

***Exploring Sustainable Solutions with Consideration for Ecosystem Services:
Restoration and Revitalization of Satoyama/Satoumi Communities after the
Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami***

Implementing Partners

Graduate School of Life Sciences, Tohoku University
United Nations University (UNU)
Ministry of the Environment, Japan (MOEJ)
CEPA Japan
Brother Sales Ltd.
Canon Inc.
DELL Japan
Hewlett-Packard Japan, Ltd.
Lexmark International K.K.
Seiko Epson Corporation

Background

Restoration of Socio-Ecological Production Landscapes (SEPLs) and building resilience in SEPLs to reduce disaster risk are areas of particular interest and relevance to the International Partnership for the *Satoyama* Initiative (IPSI). Of immediate importance is the rebuilding and restoring of SEPLs affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 11 March 2011 as well as the livelihoods of people living there. IPSI has recognised these as urgent issues, which it can contribute to addressing.

The Graduate School of Life Sciences at Tohoku University is a member of IPSI, and has been leading and coordinating the Tohoku Green Renaissance Project, which aims to sustainably rebuild livelihoods in the disaster-affected areas in Tohoku. In the process, it places an emphasis on “Green Rebuilding” in order to enrich ecosystems and the biodiversity of local nature.

The Urato Islands (Shiogama City, Miyagi Prefecture) contain some of the recently devastated SEPLs where people have traditionally lived in harmony with nature, making their livelihoods from agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture (oysters and seaweed) in a sustainable manner supported by the rich and unique ecosystems of the islands. While the tsunamis took many things from their lives, the people in Urato still continue to co-exist with the sea, and are making desperate efforts to rebuild their livelihoods. Meanwhile, the people have become more aware of deep-rooted challenges that they had already been facing before the disasters, including depopulation, ageing populations and a lack of successors. Many of these people are concerned about how they can sustain their communities into the future.

Objectives and Proposed Activities

The overriding objective of these activities is to develop an optimal model for rebuilding, restoring and revitalizing disaster-affected communities in a sustainable manner with consideration for ecosystem services while exploring solutions to long-standing challenges that local communities had already been facing before the disaster. UNU-IAS and the Graduate School of Life Sciences at Tohoku University, together with other IPSI members including MOEJ, CEPA Japan and the Ink Cartridge Satogaeri Project (Brother Sales Ltd., Canon Inc., DELL Japan, Hewlett-Packard Japan, Ltd., Lexmark International K.K., and Seiko Epson Corporation), and in consultation with local people and other stakeholders, will explore and propose potential solutions to help people on the Urato Islands to rebuild their livelihoods and revitalize their satoyama/satoumi communities.

The proposed activities will aim to 1) explore sustainable solutions considering ecosystem services for post-disaster rebuilding and restoration of the Urato Islands, and 2) revitalize and support communities in maintaining sustainable use of their natural surroundings while also promoting best use of existing natural resources (e.g. eco-/green tourism and environmental education led by local fishers, branding of local marine and agricultural products to add value), and ensuring the long-term survival of local cultures and livelihoods that have been shaped by close human-nature interactions over many generations.

A series of meetings and workshops with local people and other stakeholders working towards restoration of the islands will be organised to enhance collaboration and to build consensus on ways and means to revitalize communities. Based on the consensus, a pilot project (most likely eco-/green tourism) will be implemented before March 2014, which will aid in the further development of a platform for multi-stakeholder participation and collaboration. Progress reports (in Japanese and English) will be uploaded to the website on a regular basis, and will be presented at IPSI and other relevant meetings and side events (e.g. IUCN-WCC in September 2012) to widely disseminate the restoration process in Japan and abroad. Policy papers will also be produced offering recommendations for post-disaster restoration through methods aligned with natural processes rather than those aimed at overcoming or conquering nature.

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