

Okayama Commitment 2014

– Promoting ESD beyond DESD through Community-Based Learning –

We, over 650 participants representing learners, facilitators and managers of *Kominkan* (Community Learning Centres in Japan) and Community Learning Centres (CLCs) and other institutions that promote community-based learning, governments, civil society organisations, United Nations (UN) agencies, development partners, members of academia, the private sector and media from 29 countries, who have gathered in Okayama City, Japan from 9 to 12 October 2014 at the *Kominkan*-CLC International Conference on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) – “Community-Based Human Development for Sustainable Society” – commit to continuing and expanding Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) through community-based learning.

Okayama City is a place where several exchanges have already taken place between *Kominkan* and Community Learning Centres during the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), including the *Kominkan* Summit in Okayama in 2007; moreover, support for *Kominkan* and community-based learning has a long history in Japan.

In recognition of the principles of ESD, we have actively participated in an open and transparent process of drafting these commitments and share in the ownership of this outcome.

1. Our Commitments

Quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all must have a central place in national education and development systems as part of the agendas of Education for All (EFA) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Rethinking education to build inclusive and sustainable learning societies should give a key role to community-based learning. Community-based learning through *Kominkan*-CLCs and similar mechanisms needs to be carried out collaboratively with all providers and stakeholders in national learning and education systems to achieve ESD and the broader goals of sustainable development.

Therefore, in our respective individual and collective capacities, we commit to the following actions:

1. Develop greater awareness of and advocacy for the significance of ESD in *Kominkan*-CLCs and the roles of *Kominkan*-CLCs in promoting ESD;
2. Work together to improve and maintain strategic alliances between and among communities and stakeholders to develop a community of practice which addresses sustainable development challenges in local and global contexts;
3. Ensure the development of effective and functioning *Kominkan*-CLCs through ongoing professional and institutional capacity development in order to help build the confidence of communities as active participants in the development process;
4. Advance the innovative practices of ESD to ensure effective contributions to sustainable development through continuous documentation and research, acknowledging the need to be responsive to the changing needs of society;
5. Support and share good ESD practices through establishing resource centres and networks, especially with sister *Kominkan*-CLCs, in the context of lifelong learning for all (children, youth, adults, the elderly, the disadvantaged, etc.);
6. Empower communities to promote education on climate change, bio-diversity, food and nutrition security, resilience and disaster risk reduction management informed by the principles of ESD;
7. Nurture learning spaces which promote freedom of expression and develop skills in conflict resolution towards attaining a peaceful society;
8. Promote literacy by providing flexible and relevant learning opportunities for indigenous peoples, the differently abled, and other marginalised people in the community;

9. Develop the capacities of youth for employability, life skills and citizenship, and encourage youth leadership in *Kominkan*-CLC activities, providing greater sustainability and stability from generation to generation;
10. Give priority to girls and women to reduce gender gaps in literacy and build safe environments within families and the society and ensure equal participation of women and men in development processes;
11. Assist communities in securing material, financial and technical support to identify issues and develop solutions to create sustainable communities which value and respect diversity of culture and life;
12. Engage policy makers to contribute to the development of comprehensive and clear policies acknowledging bottom-up and top-down approaches which support *Kominkan*-CLC-based activities;
13. Mobilise funding and technical resources from communities, corporations and local, national and international sources;
14. Urge governments, policy makers, international agencies and private sectors to support *Kominkan* and CLC-based activities which tackle local, national, regional and global challenges through ESD; and
15. Continue to collaborate with existing and emerging networks, such as the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC), the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet), UNITWIN/UNESCO Chairs Programme etc., which share our commitment to ESD.

The job is not done with the adoption of the SDGs and new EFA goals and the related targets and indicators. We assert that we will continue to pursue our commitments in the post-2015 era with determination and vigour, uphold the principles and support the practices of learning for community-based sustainable human development through *Kominkan*-CLCs. The roles and contributions identified in this Commitment will guide our action.

We commit to continuing and advancing ESD beyond DESD.

2. Context

The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) as a Response to the Crisis of Sustainability

We are facing an urgent crisis of sustainability. The DESD International Implementation Scheme has inspired people to actively participate in the creation of “a world where everyone has the opportunity to benefit from education and learn the values, behavior and lifestyles required for a sustainable future and for positive societal transformation.”

The realisation of a sustainable society requires that the interlocking elements of the social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions be recognised and addressed. The recent increase in conflicts has significantly weakened the bonds of trust necessary to establish the foundations of a sustainable society.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

ESD acknowledges and celebrates all forms of education and learning: formal, non-formal, informal and incidental in the context of life-long and life-wide learning for all. Non-formal education and community-based learning provides opportunities for children, youth and adults to transform themselves and their communities through their individual and collective actions.

Multi-faceted approaches are necessary in ESD, which responds to issues with complex causes and outcomes. ESD involves a holistic approach which embraces the dynamic interaction and complementarity of traditional wisdom and modern knowledge, the changes in urban and rural environments, and skills development and learning which value ownership, citizenship, participation and empowerment.

The Focus of the *Kominkan*-CLC International Conference on ESD

Community-based learning institutions provide opportunities for individuals and communities to develop literacy, numeracy, life skills and livelihood skills necessary to establish connections and responses to global and local issues.

Institutions which facilitate community-based learning, such as *Kominkan*-CLCs, provide the space to talk about their concerns, raise people's awareness, motivate them to respond and establish ownership of their responses, and support them in sharing their hopes for a more sustainable society.

Kominkan-CLCs are unique in their role as meaningful platforms to promote and achieve the vision of ESD through multi-stakeholder, collective and inclusive approaches.

3. Roles and Contributions of Institutions which Facilitate Community-Based Learning

Roles and Contributions in General

Institutions which facilitate community-based learning, such as *Kominkan*-CLCs and other similar organisations all over the world, have made significant contributions towards attaining the vision of sustainable societies during the DESD:

1. As a "PLACE" for advancing ESD by promoting Participation, Learning, Action, Creation and Empathy, where people acknowledge and recognise each other, helping community members transition from non-participation to full commitment;
2. As a bridge between formal, non-formal and informal education by engaging community networks, schools and higher education institutions, administrative bodies and corporate sectors;
3. As a provider of inclusive and flexible education for hard-to-reach and disadvantaged children, youth and adults, providing second chance-education opportunities;
4. As a facilitator of relevant and responsive learning approaches incorporating folk and indigenous knowledge and local history as a springboard for planning and action;
5. As a catalyst of innovative and effective learning which makes use of technologies including mass media, social media, Internet and other digital technologies;
6. As a weaver of intergenerational and multidisciplinary knowledge and cultural diversity contributing to peace and social cohesion, promoting mutual recognition of different positions and views;
7. As a capacity builder of community education professionals who can inspire learners to become lifelong learners; and
8. As a hub which engages and empowers individuals by changing their mindset from thinking and acting for themselves to working for the benefits of the wider community.

Roles and Contributions in Specific Fields

During the DESD, a number of critical cross-cutting issues such as peace, human rights and equity have influenced and will continue to inform our commitments. These include ensuring peaceful and harmonious communities by promoting understanding between diverse peoples; reducing inequalities; protecting and advancing human rights; and addressing the deprivation of communities by creating learning opportunities to respond to poverty alleviation, lack of employment, health, and food and nutrition security.

We have been actively engaged in the following fields and wish to underscore the important roles and contributions which have been achieved:

1. Environmental Conservation

We have supported citizens' learning informed by the history and wisdom of our ancestors and lessons learnt from responding to environmental destruction. Furthermore, a collaborative science-based process has empowered some communities to achieve environmental sustainability.

2. Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

We have developed and maintained communities' resilience against natural and human-induced disasters through relevant learning and cultivating human relationships anchored on selflessness, empathy and mutual-help.

3. Income Generation, Entrepreneurship, Community Development

We have played a crucial role in the economic development of communities by promoting social enterprises supportive of self-sufficiency.

We have served as a catalyst in harnessing human potential to participate in productive community enterprises, improving the well-being of families with greater ability to solve local issues and challenges.

4. Cultural Diversity and Dialogue, Intergenerational Exchange

We have facilitated empowerment of communities through intergenerational, inter-sectoral and intercultural learning for all.

We have supported communities in discovering, sustaining and creating culture for the public value, while respecting diversity in gender, age, ethnicity, religion and languages.

We have gathered local and indigenous wisdom and resources and utilised them for mutual learning.

5. Literacy

We have provided literacy learning opportunities as a human right to equip everyone with the basic knowledge and skills necessary for a productive livelihood and the improvement of community well-being.

We have opened spaces for creativity and at the same time pushed for new learning frontiers to make ESD universal. Technology, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in literacy, has added significant new momentum to *Kominkan*-CLCs.

6. Empowerment

We have realised that different communities have different needs. Therefore we have created a comprehensive network system of stakeholders to address the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups, whose self-esteem is thus continuously built, making them active participants in the development process and ensuring their rights to decent life and gender equality.

7. Policy Making, Management and Capacity Development

Policy support for community-based learning has been ensured in some countries to develop a platform of community dialogues, networking and resource mobilisation. We have created learning communities which promote autonomous actions and reaffirm local values and practices from the ESD perspective and developed capacities of community-based learning professionals and learners.

We acknowledge the achievements of previous regional and global events, such as the Jakarta Statement: *Nurturing a Care, Fair and Share Society through CLCs* adopted in September 2014.

We will use this Commitment as an opportunity to engage learners, managers and governments in a dialogue towards developing concrete policies and actions.

We will engage with local, national and international forums which will contribute to the formulation of the Post-2015 Development and Education Agenda, to underscore the vital importance of community-based learning for sustainable human development. More specifically, we see the forthcoming global conferences as opportunities for advocacy and re-affirmation of our commitment to ESD: the World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan in November 2014, the UN Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan in March 2015, the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea in May 2015 and the UN-facilitated discussions in the lead-up to the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015.

We would like to thank Okayama City, the Executive Committee for *Kominkan*-CLC Conference, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) as organisers and UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education (UNESCO Bangkok), UNESCO Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Science (UNESCO Jakarta), UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), National *Kominkan* Association as co-organisers and all the other institutions and people who worked to organise this Conference.

We would especially like to express our appreciation to the citizens and *Kominkan* of Okayama City for their warm hospitality.

Adopted on 11 October 2014, Okayama City, Japan
Participants of the *Kominkan*-CLC International Conference on ESD