goals were,’ said G.Enkhtuya, a kindergarten teacher at the 11th kindergarten. ‘For me, education of sustainable development sounded like something really far from us. We even said to each other if it could ever be connected to pre-school education. But after going through the training from Luvsandagva, we realized that education for sustainable development should be taught to kids from a very young age.’ She adds, ‘The

“For me, education of sustainable development sounded like something really far from us.”

**Kindergartens** bring sustainable development to the Southern Gobi



Children at the 11th Kindergarten, Dalanzagad, Umnugovi. Credit: Suvdantsseteg Tsagaanbaatar

first step can start from simply saving or reducing our everyday consumption.'

Enkhtuya is in her 38th year of working at the kindergarten. Based on her experiences, she thought up and put into action many good ideas with her colleagues in the kindergarten, such as drawing lines on rinse cups to save water and making trash bins to sort litter. The teachers drew lines on the children's rinse cups indicating 100 millilitres to let them know how much water they need to rinse after brushing their teeth. The kids can then easily recognize how much

water they need to fill up their cups when cleaning their teeth. As they clean their teeth every day, the children are embracing the concept of water conservation.

The teachers made coloured trash bins for separating different types of litter using carton boxes. Each class has three separate bins—one for plastics, one for tissue paper, and the last is for construction paper scraps. The bins themselves were made from re-used materials such as using plastic plates as lids. 'Sometimes, we use construction paper scraps to make

other things,' G.Enkhtuya shares. 'Through this process, we are trying to teach and give an understanding to the kids that waste should be thrown out separately, and that some waste can be re-used'

The teachers at the kindergarten also made more than 700 stickers to put next to electrical plugs and switches. The stickers remind the children to turn off the lights or unplug power cords. The kids are quick learners and promptly went into action. The students of the 11th kindergarten now ask their parents to unplug cables

when they leave their houses or ask their teachers to turn off the lights when natural light can be used.

In order to share her kindergarten's experience and spread ESD to other kindergartens, Director J.Zul organized an event with teachers and their supervisors from ten kindergartens in Dalanzadgad. At the meeting, she emphasized that raising awareness

among parents about sustainable development is one of the important factors to create impact. 'In the next round, we would like to share our experiences with other kindergartens all around Umnugovi with the cooperation of G.Luvsandagva, our master teacher,' she said.

In the process of learning about sustainable development, teaching,

and working with the community, Luvsandagva emphasizes, 'While teaching ESD at the community level as a master teacher, I think one of the important tasks is to look at cooperation between citizens, government authorities at the regional level, and private companies.'



## Sustainable development is our life cycle

**P.NYAMSUREN** works at the Lifelong Education Centre in Bayanzurkh District in Ulaanbaatar. She participated in the ESD master teachers' training organized by the National Centre for Lifelong Education together with G.Luvsandagva. 'By attending the Reflect-Share-Act training for master teachers, I learned that ESD could be more effective when ESD classes are conducted with real practices or

in the real situation of sustainable development issues, such as in a place where waste management is needed,' she said. 'In the case of ESD, having training in a classroom is not very effective.'

Bayanzurkh District, the most populated district where 25 per cent of Ulaanbaatar's residents live, is located in the southeastern part of the city.

Migrants who cannot afford apartments usually settle down in gers in the outskirts of the city. A ger, also known as a yurt, is a traditional Mongolian house, which is a portable dwelling for a nomadic lifestyle. Since most parts of Bayanzurkh are located on the outskirts of the city, year by year, its ger area is expanding. Also, as there are major markets in the district, everyday life is always bustling with activity.



**Sustainable development is our life cycle**

“I want to be a bridge between people and organizations to share their practices for sustainable development with each other.”

Nyamsuren has been working at the Lifelong Education Centre for two years. She teaches ESD classes to children at the centre and also offers training to organizations in Bayanzurkh. ‘Sustainable development is an easily understandable topic for citizens because everyone uses electricity, everyone needs water; everyone faces environmental issues. Sustainable development is simply our life cycle,’ she said. ‘The three pillars of sustainable development are very much related to our everyday lifestyle. It might make people feel the concept of sustainable development is a closely related topic to them.’



During her training, she asked what the solutions for sustainable development issues could be. 'When I asked about solutions, people started talking about high-level policy issues. That made me realize that I need to show people real examples of good practices, and show them what simple steps we can take towards sustainable development. I thought I should help people become aware that we can start from ourselves by taking simple actions,' the young, energetic ESD master teacher said.

She decided to start from herself and show it to others. Her first action was to change her teaching materials by creating her own. She made a small model of a typical home in the ger area. In this area, people live next to each other on a piece of land surrounded by fences. The model

consists of movable miniatures of various items such as gers, fences, grass, vegetable gardens and trash bins. During her ESD classes, she shows the model to her students and asks them to place the items in a way that shows an eco-friendly manner of living. The children assemble them based on their understandings of sustainable development.

Furthermore, together with other teachers at the Bayanzurkh district centre, Nyamsuren made books for children by using felt. They chose felt because it is reusable, colourful, and safe for children. 'We chose colourful felt because kids are always attracted to colourful things, especially kids with disabilities,' S.Undarmaa, a training manager at Bayanzurkh's Lifelong Education Centre, shared. 'It's an idea

for parents, too. When they see our books, they realize that they can make books by using materials other than paper. Books do not always have to be made of paper. Education for sustainable development is not only lectures or classes, but it's the practice of our everyday life.'

Full of inspiration, Nyamsuren said, 'I advanced my understanding and teaching method through the ESD master teachers' training. If I had not had a chance to join the training, I would not have understood to teach ESD with real examples. Sharing good practices is a more effective way to bring about results with impacts. In the future, I want to be a bridge between people and organizations to share their practices for sustainable development with each other.'

## Reaching communities around the country

**LAST YEAR**, fifteen teachers from eight provinces and seven districts in Mongolia joined the Reflect-Share-Act ESD training as master teachers. They are now raising awareness on sustainable development in their communities. G.Luvsandagva and P.Nyamsuren are among them. 'The feedback from our master teachers is that we learned and are learning sustainable development,' said B.Munguntsetseg of the National Centre for Lifelong Education of Mongolia (NCLE) who organized the training. 'There are things we already know and also things we are newly learning. The main thing we are learning is ESD is about acting together and engaging in practices instead of just teaching what sustainable development is.'

NCLE, an institute affiliated to the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) of Mongolia, has its branch centres in 21 provinces and 330 districts in the country. Its wide reach to citizens across the country through its local branches is a significant institutional advantage in a large and sparsely populated country like Mongolia.

'After the Reflect-Share-Act ESD training, we visited each province and district,' L. Bolortungalag, Director of NCLE, said. 'We saw that not only our master teachers, but also other teachers at Lifelong Education Centres have strengthened their capacity and knowledge on ESD.'

So far, master teachers' ESD classes have reached 300 teachers of local Lifelong Education Centres and

around 18,000 citizens, providing understanding about sustainable development and raising awareness to create grounds for future collaborative actions in the communities. Ms Bolortungalag shared NCLE's future plans. 'We are thinking of offering video classes based on an online platform. Also, we want to work with managerial level officials in local governments to make them understand ESD. We are asking our master teachers and other teachers to include ESD activities that are based on the characteristics of their local contexts in their workplans for next year.' She added, 'In the past, access was more important for us and we considered reaching a greater number of people. But now we think about quality, which can make a difference in people's lives.'



Children at the school in BBR Hills. Credit: UNESCO Bangkok

# One step at a time: a sustainable future takes root

■ KARNATAKA, INDIA

By Preethi Nagaraj



**MONSOON SEASON** has entered its last phase in most parts of Karnataka, a state in southern India. In Biligiri Rangana Hills, a hill range near the state's south-eastern border, Puttarange Gowda, a member of the indigenous Soliga community, is upbeat about exploring the forests after a long gap.

The incessant rain had made it impossible to venture into the deciduous landscape of trees, animals, birds and bees. As the sky clears, Puttarange Gowda is excited to share the Soligas' success story of honey harvesting by

showing the new colony of honey bees that have returned to their green abodes. His younger friends walking alongside him flash hesitant smiles as he points at the tall trees.

'Last year, we tried harvesting honey twice using a totally different method we had learnt at a training session on sustained development,' he says. 'We are curious to check if the new methods have again done us good at the turn of this season too.'

The 'new methods' he is referring to is a sustainable mode of honey harvesting.

## BR Hills and Soligas

**BILIGIRI RANGANA BETTA**, commonly known as BR Hills, is a protected wildlife sanctuary located at a height of 5,091 feet above sea level. Sitting on the edge of a precipice, the mountain range is also a tiger reserve forest and a safe den for Indian elephants.

The sanctuary serves as a significant biological bridge for the Deccan Plateau, the largest plateau in South India. A multitude of peaks and rocks peer out from the thick primeval forest of rich green well-aged trees. The bamboo thickets could stun onlookers with their sheer height and sturdiness.

Legend has it that the centuries-old community of Soligas originated from this very forest, as the name of the tribe means 'children of bamboo'. Studies by academicians into this community's origins have shown that it is among the oldest tribes in India.

As the only tribal community living in BR Hills since time immemorial, the Soligas live and breathe nature. Their festivals are mostly based on the turn of seasons, rains, sowing and crop harvesting schedules. From a young age, they learn to identify more than 300 species of trees, plants and herbs. Using these natural elements, they can prepare herbal medicinal concoctions for numerous illnesses.

One of the oldest trees in the forests of BR Hills—known as the Dodda Sampige Mara, meaning the 'Big Champak Tree'—is believed to be 2,000 years old. Standing at 34 metres tall and 20 metres wide, the Soligas consider it their god and offer prayers to it regularly. With this deeply-rooted dedication to nature, the community had never considered that their longstanding practices would need to be changed.



Green hills of Karnataka. Credit: Shutterstock



## The beginning



The entrance of VGKK. Credit: Jeevan Kumar, KM

**THE SEEDS** for this change were sown in mid-2019 when ‘sustainability’ was introduced both as a concept and a way of life to forty-seven members of the Soliga community.

Social activist Puttarange Gowda and his friends first learned about sustainability at a training session on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) organized by the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) under UNESCO’s project. The group that attended the day-long training was a heterogeneous mix of Soliga women, men and the youth.

The training session brought forth a stark reality before the attendees. The conventional methods followed by the Soliga community members were close to being expendable.

Up until then, they were collecting the last twig, ripping off the bark, plucking each berry, and slicing up entire units of honeycombs to harvest the honey. The Soligas were not aware that their trusted practices were taking them towards a possible exhaustion of resources.

Bharathi, 42, remembers sitting in the training workshop and wondering if the community members would actually work to change their methods. She is among the senior members of the workforce at Vivekananda Girijana Kalyana Kendra (VGKK), the community centre in BR Hills where the training was held.

For the last three decades, VGKK has been working for the holistic, sustainable development of the tribal

people. The organization believes in empowering tribal communities by facilitating processes that would lead to sustainable development while keeping the core culture, socio-cultural background and rights intact.

As the new perspective of sustainability was brought into the Soliga community, Bharathi says it significantly changed their labour input.

‘The earlier practices we followed took a lot of physical effort and risks, but the sustainable methods are less intensive and safer,’ she says. ‘Whether it is execution or incorporation, more of us have been involved in embedding those into our practices than with the previous methods.’



## Honey was the way

THE SOLIGA COMMUNITY'S age-old practice to collect honey was to start a fire at the bottom of a tree to chase the bees away. Then, they would pluck the whole comb to squeeze the honey to its last drop, discarding the remnants. This was done rather frequently and the method caused the death of thousands of precious bees. Any bees that escaped the fire would sense threat and choose not to return to the same tree or the particular area in the forest for a long period of time.

Speakers at the training session held at VGKK explained in great detail about the harm caused by smoking out the bees. They said this act was altering the bee population in the area, which would have a long-lasting impact on the composition of the forest. 'We didn't know any better till now,'

said Puttarange Gowda. 'We were flummoxed. Smoking up combs is something our ancestors taught us! They couldn't have been wrong!'

When the training ended, the participants were not too sure of how to take a step further. Moreover, they were not even certain if they would go ahead and explore ways of incorporating changes towards sustainability. With limited expectations, they decided to meet with their community members to discuss the feasibility of taking this new road.

The first discussion after the training session was held with a group of men and women within the Soliga tribe. Naturally, there were signs of resistance to the new methods of honey harvesting. Some members

of the community vetoed the idea, saying it was safer to stick to the old ways that they were familiar with from ages ago. They believed they were already living in perfect harmony with nature.

The community members had several concerns. 'We have been living in the forest for centuries. We hardly have any knowledge about another eco-system apart from where we live. Every bit of our knowledge is embedded like reflexes in our mind and body. How could all this be wrong?' they asked.

Puttarange Gowda understood why they were hesitant, particularly about the term 'sustainable development'. 'We only knew of "development" which means building structures or dams or introducing markets,' he says.



Wild honeycomb formation in the forest of BR Hills. Credit: Jeevan Kumari

“We only knew of ‘development’ which means building structures or dams or introducing markets.”

**Honey was the way**

When the meeting ended with more questions than answers, Puttarange Gowda, Bharathi and others that had attended the ESD training session felt they had to take some time to fructify their ideas. Subsequently, some of them met again on two occasions to further discuss if the methods imparted by the speakers at the session were executable.

It was the onset of monsoon season then, and their trips of venturing into the forest would go into a lull period due to the constant rain. Work and livelihoods were turning into more of a challenge with every passing day. Sustainability was not going to be an attractive proposition if it added more work to the local people.

The ever-expanding new rules and policies imposed by the government regarding collection and selling of the forest produce also posed a problem for the community. However, one of the speakers at the ESD training, Dr Jadegowda, a researcher and the first PhD holder from the Soliga community, had said during his session that sustainability as a perspective

would actually help the community members in a positive way.

With sustainability, the Soligas could adhere by all the legal provisions, such as the Biological Diversity Act, Forest Conservation Act, Wildlife Protection Act and Recognition of Forest Rights Act. It would also turn them into a joint forest management force and they would be perceived as enablers of forest protection. This would ensure that the community would not face much friction with the law implementing agencies.

Another speaker at the ESD session was Basavaraju, a science teacher working at the dedicated school for the Soliga children. He has been honoured by the state government for his innovation in teaching and his efforts to preserve folklore in the area. Like Puttarange Gowda, he also understands the local people's reluctance.

'The tribal community is a hardworking one,' Basavaraju shares. 'But when introduced to new concepts, it can get confusing for our people to follow. So, we decided to brainstorm our ideas

with other people from around our forest areas to know if they wanted to partner with us in an attempt towards this journey of sustainability.'

The Soliga people decided to meet with members from LAMPS (Large Sized Adivasi Multi-Purpose Societies) and invite them to join hands to take up sustainable methods of livelihoods. LAMPS or LAMP Societies are collectives of members from tribal communities that create solidarity among tribals and help them enhance their financial status and other life necessities. They are formed, owned and run by tribal people with a focus on collection and marketing of minor forest produce.

Some local government representatives and officers were also invited to be part of this meeting. However, the community's lacking attendance and lukewarm enthusiasm gave a clear message. Nevertheless, those who had now become champions of sustainability in their tribe remained undeterred. 'That is when we decided that we would approach sustainable development with one step at a time by ourselves and see how things rolled out,' says Puttarange Gowda.

## One step at a time

**BECAUSE HONEY** collection is the mainstay of Soliga community members, the quest for sustainability had to start with honey harvesting. 'Bees are the most important link to our ecosystem,' says Basavaraju. 'Though we knew this fact in a manner that our local wisdom told us, when we heard the experts talk about this at the training, we were

able to understand the intricate and significant role they play in protecting the forests while they are collecting nectar from plants and trees. Our efforts towards sustainability had to start with not destroying the bees while harvesting the honey.'

Since the community worked on honey extraction in large quantities, they felt

they could try a small portion of this task with the approach of sustainability. During peak harvesting season, the community collects around 8,000 gallons of honey in one go. The harvest takes place twice a year.

So, Puttarange Gowda, Basavaraju and a small team of people decided to break things down to small tasks.

“Bees are the most important link to our ecosystem.”



Bottling honey at VGKK, BR Hills. Credit: Jeevan Kumar KM

## One step at a time

They tried the new approach of slicing the honeycombs partially, leaving the larva behind. The honey collection quantity was reduced from earlier, but this would not hurt their economic prospects.

The college-going youth observed what had later transpired with the honeycombs. 'One day they told us excitedly that they had seen the bees had come back comfortably to their earlier abode since where we had left a significant part of the comb,' says Puttarange Gowda. 'We hadn't chased away the queen bee like we did earlier while smoking the combs up. We left the queen bee, larva and pollen untouched. The bees settled back in the same place, adding nectar and building colonies, extending the comb. This in fact, doubled the quantity of honey we harvested from a single point.'

When the team came back to VGKK with almost the same quantity of honey as they did before, it was deemed a great step towards sustainability. Those who were unrelenting earlier became suitably curious as the news travelled far and wide in the community.

Case studies shared by experts at the ESD training also helped the community members relate and bolster the aspects around safe and sustained honey extraction. Moreover, they were able to explore value addition in terms of collecting and selling beeswax for commercial use. The cosmetic industry has massive uses for beeswax, from creams to lipsticks, due to its natural ability to keep the skin hydrated.

'Earlier, the beeswax wasn't preserved for any use and was discarded,' Puttarange Gowda explains. 'But now we

process it and sell it to vendors who use it to make cosmetic and Ayurvedic (ancient method of treatment) products.'

The journey that had started with a novel method of honey extraction has also encouraged them to work on sustainably collecting other forest produce such as roots, tubers, berries and fuel wood. All that has also undergone a good deal of change.

Bharathi and her co-workers at VGKK held discussions among their Self-Help Group for Women on value addition to the products they were making. 'After we saw honey harvesting changing for better, we simultaneously decided to adapt a sustainability approach in making our products,' says Gayathri, one of Bharathi's co-workers. 'As of now, we are working on making organic dyes with our fruits and leaves to be used on clothes.'

## Sustained metamorphosis

THE METAMORPHOSIS that the community is going through has had a desirable impact on the collection of about twenty-four varieties of non-timber forest produce that they are legally allowed to collect. The improved methods of honey harvesting have also added value. About 60 per cent of the community's income is generated from these renewable products that fetch a good price in the market.

'We collect soap nut, mushrooms, oils, sap, foliage, medicinal plants, fuelwood, duckweed, moss, seeds, turmeric, bamboo, berries, without disturbing the green cover in the area,'

says Puttarange Gowda. 'In addition to all this, we also collect sticks that are used to make brooms.'

The Soliga community has come a long way from their former rustic methods of extracting nectar or collecting forest produce. It has just been two to three seasons of honey harvesting since the training session, and the community has now started experimenting with other aspects of sustenance as well.

'We used to shave the trees dry when we plucked berries or leaves. We would leave the climbers hanging in thin air when we took their roots for medicines.

But now, we only harvest forty to fifty per cent of whatever we aim to collect, leaving the rest for birds, animals and regeneration,' Basavaraju explains. 'We don't uproot the climbers or clear off the tubers anymore, and the results have given us new positive lessons.'

Income generation efforts have yielded great success and their products are recognized in selected organic markets that have a loyal customer base. The Soligas are planning on creating more markets for their products in nearby cities, where they can introduce their traditional methods of growing food, extracting



*Apis Cerana* on a beehive. Credit: Jeevan Kumar KM

honey and healing aches and pains through their native oil concoctions that are made through gradual and sustained processes.

From depending on forest bees, which are mostly *Apis Dorsata*—the giant bees that make honeycombs—the Soligas have moved to bee keeping or apiculture which is mostly done by *Apis Cerana*, known as 'Tuduve Jenu' in the local language.

*Apis Cerana* is a variety of small bees found in India that is best suited for domestication in cold weather and mountain areas. This variety of bees

can adapt to living in purpose-made hives and cavities. It is one of the important pollinators of coconut palms. Their colonies contain a few thousand workers around the queen bee, which are small compared to the massive *Dorsata* which has 50,000 or more bees in a colony. All these attributes work to the benefit of the Soligas.

In addition, the community's sustainability journey has brought about value addition in terms of indigenous knowledge and also the knowledge they had gained at the training session at VGKK. Commercial

success is a huge milestone for the community members. However, they also know that this is a step they must tread cautiously so as to not return to their old methods to serve the high demand of markets.

'We must sell only what we get as excess from the forest,' says Puttarange Gowda. 'We must never snatch hard from our resources.'

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## Future ready

AS A TEACHER at the local BR Hills school, Basavaraju knows he and his colleagues have a significant role to play in ensuring sustainability takes root in the minds of their future generations as well. At the school, their activity plan for young students also includes discussions on how sustainability has changed their ways of living in the forest for the better.

Children are encouraged to share stories on how their parents are now doing things differently and what impact it has had on nature and livelihoods. This has improved communication in their families. Also, the younger generation is enthusiastic about the growing trend of organic farming that is turning into a good income generating market.

The Soligas have become mentors not only for the youth in their community but also for other communities, too. Their knowledge-sharing in beekeeping and honey harvesting has helped many people find their inspiration to follow the same path. Shailaja Goranamane, a honey entrepreneur in the nearby town of Sirsi, is one of them. She has taken up innovative and organic bee-keeping methods, such as zero pesticide use.

Sirsi is a small town nestled amidst rivers and hillocks in Karnataka. It is situated 282 miles away from BR Hills. The climatic conditions of both places are very different. Yet, Shailaja was able to apply her learnings from the Soligas in her own context to considerably increase the yield of honey from her organic bee boxes.

Today, she has turned into an educator for apiculture enthusiasts. The information she shares is completely based on the knowledge she gained from her own experiments along with sustainable methods she learnt from the Soligas.

Being surrounded with precious flora and fauna, BR Hills is turning into an excellent standing testimony of sustainable development with stakeholders leading the change. The Soliga community has turned its complete attention to reinventing ways in which they can safeguard everything around them, while continuing to have safe and sustainable livelihoods. This ongoing phase of sustainable development is bound to create a significant dimension for BR Hills and the state of Karnataka to be well preserved for future generations for many decades to come.





Residents of BAP Hills. Credit: Jeevan Kurnar/KM



The coastline of Hiratsuka. Credit: Hiratsuka Board of Education

# Fostering community to create a future

■ HIRATSUKA, JAPAN

By Suvendrini Kakuchi

It is a cool autumn evening and discussions at the Suka Community Learning Centre, or Suka Kominkan in Japanese, are proceeding smoothly. The subject matter is the upcoming Kominkan Matsuri, a day-long festival that showcases community activities including concerts and exhibitions by the residents. The discussions centred on arrangements

for the festival, which included the importance of supporting and encouraging volunteers to make it a success. Currently in its thirty-eighth year, the Suka Kominkan is the oldest community learning centre in Hiratsuka City, a bed town south of Tokyo. The city has a population of 260,000 people that is a mix of old families and urban migrants.

As the discussions unfolded, Mr Takahide Chiba, the thirty-six-year-old Programme Coordinator of the Kominkan, listened quietly in the room, taking notes. Six years have passed since he was assigned to Suka by the Hiratsuka City Office, and it was his idea to hold the event given its importance to the community. The enthusiastic support, first from the two

central members and later by the rest of the committee, is deeply important to him. 'Being able to work together provides me with the solid foundation to take new actions,' he explained. Nodding to confirm the statement was Mr Masaki Suyama, 74, who has been the volunteer community leader for the last twenty-two years. 'Solidarity is pivotal for team spirit and for the development of our Kominkan,' he said.

This year, Mr Chiba has embarked on a special mission. It is a new initiative

to infuse sustainability perspectives with Kominkan activities. He is acutely aware that sustainable lifestyles are not familiar topics in the local community. However, he believes it is possible to make alterations given his close relations with the working members. 'My plan is to usher in fresh outlooks to our activities,' he said.

Mr Chiba was referring to his participation in a training project that introduced him to the concepts and practices of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The objective

of ESD is to nurture changes in individual lifestyles and community to advance towards the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) slated for 2030.

The Suka Kominkan joined the project that was developed in close cooperation with education experts and the central Kominkan management. The project was organized by the Asia Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU) in Tokyo. ESD is defined as a life-long learning process, a target not that different to that of



Suka Kominkan in Hiratsuka. Credit: Hiratsuka Board of Education.

“I went in with a blank mind and walked out realizing I now face new challenges...”

the Kominkan, which is mandated to provide non-formal education for local communities. Still, Mr Chiba explained, the introduction of ESD into the Kominkan in a variety of contexts marked a turning point in his career.

His opinion echoed that of Mr Satoshi Ohno, 42, the Programme Coordinator of the Matsugaoka Kominkan, who also actively participated in the project. ‘When I joined the training,

I was not familiar with ESD. I went in with a blank mind and walked out realizing I now face new challenges to bring sustainability issues to our activities,’ he said.

Included in the project were the directors and staff of four district Kominkans and the central Kominkan of Hiratsuka. A host of community residents supported the activities organized by the participating

Kominkans. They represented the local communities and joined from neighbourhood associations and community organizations such as a parent-teacher association, climate change action organization, after-school children’s club and local businesses. As the key stakeholders in community development, they provided diverse expertise and opinions, and contributed to the project’s objective to shape ESD for the city.

## Launching ESD in Hiratsuka

ESD is not widely recognized in Kominkans in Japan and Hiratsuka was not an exception. A baseline survey conducted among the local staff revealed only two of the twenty-three respondents indicated they were familiar with ESD or its practices. The ACCU report also pointed out that Hiratsuka, like other cities, has not been able to grasp the urgency of taking on sustainable development as their own problem. For example, during early discussions, the Hiratsuka Central Kominkan viewed the introduction of ESD as an extra burden for Kominkan staff, a position that also contributed to the early lack of enthusiasm for the topic at the ground level.

The ESD training, organized by ACCU, focused on the Reflect-Share-

Act framework, a learning process described as a journey to be taken both individually and in the community. It does not refer to a set of modules to provide knowledge but is rather explained as an evolving process. During the first workshop in March, the district participants found it difficult to relate to the concept of ESD. They were puzzled with the new terminology and grappled with identifying new measures that can be compatible with the existing activities.

In a later interview, Mr Chiba at the Suka Kominkan recalled his experience with the project team. ‘It was a struggle to comprehend the concepts of sustainable development and ESD that were not familiar in my personal life,’ he said. ‘Then I also started to

worry about how I could bring what I was learning to my community leaders who are older than myself. We had not discussed the UN SDGs before.’

It is not that ESD is unfamiliar in Japan. Internationally, the Ministry of Education of Japan is a leading proponent of ESD, and official support has ushered it into 1,000 schools across the country. Okayama City in Okayama Prefecture leads the way with ESD already implemented in schools in the city and the municipal administration. Since 2005, there is a Regional Centre of Expertise in Okayama that promotes sustainability learning in both schools and local administration. The move to bring ESD into the Hiratsuka Kominkans that did not recognize the theme, therefore, signals a new trajectory.

## Background

**HISTORICALLY**, Hiratsuka was developed as a stop for the powerful seventeenth-century Shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu, on his way to Edo or current Tokyo. The city was also an ammunition production centre during World War II and faced severe bombing from the Allied

Powers. But following Japan's rapid post-war industrialization and social urbanization, Hiratsuka is now a typical small city on the outskirts of Tokyo. Auto part factories, new apartment buildings, and a narrow commercial area of restaurants and shuttered shopping arcades surround the train

station, while older residential areas are located further interior.

There are twenty-five district Kominkans active in Hiratsuka, stretching from the coast to the hills. The Kominkan provides multi-services to support grass-roots development



that are implemented with the collaboration of local community volunteers. Adult learning classes, summer camps for children and parents, nutrition and childcare support, and age-old recreational activities, such as the fall programme of collecting sweet potatoes, are some examples. The Japanese Kominkan system was established in 1949 to provide community education and social cohesion to the rural masses in

the new democratization process after Japan's defeat in World War II.

Mr Takeshi Ebisawa, the Vice Director of the Central Kominkan Management Office, explained in an interview, that demographic change in the city has ushered in new challenges. 'The role of the Kominkan is to foster community learning and grass-roots development. But recently we need to adapt to the changes around us,'

he pointed out. Hirastuka is not alone. Japan's declining population is also rapidly aging, a trend that is threatening the welfare budgets that support the future of the Kominkan. The system is currently at a crossroads and searching for survival strategies.

Mr Ebisawa described some of the troubling consequences on the Kominkan due to the loss of a sense of belonging among



A view on the city of Hirastuka. Credit: Shutterstock

Background

members in their communities. For instance, large buildings that were built to be used predominantly for community development activities have now become places where elderly residents gather for recreation programmes—hobbies, concerts, or sometimes simply to get together for personal chit-chats. He is also very concerned over organizational risks because Kominkans are struggling to find active and committed volunteers. ‘Younger people are busy with work and child care. Even people who have retired have taken on new jobs and have very little time for the community,’ Mr Ebisawa explained. The elderly feel they are too frail to take on volunteer activities. ‘It is becoming harder to persuade people to work together for the community,’ he added.

Against this background, the ESD project marked an important turning point for the Kominkans in Hiratsuka. Indeed, for Mr Ebisawa, the implementation of the ESD project was a well-timed step for the Kominkan. ‘We view the ESD project as an important entry point towards implementing new strategies,’ he said.

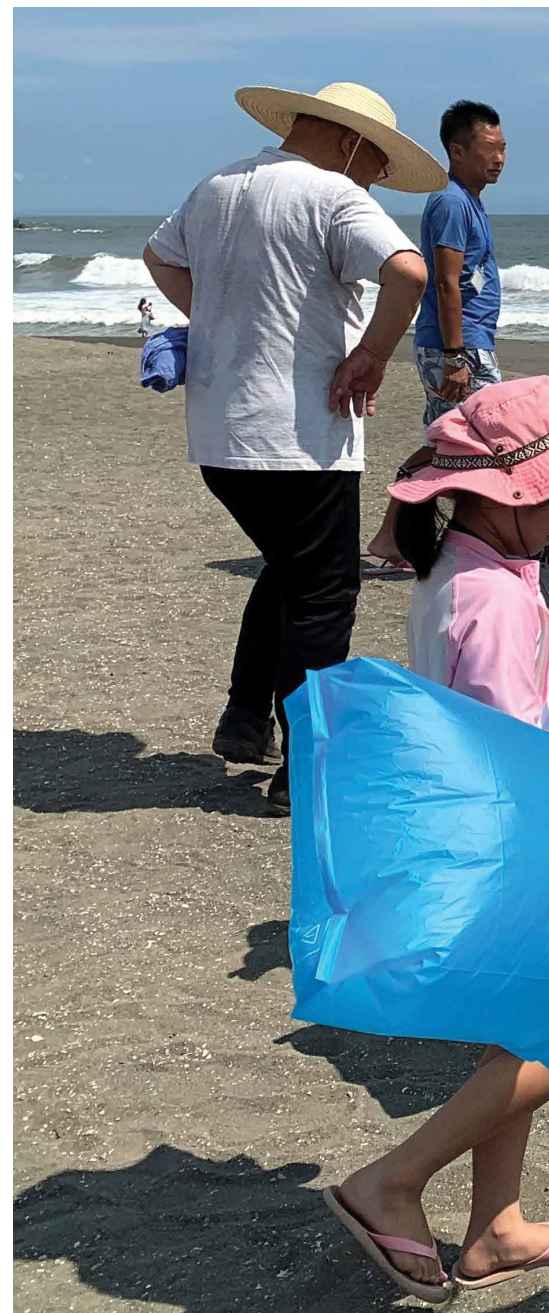
The decision is also tied to the growing interest of the national government and big businesses in the UN SDGs. ‘We are aware of the rising profile of the SDGs across Japan,’ said Mr Ebisawa. Through ESD training, his hope is to strengthen ESD knowledge in the staff in order to include sustainability topics in their work and build the future of the Kominkan. ‘ESD goals that stress collaboration and sustainability can be embedded easily in our activities,’ he added.

In fact, subtle changes are already making inroads to reform Kominkan activities and address weak community engagement. For example, a Japanese poetry class at the Central Kominkan has taken steps to promote mutual learning and collaboration that are also important in ESD. The class is comprised of mostly elderly residents who hardly speak to each other. To change the situation and encourage interaction, the instructor and the Kominkan staff in charge will introduce group poetry writing. ‘Writing poetry together leads to better ties between the participants. This is the base to the new community building,’ Mr Ebisawa said.

“ESD goals that stress collaboration and sustainability can be embedded easily in our activities.”

Breakthroughs

THE DAWNING OF ESD in Hiratsuka during the project left a lasting impression on assistant professor Mieko Ikegaya, who was the senior trainer. ‘I began with the impression that I was prying open a very tightly shut window,’ said the social education expert who teaches at Tokai University



located in Hiratsuka. 'But, at the end there were important results.'

As a key person in the design and training of the ESD project, Ms Ikegaya cited an interesting example of the unconscious resistance she confronted among the participants.

'The introduction of English vocabulary, such as ESD and SDGs, created confusion simply because they were not accustomed to foreign texts,' she said. The importance of discussion, analysis, and action and the lack of modules in the curriculum were other bones of contention. 'The

training had to deviate from typical Japanese norms that are based on the format of students listening to their lecturer. The Reflect-Share-Act approach that expected participants to dissect one's own practices was also something new to the Kominkan directors and staff,' she said.



Summer camp activity on the Hiasuka beach. Credit: UNESCO Bangkok and the Hiratsuka Board of Education.

## Breakthroughs

A breakthrough Ms Ikegaya remembers clearly is when she presented her examples to the project participants that showed how impact can be achieved through simple changes. That led to new discussions on ideas for initiatives like including easy questions for children during camp activities to make them aware of their surrounding environment. 'When I actually wrote down the questions that could entertain children and at the same time facilitate their learning of sustainability topics, it kindled interest among the participants. They were able to expand their former narrow definition of fun,' she said.

The training prompted Mr Chiba, the Programme Coordinator of Suka Kominkan, to introduce ESD in the August Ocean and Mountain Expedition camp held for children, parents and guardians. The structure retained the usual activities—cooking with local vegetables, fireworks, studying insects—but Mr Chiba decided to include a sustainability issue soon after the discovery of a nest of cicada larva among the trees. 'The participants were so touched by what they found that I found it easy to include a discussion on the

protection of natural resources for future generations,' he explained. A later survey showed the participants had enjoyed the new learning. 'Their response helped me to move beyond agonizing about the risk of rejection and gain confidence to add ESD,' he opined.

Mr Ohno from Matsugaoka Kominkan shared a similar story. 'My interest peaked when I was able to have a dialogue with the experts. It was important to be able to converse about the activities in my Kominkan for me to connect with sustainability issues,' he said.

For Mr Ohno, the highlight of the ESD training was the study visit to Okayama during which he could exchange opinions with experienced Kominkan counterparts. 'I was stimulated to learn the benefits of developing sustainability concepts in local programmes by talking with the people who were actively working on these projects. The way they were promoting ESD gave me ideas to replicate in Hiratsuka,' he said.

Mr Ohno refers to his experience with his Matsugaoka Kominkan community

leaders. They work together to provide activities for the small neighborhood of both older and younger households. A major feat that he faces is bringing everyone together. Older people live alone and do not interact with the young families, who are also busy with jobs and child rearing. To bridge the gap, Mr. Ohno spearheaded a project a few years ago in collaboration with the local seniors' club to involve elders in traffic duty at schools. The objective was to foster closer relations between children and the older population. However, the project did not last long.

After the Okayama study visit, Mr Ohno is now more keenly aware of the importance of fostering stronger communication between children and older people by organizing events so they can interact with each other more often. 'It is the individuals who are the owners of their community, and Kominkan activities need to focus on building this community spirit,' he said.

Ms Ikegaya observes such comments illustrate that ESD knowledge has helped the directors to evolve beyond their silos. 'It is a minor revolution that Mr Ohno is ready to experiment with new activities,' she said. 'That is ESD learning.'

## Moving towards change

**STARTING** from this academic year, the Hiratsuka Board of Education incorporates ESD into the mainstream Kominkan policy. The landmark change officially recognized that Kominkan activities will include sustainability with the participation of the Kominkan Management Committee in the

planning process. The decision was also linked to the recently completed ESD project and the contributions made by the participating directors. In several post-training meetings with colleagues, they described their experience as a first in understanding the importance of sustainability issues

and recommended the incorporation of ESD towards reforming and strengthening the Hiratsuka Kominkan.

The ESD policy has hugely motivated Mr Chiba at the Suka Kominkan. He views the decision as the necessary green light for the staff to enact

positive steps to include sustainability concepts in their work. 'I definitely think the implemented ESD policy is the support I need to act further on the training I had,' he said.

For Mr Chiba this means making plans to promote ESD themes and topics by working closely with the Suka community. 'I don't need to hasten the process but rather it is important to first devise a strategy to make sure the local community is onboard and ready to participate,' he said.

Mr Ohno echoes that sentiment. Relying on his ESD training, the director is planning to establish a new fathers' club in his Kominkan. He knows the needs are there especially when meeting with young dads like himself at school events. 'Younger

men want to get more involved with the development of their children by doing new things with them,' he said. 'A club will bring like-minded people to share and act together.'

To make sure of progress this time, the project will be developed through careful reflection and discussion, which Mr Ohno had experienced at ESD training. 'I am keenly aware of the need to prepare. Going ahead must involve community leaders who are elderly, and this is something new to them,' he mused.

Mr Chiba and Mr Ohno both firmly expressed their ESD journey involves strengthening their own knowledge of sustainability issues. Mr Chiba likens himself to a juggler where his skills start creaky but only sharpen along

the way. For Mr Ohno, the goals appeared more uphill, but he is happy to see the new opportunities. They point to the plans now fomenting in their minds as the seeds that were planted through the training. 'At this stage, I have the plans,' said Mr Ohno. 'The next step is to make them work.'

Back in the Suka Kominkan, Mr Chiba is also exuding this positivity. He plans to leave his ESD footprint before the duration of his term ends. He is encouraged mostly by the dedication of his community members. 'The tireless work of the Kominkan committee members is an inspiration,' he said. 'Given this spirit, promoting ESD now will only strengthen their wonderful capacity to keep Suka's active for the next generations.'

“Going ahead must involve community leaders who are elderly.”



Vegetable field along Mekong River in Hom Village. Credit: Vandy Lorkuangming

# Bringing the whole community together on a journey towards sustainable development

■ HOM VILLAGE, LAO PDR

By Vanly Lorkuangming



**LOCATED** in Hadxayfong District along the Mekong River, Hom Village is known for its calm, beautiful greenery and rich croplands, making it a perfect agricultural area in Vientiane Capital. The people spend most of their days on the farm growing crops to earn a living. Since the village has a Community Learning Centre to promote local learning, Somchit and her team see great potential in implementing their project to promote Education for Sustainable Development (ESD).

Ms Somchit, 28 years old, works at the Non-Formal Education for Development Centre (NFEDC) of the Ministry of Education and Sports. It is not until she takes part in the Reflect-Share-Act training that

Somchit comes to understand what sustainable development means for her. 'It is quite a difficult concept to comprehend initially,' she says, 'but through the engagement with my project team and the participants in our workshops, I found out what sustainable development means in our everyday life.'

Although Somchit has heard about ESD, the concept appeared to be relatively new until she became involved in the project that requires her to be a learner and a training provider at the same time. She finds this to be a challenge. 'People might have heard of sustainable development, but it is not a familiar term for most of them. They do not understand what it means.'

However, after taking part in the project, Somchit can now grasp the concept of sustainable development. 'It is about balancing three components of development such as economy, society, and environment,' she explains. She discovers that these three dimensions are interconnected, giving an example of how many economic activities harm the environment, which then in turn affects people's lives. With this new understanding, Somchit is ready to share her knowledge with the people in the communities, who, just like her, may have heard of the term but have no idea what it means in real life.



## Enhancing the skills of the community educators

**SOMCHIT**, together with her colleagues, conduct a series of workshops using UNESCO's Reflect-Share-Act framework. The workshops aim to enhance the capacity of local community educators from the Community Learning Centres (CLC), primary and secondary schools, and the village committee. These workshops are interactive and participatory to stimulate discussion among the participants.

During the workshops, the educators discuss the concept of sustainable development, including working in groups to design, plan, and implement activities regarding sustainable development in their communities. 'These workshops help the community educators gain skills to engage with villagers and involve them in the learning process on sustainable development,' says Somchit.

The workshops stimulate local ownership and leadership through the exchanging of thoughts and conversations to define problems and identify solutions. Among other sessions, the educators run a community needs assessment that allows them to engage with villagers in their communities. This exercise concluded that one of the most pressing issues facing the people in Hom Village is the overuse of pesticides in farming.

Most villagers are farmers, with agriculture as their primary source of income. In their daily work, the farmers reportedly overuse pesticides. The workshops provide an opportunity to engage them on the issue of unsustainable agriculture. 'We want to draw them into a discussion about sustainable

development, like how pesticide use has an impact on people's health, environment, and other social issues,' explains Somchit.

In the workshops, the community educators reflect on their past and current practices in farming. As they discuss the pesticide issue, Somchit observes that the community educators analyse various aspects of sustainable development concerning pesticide use. They manifest their understanding through active involvement in the learning process.



## Embedding ESD into school teaching and learning

ONE OF THE community educators in Hom, Mr Somwang, the Hom Nuea Primary School Principal, who is also a farmer back at home, is concerned about the danger of pesticides on human and animal health. 'When farmers apply pesticides, they are at risk of catching the chemicals through breathing. It has an impact on consumers as well,' he says. 'If farmers do not keep pesticide cans or bottles

carefully, they will pose a danger to cows and other livestock. Pesticides will poison them.'

Mr Somwang raises an important point: 'People rely on farming for their living, yet their approach is not environmentally-friendly.' Because of this, he feels that the current practice is not sustainable. 'It destroys the soil, creates pollution, and harms the

environment and human and animals' health. There are many other issues if we dig deeper,' he says. 'We can see the connection between many dimensions of the problem. It is not easy to address them.'

Perceiving the seriousness of the problem, Mr Somwang has to find sustainable solutions. As the principal, his role is to manage his school to



**Embedding ESD into school teaching and learning**

prepare students for their future. To cultivate the youngsters’ awareness, he includes sustainability issues in their ‘mindset education’ class. ‘Every Monday morning and Friday evening, we educate students about the danger of pesticides in our daily life, along with other environmental topics,’ he says. ‘We try to educate them to become responsible citizens and contribute to the future.’

Mr Somwang plans to integrate sustainable development into teaching and learning at his school. He holds a strong belief that education, especially at an early age, is crucial in building critical thinking skills and nurturing sustainable and responsible behaviour.

The workshops also provided a great opportunity for him to meet and discuss with another participant and fellow community educator Ms Manivone, the Head of the Community Learning Centre in Hom. Soon after, they agree to collaborate. When he goes back to his school, the principal has a meeting with the teachers to start planning activities for students to plant trees and grow crops in school.

Back at home, Mr Somwang inhabits the role of farmer, father and husband. For him, safety is the priority to ensure

the health of his family. He grows vegetables using natural fertilizers and organic pesticides in his garden. This way, his family can enjoy fresh, uncontaminated vegetables and stay healthy. He hopes that his practice can inspire his neighbours to understand the problem and stay healthy, too. Ultimately, he wants to see the whole village reduce its pesticide use and adopt a sustainable farming approach.

When asked about the one crucial thing he learned from the workshops, Mr Somwang immediately responds, ‘long-term solutions.’ For him, to achieve sustainable development means identifying long-term solutions to all the problems facing human beings. ‘It is about learning, taking action and learning as you take action, delivering good results, and maintaining the results as long as possible,’ he adds.

The school principal’s goal has always been the same since starting this job many years ago. He wants to focus on providing quality education and building critical thinking skills among his students. ‘Children are the backbone of the country,’ he says. ‘They are the future, so we need to develop human resources, and that begins with education.’

In addition to the pesticide issue, other significant problems also emerged from the workshop discussions, including waste management. The community educators discussed how waste has an impact on environment and health.

To address this issue, Mr Somwang also focuses on improving waste management in the school. He thinks it is vital to teach students about the different types of waste so they can segregate and know how to manage waste. It is also essential to educate them about the environmental and health impacts of unmanaged waste and to teach them to be responsible and not litter in public.

Following the principal’s vision, Hom Neua School now demonstrates the importance of incorporating waste management in teaching. Here, students take turns cleaning up the school field. Three trash bins are placed outside the classroom, labelled with different types of waste so that students know which type belongs to which bin.



“We can see the connection between many dimensions of the problem.”

## Integrating sustainable development into community learning

**MS MANIVONE** has been the Head of the Community Learning Centre (CLC) in Hom Village for more than ten years. Her centre provides vocational training like farming, sewing, and cooking sessions for young people.

She has participated in numerous meetings and workshops on educational topics, but this ESD project is quite different. 'This is the

first time I participated in this kind of workshop,' she says. 'I got to always think and analyse the problems and discuss with other participants throughout the workshops.'

Ms Manivone is firm about how pesticides significantly impact the environment, such as air pollution and soil quality. She observes, 'Pesticides contaminate and destroy the soils, so

farmers have to increase the number of pesticides every time to make it work.' Indeed, croplands lose their quality due to pesticides.

To cleanse the agricultural land, farmers need to 'rest' (directly translated from the local term 'phak din', meaning to let the soils take a break without exposure to chemicals) for three to five years. Ms Manivone feels for the farmers who



Hom Village Community Learning Centre. Credit: Vany Loukuangming

Integrating **sustainable development** into community learning



Ms Manivone, Head of the HomVillage Community Learning Centre, tending to her vegetable garden. Credit: Varnly Lokkuangming

cannot wait for so long. 'What are they going to do during the three to five years? This would affect the farmers' income,' she ponders. She concludes that there needs to be an alternative approach for the farmers to minimize pesticide utilization.

After participating in the Reflect-Share-Act sessions, Ms Manivone incorporates sustainable development into her learning centre's training. Besides collaborating with the Hom Neua Primary School Principal to grow crops and trees in the school, she wants to trigger more reflection among young people and help them become responsible citizens. 'If they feel that it is important, they will start to make an effort,' she says.

Ms Manivone hopes to create a learning environment that allows young people to feel connected and involved, so that they can work together to find solutions. 'Everyone has a role to play to make a real change,' she says. 'But first and foremost, people need to be aware and understand the issues.' She shares what she learned from the workshops with her learners. Together, they discuss the impact of

“Everyone has a role to play to make a real change. . . .But first and foremost, people need to be aware and understand the issues.”

pesticide use and how to protect the environment by adopting a sustainable approach.

Ms Manivone also grows vegetables and fruit trees at home and at the learning centre, applying the recipes for natural fertilizers she learned from the workshops. It makes her feel safe to eat the vegetables she grew herself. When harvesting, she shares some with her learners and tells them how she grows crops without exposure to chemicals.

When it comes to her understanding about sustainable development, Ms Manivone says it is about long-term growth. 'It's about lifelong learning, so that people acquire skills to solve problems,' she notes. As she observes how the world is changing, she states that 'we need to keep up with it, and we need to be adaptable to the situation'. In sharing her understandings with her learners, Ms Manivone involves them in an ongoing discussion by talking about the real-life issues they face daily.

'We have to address problems using sustainable solutions and think about how to keep the good things with us for a longer time,' she explained. 'How can we grow crops without causing harm or at least with little harm to human health and environment, while at the same time maintaining income? It is not easy, but we need to think.'



## Promoting sustainable development through community engagement

**LIKE MR SOMWANG** and Ms Manivone, another community educator named Mr Noi is also passionate about sustainable development. Having been the Head of Hom Village for more than twenty years, he knows his village more than anyone else.

When analysing why pesticide use persists despite the knowledge of its dangers, the community educators are certain that it is because people want to maintain their income. Carefully examining the factors behind this pervasive practice, Mr Noi explains. 'Farmers have to use pesticides in order to improve yields to meet the market demand,' he says. 'When the farmers apply pesticides, they see good results. Their crops grow fast and well, and they are good to sell at the market.'

As the discussion goes on, Mr Noi shares other social problems he observed. As most farmers are aware of the danger of pesticides, they do not apply them by themselves.

Instead, they hire workers to do the job. 'They are paid about 100,000 Lao kip a day and those poor workers do not have any protective equipment to safeguard themselves. Is it worth it?' Mr Noi questions the practice. 'There are workers who died because of these chemicals. It's terrible!' Apart from this issue, he also points out that some local suppliers still provide illegal or prohibited pesticides in his village.

Following the workshops, Mr Noi continues to share his understanding of sustainable development with others. He feels that he has a responsibility to encourage and inspire people to think about the problem by initiating a discussion. 'I talk to my wife and my children at home. I teach them how to make natural fertilizers and pesticides. I also speak to my neighbours about the impacts of pesticides.'

Mr Noi promotes sustainable development in his village through community engagement like village meetings. He uses the village loudspeakers to

spread the message. 'I want them to reflect on their current practices in farming,' he says. 'I hope they will come to understand and change little by little.'

Apart from sharing his understandings with the people in his village, Mr Noi also upholds his commitment to being a role model. Like Ms Manivone, he tries natural fertilizers following the recipe he learned from the workshops to grow vegetables and fruits. He grows grass to feed his cows and uses the cow dung to make organic fertilizer.

He has seen the results that the organic fertilizer works. 'It takes some time,' he shares. 'I also notice that it works well for fruit trees, but not very well with vegetables because it also helps weeds grow, not only the vegetables.' He keeps looking for natural ways to improve his vegetables without further harming the soil. He also encourages his neighbours to try it and even invites them to visit his garden.

Promoting sustainable development through community engagement

Just like the other community educators, Mr Noi acknowledges that the concept of sustainable development is not easy to understand, so he needs to think about other ways to discuss it. By talking about problems

around the village, he shows the link between the different dimensions of sustainability.

Although he knows it will take time, Mr Noi is adamant about making

sure people continue to think about sustainable development. To achieve this, he is ready to lead the charge. 'You need to take action and be a role model so people see you do it,' he says. 'Then they will follow.'



Mr Noi, head of Horn Village and his cow. Credit: Yany, Lorkuangming

“You need to take action and be a role model so people see you do it. . . . Then they will follow.”

## The way forward

‘THE COMMUNITY EDUCATORS are already entering into the ongoing process of Reflect-Share-Act,’ Somchit, the young staff at the Non-Formal Education Development Centre (NFEDC), observes. She is becoming more confident that ESD can empower people to change their thinking and collectively resolve challenges. She says, ‘ESD has drawn us into the learning process where we

constantly reflect on our real problems, find solutions that work in our context, and think again about how it works and does not work.’

When talking about the future, Mr Somsy, the Director of the NFEDC, has strong hopes for ESD. He plans to expand ESD to other community learning centres in Vientiane and, ultimately, all provinces across the

country. He is also looking to integrate ESD into the National Lifelong Learning Policy towards 2030. He says, ‘ESD creates an opportunity for all Lao people to access education so they have the knowledge and skills to improve their livelihoods and take on an active role in bringing about sustainable development.’





Planting mangroves on the shoreline of Daga. Credit: Philippine Normal University - Visayas

# Preserving Indigenous legacy through ESD

■ CADIZ CITY, PHILIPPINES

By Nestor Godofredo Baylon Ramirez



WHEN TYPHOON HAIYAN hit the shoreline of Purok Kakahuyan in Barangay Daga, Cadiz City, the lives of the fisherfolk inhabiting the area were badly devastated. In the wake of this destruction, Anna Liza Santillana, an academician at the Philippine Normal University (PNU), wished to help breathe life back into the legacy of the local fisherfolk community.

Cadiz City is located in the northern part of Negros Occidental in Philippines, some 65 kilometres away from the provincial capital of Bacolod. Santillana had been involved in various notable humanitarian projects in the area under her work at PNU in Cadiz. It was through this work that she reached out to the fisherfolks in the hope of salvaging the area that had been ravaged by the super typhoon.

Santillana’s project with the fisherfolks helped turn the damaged coastline into a verdant and burgeoning ten-hectare mangrove forest. The mangroves serve as a natural buffer against winds and storm surges. At the same time, the forest became a stable source of food and livelihood for the community.

Following the initial triumph of preserving and expanding the mangrove plantation, Santillana began to reflect on how the indigenous knowledge of the fisherfolk could be preserved for the future. ‘The bungalon forest is the legacy of the fisherfolks; I want this to be passed on to the next generation,’ she said. ‘Bungalon’ refers to the Indian mangrove in the local language.

Santillana believes that in order to make a project sustainable, one has to engage the involvement of the younger generation. In her work, she had seen how many projects had not endured due to either a lack of interest or insufficient knowledge. ‘Children have to be taught to embrace nature for them to continue nurturing and caring for the mangroves planted by their parents,’ she says. ‘It is also the responsibility of the academe and the government to guide the community to attain its fullest potential.’

It was when she joined the Education for Sustainable Development workshop organized in Cebu, the island adjacent to Negros, that Santillana began contemplating a partnership with the nearby Daga Elementary

School in Purok Kakahuyan, Cadiz City. Connecting the mangrove reforestation project to the students at the school would fulfill her dream of inculcating the importance of environmental care and protection to the young children.

To help realize her dream, Santillana visualized the creation of literacy materials written in Hiligaynon, the language of the area. The literacy materials would contain indigenous knowledge about the sea and its species drawn from the personal experiences and oral tradition of the fisherfolk community.

This latest community mobilization initiative was dubbed ‘Katunggan Damo Kita Mahibaluan’, which means ‘In the mangroves, we can learn many things’. It is a continuation of PNU’s project entitled ‘Bungalon Padamuon, Tatapon (Mangrove Rehabilitation Among Fisherfolks)’; launched in 2014.



“The bungalon forest is the legacy of the fisherfolks; I want this to be passed on to the next generation.”

## Engaging the community

IN 2014, Santillana, who was then the Director of the Center for Environment and Green Technology Education and the Community Extension Office of PNU, organized the fisherfolks in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. She saw the need to rehabilitate the mangroves for two reasons. The first was to protect the community from being battered by the big waves when another typhoon comes. The second was to improve the breeding grounds for the different sea creatures.

According to Carlito Matulac, the chairman of Purok Kakahuyan Small Fishermen Association (PKSFA), the

local organization of the fisherfolks, before PNU started the project in 2014, at least three different agencies had attempted to plant mangroves in the same area. However, all these prior attempts had failed. 'They distributed rice to the residents who helped them plant the mangroves,' said Matulac. 'They left and never returned.'

Matulac and his colleagues appreciated the style of PNU, who persuaded them to act on the problem. When the mangroves started to flourish, different marine species became abundant. In the last two years, there has been no need for the fisherfolks to sail their

boats in the deep portion of the water to fish. Their catch is sufficient just by staying a few meters away from the edge of the mangrove plantation. Santillana's initiative converted most of their members from being passive residents to engaged individuals and protectors of the environment.

In her latest project, Santillana once again wanted to mobilize the community by engaging them as key informants and implementers. She planned to do this by branching out and connecting to the community of beneficiaries and the local school. The project also tapped the help of



Engaging the community

“Who would ever think of that as part of your coursework?”

teachers from the nearby elementary school, local officials and pre-service teachers of PNU.

Matulac said the entire community supported her new initiative that was building on the previous project in which the PKSFA members were deeply involved. ‘It is not difficult to get the commitment of the fisherfolks, especially that Dr Santillana is on top, because they have already learned a lot from her group at PNU,’ he added.

Jiger Calo, as a pre-service teacher, had already completed the academic course requirements, but had yet to obtain his teaching license. He

was excited about the proposal of Santillana to compile literacy materials containing the testimonies of fisherfolk. ‘Who would ever think of that as part of your coursework?’ he quipped.

For Arnel Geronga, the principal of Daga Elementary School, he foresaw that being part of the programme would benefit his school. ‘It will help us in educating our children about the importance of environment protection,’ he said.

Another person who was eager to be involved was Ruben Emberga, a barangay councilor of Daga. The

barangay is the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines, similar to a district or ward. The council signed a memorandum of agreement to support Santillana’s project.

As the former chairman of the barangay’s education committee, Emberga shared his observation that most of the children in the community do not fully understand the concept of caring for the environment. He felt that incorporating the importance of a balanced eco-system into their lessons was a remarkable idea that would make them appreciate the labour of their parents.

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## Compiling literacy materials

**IN ORDER TO COLLECT** the contents for the literacy materials, the PNU faculty, staff and pre-service teachers met with members of PKSFA ten times over a period of four months. During these meetings, the PKSFA members shared their experiences on how they were able to protect the mangroves while carrying out the rehabilitation.

In addition to speaking about how the bungalow affected their own lives, the fisherfolk also discussed how the mangrove forest impacted other stakeholders, especially in the aspects

of environmental protection, food security and livelihood. Pre-service teachers were in charge of taking notes and collating the information for the literacy materials.

Jocelyn Duenas, a member of PKSFA who took part in these knowledge sharing sessions, revealed that initially, some of the participants entertained the thought of backing out. This was because they were afraid to speak about their knowledge and experiences in front of other people. ‘We are just ordinary people, and we

are not comfortable speaking in public for fear of being criticized,’ she said.

Learning about these participants’ hesitation, the PNU team impressed upon them the importance of their knowledge about the sea. They encouraged those who lacked confidence to overcome their fear of public speaking so that people could learn from them.

To help them further, the PKSFA members were also invited to join the activities of the university, so they could

have an immersive experience of how knowledge can be shared. In addition, Emberga, the barangay official, went to their houses and encouraged them to continue. He told them how their testimonies would greatly help to enhance the children's knowledge on environmental care and protection. Eventually, the fisherfolk became more eager to participate in the sessions.

The team of pre-service teachers made countless trips to the shoreline to examine and assess the condition of the sea species and other organisms. The members of PKSFA guided these excursions. For Maria Lyka Villcorta, a pre-service teacher who took part in the project, the most memorable part of the process was when they were taken to the shorelines to gather sea

shells and other organisms. The team also learned to identify the specimens they encountered. Subsequently, the names of the shells and creatures found in the area were used as characters in the stories included in the literacy materials.

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## Protecting the legacy

**THE LITERACY MATERIALS** were piloted during classes with the students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 at Daga Elementary School. As a result, the teachers observed that some pupils had improved their reading skills by 15 per cent and were already familiar with the names and categories of sea creatures found in the mangrove areas.

For the next step of her project, Santillana plans to let the Daga Elementary School students plant mangrove propagules. Allowing the pupils to experience for themselves the actual planting of the mangroves would immerse them into the different processes of forest rehabilitation. This hands-on activity would also help them to easily understand the purpose of the project.

At the same time, the students would be able to experience the thrill of watching their plants grow. 'The school is near the coastal area where the reforestation project is located,' Santillana explained. 'The children can monitor the progress of the seedlings they planted, especially as the rehabilitated area is adjacent to their homes.'



Participants at a PNU-PKSFA session. Credit: Philippine Normal University - Visayas

Protecting the legacy



Students of Daga Elementary School, Caltex Philippine Normal University - Araya

Santillana was positive that the children would learn fast if the task at hand is demonstrated or if they can participate in the process like in a workshop. In addition, the activity will eventually help replenish the forest as the children learn how to nurture their own plants to become strong trees.

Aside from the publication of the literacy materials, the PNU team is also

making a Hiligaynon dictionary that features the names of the organisms found in the rehabilitated area as identified by the fisherfolks.

The book that they will publish is unique because it is endemic to the area. Santillana shared that it would also feature stories about mythical figures of the sea that were orally handed down from the previous generation of fishers.

Santillana hopes that, through the instructional materials, the children can share the importance of mangrove cultivation with their peers. Then, in turn, they would be able to pass this on to their own children and grandchildren, fulfilling the goal of preserving the legacy of the fisherfolk.



## Writers

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*Raising the awareness of sustainable development across the country – Umnugovi and Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia:* Suvdantsetseg Tsagaanbaatar

*One step at a time: a sustainable future takes root – Karnataka, India:* Preethi Nagaraj

*Fostering community to create a future – Hiratsuka, Japan:* Suvendrini Kakuchi

*Bringing the whole community together on a journey towards sustainable development – Hom Village, Lao PDR:* Vanly Lorkuangming

*Preserving indigenous legacy through ESD – Cadiz City, Philippines:* Nestor Godofredo Baylon Ramirez

Resource materials

'Starting with your own practice' and 'Analyzing your community practices': Jose Roberto Guevara

'Share as Advocacy – 3Ps Framework': Cecilia Soriano

'Contextualizing your understanding in the community you work with': Rika Yorozu and Anita Borkar

'Reviving a dying industry through community engagement' and 'A community mobilizes to fight drought': Chariya Chiumkanokchai

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*Mangrove plantation, Cadiz City, Philippines:* Center Environment and Green Technology Education, Philippine Normal University – Visayas

*Elephant of BR Hills, Karnataka, India:* Jeevan Kumar K M

*Rice field of Hom Village, Lao PDR:* Vanly Lorkuangming

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*Vegetable field along Mekong River in Hom Village; Hom Nuea Primary School in Hom Village; Hom Village Community Learning Centre; Ms Manivone, Head of the Hom Village Community Learning Centre, in her vegetable garden; Mr Noi, head of Hom Village, and his cow:* Vanly Lorkuangming

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*Planting mangroves on the shoreline of Daga; Santillana with PKSFA members; Participants at a PNU-PKSFA session; Students of Daga Elementary School:* Center for Environment and Green Technology Education, Philippine Normal University – Visayas



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# Reflect–Share–Act

## A Guide to Community-based Education for Sustainable Development

With stories from five countries in the Asia-Pacific region

This guidebook aspires to build a community where learning for sustainable development takes place everywhere for everyone as an ongoing practice. It introduces you to *Reflect-Share-Act*, a process to discover and define sustainable development in your own contexts together with others in your community. The guide compiles resources that can support this learning process, including stories of various communities' actual experiences. Join us on this journey to put sustainable development into practice for everyone in your community!

## Stay in touch

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From  
the People of Japan



Sustainable  
Development  
Goals