

# A Lively Future for Everyone



“SDGs Future City,”  
Rikuzentakata  
Toward an Accessible and Inclusive City



# SDG Players in Rikuzentakata

In July 2019, Rikuzentakata was designated as an “SDGs Future City” by the Japanese government in recognition of its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the city, you’ll see many citizens who are doing what they can and moving, step by step, day by day, toward the achievement of these goals.

Let’s meet some of these active SDG-oriented friends in Rikuzentakata.

Photo by Takamune Ito





### SDGs Bring the Local Woods ("Satoyama") Closer to People

At the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami in 2011, I saw many people who had become so used to modern life that they did not know how to build a fire. This made me realize that people need to be determined and bold to survive in any environment.

The busiest period of the reconstruction has passed, and as the third generation in my family to run the sawmill, I would like everyone to get closer to nature. In particular, I want people to become familiar with the local woods, or *satoyama*, that connect the community to the mountains and the forests.

Several years ago I visited Germany, where I saw local residents on their days off taking their families on a walk through the local woods. I thought about how great it would be if that recreation became a regular activity in Japan as well. To protect and maintain the local woods, it is necessary to build simple roads and also use light machinery for periodic thinning of these woods, which require the involvement of the local government and other stakeholders. In the past it was difficult to explain why the local woods are meaningful, but now it is easier thanks to the SDGs, which have been increasingly recognized as a shared language. I feel that the SDGs are more practical and connected to our lives than I ever expected.

#### My Contribution to the SDGs





## Ito Stationery Shop Akiko Ito

### Both Work and the SDGs Should Be Fun and Cool

A good bookstore attracts people. As I see it, when a bookstore provides a space that makes people feel good, gives them something new to encounter, and makes them want to come back, the store and the community will thrive. To create such a bookstore, it is very important for workers to enjoy their work. The SDGs are

similar. Rather than grimly working to achieve the goals, why not see the SDGs as a cool, stylish way of living? As part of efforts involving the SDGs, I plan enjoyable events and activities that everyone can participate in as a member of the Junior Chamber.

I returned to Rikuzentakata the year after the disaster with expectations to see with my own eyes how the new community was going ahead with reconstruction. Although we are still in the process of recovery and development, I feel that Rikuzentakata holds great excitement and opportunity for the future.



#### My Contribution to the SDGs



## Tohoku Co., Ltd. Katsuhiro Asama

(On the right side of the photo)



#### My Contribution to the SDGs



## Reconstructing the City Before the Disaster in a Virtual Space with Children

Our organization was formed by people originally born and raised in this city who came together to provide emergency support for their hometown. Today, we are supporting the area as a community development company.

One of the programs we utilize is the education edition of the popular game software Minecraft. We have an activity where we re-create the Rikuzentakata that existed before the disaster in a virtual space (i.e. Minecraft), together with children. Their passionate involvement in rebuilding a city they never knew will become the power to sustain Rikuzentakata in the future. The program also gives us a chance to teach the children about the past, resulting in a form of multigenerational exchange. As the future leaders of the city, the children are full of desire to face new challenges.



### My Contribution to the SDGs



## Venturing with Companions into an Electric Vehicle (EV) Car Rental Business

Participating in the reconstruction of the city, I wanted to try something completely new, something that has never been done anywhere else. That's how I came to set up a new car rental company specializing in EVs. I faced many obstacles, but I tried my best to overcome them rather than keep worrying. As soon as I took the leap, I met people who were happy to help and support me. An expert in

EVs, Kenichi Tsutsumi (on the left side of the photo) is one such person. What a single person can accomplish on their own is very limited, but when you let people know your intention to take action, people will gather around you, and you will be able to get problems solved with their help. This is a lesson I really took to heart.

If things go well, you have your answer. If they do not, you can look for a way to improve that gets you even closer to your ideal. I really feel that Rikuzentakata today is a place full of hope where it is possible to pursue one's ideals.



An interview with Kaoru Nemoto,  
Director of the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Tokyo

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# What Actually Are the



The SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) are goals for the future of the planet that the whole world is striving in unison to achieve. We asked UNIC Tokyo Director Kaoru Nemoto to talk in more depth about the SDGs, which have been initiated by the United Nations.

Photo by Wakana Baba

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## Global Goals for the Future

The SDGs were adopted at a United Nations Summit in September 2015 by all the 193 member states of the United Nations, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals.

The SDGs are a universal call to action to end all forms of poverty and discrimination, protect the environment, and achieve social development. The SDGs are goals for a better future that we must work together to achieve worldwide.

## How the SDGs Came to Be

The SDGs were born out of a sense of urgency that the planet would not survive

if we continue down the path we are currently following. Unless we take action now to solve the problems facing the world, we will not be able to pass down the abundance that we have enjoyed to our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. That was a shared global understanding.

One example of worsening environmental conditions is severe heat and heavy rains that hit Japan every year. Extreme weather and extraordinary disasters caused by climate change have become a global phenomenon.

Various inequalities are expanding as well. Inequalities between countries, among the developed countries, and



## Gender equality and empowering of women is one of the most important SDGs.



among the developing countries are becoming serious. There are also disparities between cities and regions, between men and women, between majorities and minorities. Such gaps are increasing and giving rise to feelings of inequality and social unrest, which may ignite coup d'états and armed conflicts.

### Determined to “Leave No One Behind”

It finally became imperative to address these problems properly at the international level. Both developed and developing countries alike had to engage in the efforts. That's how 17 SDGs came into place.

Underlying the launch of the SDGs was a strong determination for the world to



### Kaoru Nemoto

Director, United Nations Information Centre Tokyo

Graduated from the Faculty of Law of the University of Tokyo. After working for TV Asahi, earned a Master of International Affairs degree from Columbia University, New York. Worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Headquarters in Geneva, and then became a freelance journalist. Has been in her current position since August 2013. Her published works include *Nanmin Sakoku Nippon no Yukue—Nihon de Ikiru Nanmin to Sasaeru Hitobito no Sugata o Otte* (The Future of Japan as Excluder of Refugees—Refugees Living in Japan and the People Who Support Them) (Poplar Shinsho).





work together to “leave no one behind.” The goals clearly state from the outset that the needs of those who are the most vulnerable and tend to get left behind by society should be addressed first.

Viewed from a different angle, the 17 SDGs are all related to human rights. They express the need to protect people’s right to food, education, water, and so on.

### Importance of Gender Equality

All 17 SDGs are important, but Goal 5 in particular—to achieve gender equality—tends to get overlooked, especially in Japan. For the United Nations, gender is a crucial priority issue.

When Malala Yousafzai\*<sup>1</sup> visited Japan, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate and activist for female education made

a strong impression on me with her message.

“I am here to speak to all of you on behalf of 130 million girls still out of school,” she said. She called strongly for “the world’s leaders to make it possible for girls to not only get primary school education, but be able to complete their secondary education—the full 12 years.”

If all girls in the world could get a secondary education, they would have a better chance to get good work, and the total income earned by women over their lifetime would increase to an estimated \$30 trillion (about 3,300 trillion yen).<sup>\*2</sup>

According to the World Economic Forum’s gender gap report 2018, even though Japan and South Korea almost attain gender parity in terms of education, the two countries lag behind in terms of gaps in economy. The environment for women to continue working as professionals is perhaps not adequate in these countries.

### SDGs Appear in the Japanese Government’s Official School Curriculum Guidelines

Teaching about the SDGs is beginning in schools as well. The Japanese government’s official guidelines (“Course of Study”) include the SDGs in elementary

“ Issues in your daily life are closely linked to the SDGs. ”



school curricula starting with the 2020 academic year and in junior high school curricula starting in 2021. Some public schools and private tutoring schools have already begun actively incorporating lessons on the SDGs ahead of schedule. Thanks to these efforts, children seem to be asking their parents if they know about the SDGs and then sharing what they have learned.

The SDGs address issues that are also highly relevant to Japan. Goal 1, “No poverty,” is a good example. In Japan, one in seven children lives below the poverty line. There are many other issues that Japan faces too, including

child abuse, lack of job satisfaction, death from overwork, how to build sustainable communities and environmental problems. They are all addressed by the 17 SDGs.

It is important for adults and children together to think about a range of issues, bringing them into their daily lives and homes. These might include local production for local consumption, cutting down on one-way plastics, and not discarding clothing. Paying attention to such things on a regular basis will contribute to achieving the SDGs.



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



\*1: Malala Yousafzai: Human rights activist. Shot by the Taliban in Pakistan for her activism, she continues to fight for the right of children to enjoy education. Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014.

\*2: Calculated by the Malala Fund and the World Bank



# The SDGs and Children's Vision of the Future



The SDGs have been promoted in Japan as well as in the world. From a prefecture designated as another SDGs Future City, Kanagawa, we introduce an example where children play a leading role in tackling the SDGs.



Cooperation: Hokago NPO Afterschool (nonprofit organization)

Photos by Shinichiro Orokū

Photos courtesy of Hokago NPO Afterschool

This page is an excerpt from the Japanese magazine *ecomom* Spring 2019 edition, Nikkei Business Publications.

## Taking Actions for the SDGs at an Afterschool Daycare Club

At Shonan Gakuen Elementary School in Fujisawa City, Kanagawa Prefecture, the nonprofit organization Hokago NPO Afterschool runs an afterschool daycare club for children, and provides a stimulating and safe afterschool

environment for all kids, regardless of such conditions as whether or not both parents are working.

What catches the eye upon entering the room used by Afterschool is a pillar near the entrance decorated with the 17 SDGs hand-drawn by the children. Here, it is the children who play the leading role in actively learning about the SDGs.

Hoping that the children can learn that the SDGs are closely related to their own lives, in July 2018, Afterschool began an initiative to collect old toothbrushes. Empathizing with the initiative, the elementary school now collects old toothbrushes as a school-wide effort.

## Posting SDG Cards Made by the Kids Themselves Around the School

Stimulated by this activity, the children raised their voices to do more in relation to



The 17 goals made and posted by the children





the SDGs. Kids who identified themselves as belonging to the “Team SDGs” were instrumental in thinking about what could be done with the SDGs in the school. They came up with a proposal for the principal to post handmade SDG cards around the school.

When you walk around the school, you will see SDG cards everywhere. In restrooms and at water fountain areas, there is “Goal 6: Access to safe water and sanitation for all.” In front of the home economics room, there is “Goal 2: End hunger,” “Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production,” and “Goal 4: Quality education for all.” In the English

classroom, there is “Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries.”

### Fun to Discover and Practice the SDGs in Everyday Life

All daily activities at the afterschool club are connected with the SDGs. Sharing this awareness with the children, Afterschool conducts various other activities as well.

In a monthly special program, the children listen to talks by experts about efforts to protect clean oceans and issues related to endangered and nonnative species, and staff members explain the SDGs with the help of songs and picture books. The children also discuss



“ Everything in our daily lives is linked to the SDGs. ”

the future of the planet with senior high school students tackling the SDGs. According to Junko Fujiwara of Hokago NPO Afterschool, “The children now have a better understanding of the SDGs than us!”

## Protecting Their Future Through the SDGs

The children make such comments as “When we started reading a book about environmental issues, it suddenly became more and more interesting,” “When we started playing an SDGs card game used

by senior high school students and adults, we found that even as elementary school kids we could do it,” and “When I become an adult, I want the Earth to have been protected so that we can live without anxiety.” From their statements, it is clear that the children have fun learning about the SDGs and link them with the future.

Going forward, the school plans to incorporate the SDGs more fully into classes and school life. It is hoped adults also keep abreast of the children and practice lifestyles that contribute toward achieving the SDGs.

What can we do to protect our future?



Get to know more about SDGs



SDG cards posted here and there around the school





Start living with the SDGs today!

# Shopping Is a Vote for the Future



When we do our shopping every day, by what criteria do we choose what to buy? Price? Quantity? Appearance? Place of origin?

Through the producers, distributors and sellers, the things that we casually purchase for our daily lives are actually linked to a range of issues, including environmental and human rights problems. When was the product made? Where? By whom? What materials were used and how? Taking an interest in the story of how a product has taken shape is the first step toward achievement of the SDGs.

“Sustainable labels” help us to make this first step. The Japan Sustainable Labels Association promotes various international certification labels in Japan that pertain to sustainable materials procurement and environmental/social considerations. Below are some of those labels. What do you value in your life? What do you choose? Shopping is a vote for the future and a chance to express your feelings about what you think is really important in life.

Check and choose with sustainable labels!

Made where?

By whom?

Using what?

How was it made?  
Every item has a story.



Protecting the environment/Improving working conditions



Sustainable society



## MSC (Marine Stewardship Council)

The blue MSC ecolabel is only applied to wild fish or seafood from fisheries that have been certified to the MSC Fisheries Standard, a science-based set of requirements for sustainable fishing.



## RSPO (Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil)

This label certifies that a product uses sustainable materials so that palm oil production does not damage tropical rainforests, biodiversity, or people's lives and has contributed to such production.



## Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal

This seal indicates that a product uses crops grown by certified farms that meet rigorous criteria which require continual improvement on the journey to sustainable agriculture that conserves biodiversity and natural resource and improves livelihood and human well-being.



## ASC (Aquaculture Stewardship Council)

The ASC ecolabel certifies that seafood has been responsibly farmed in consideration of the environment, producers, and local residents.



## GOTS (Global Organic Textile Standard)

This is the leading worldwide standard certifying that textile products are made from organically grown or raised fibers and meet ecological and social criteria.



## The FAIRTRADE Mark

Products bearing this label meet the internationally agreed social, environmental and economic Fairtrade Standards which are designed to support the sustainable development of small producers and workers in developing countries, such as the guarantee of minimum price and premium, and prohibition of forced labor and child labor.



## OCS (Organic Content Standard)

The OCS label certifies that the product is made of organic textile material by tracking the flow of the raw material from its source to the final product.



## Organic JAS

This label guarantees that foods are produced and processed organically according to the Japanese Agricultural Standard. It indicates that production utilizes the cyclical functions of nature.



## FSC® (Forest Stewardship Council®)

This label means that materials have been responsibly sourced from well-managed, certified forests, recycled materials, and other sources of low environmental and social risk.

## Think of the SDGs when Shopping!

If you are aware of these sustainable labels, you can check that the items you buy have been produced and distributed in consideration of the environment and in accordance with appropriate working conditions and fair rules and thereby contribute to the SDGs in various fields. Why not begin an SDG-oriented lifestyle, starting easily with shopping?



Cooperation:  
Japan Sustainable  
Labels Association



Sustainable Label

# Rikuzentakata and the SDGs

## Rikuzentakata and the SDGs

In July 2019, Rikuzentakata was designated as an “SDGs Future City” by the Japanese government. We see great significance in the fact that our city, which experienced devastation in the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, has received such a title in recognition of our efforts to build a community that is accessible and inclusive.

The disaster made everyone “vulnerable.” Without any assistance, none of us could have survived. When reconstruction began, a gap started to emerge even among the “vulnerable,” making it clear that special consideration would be required for the elderly, people with disabilities, and others. The commitment of the SDGs to “leave no one behind” perfectly matches the commitment of Rikuzentakata. Reconstruction that “leaves no one behind” is not merely a dream or ideal but something that we simply have to accomplish.

We have received a tremendous amount of support from people throughout Japan and around the world, but we are still in the process of reconstruction. Meanwhile, however, we have been facing the issues of population outflow, a declining birthrate, and a growing proportion of elderly people, so the future of the city cannot be taken for granted. If the city cannot sustain itself after 10 years, all the support and efforts made so far will have been for nothing. Promotion of the SDGs is essential for Rikuzentakata's continuation of growth and sustainability.



## Each Individual Step Is Important

The power of our citizenry is vital for promotion of the SDGs. At one conference I heard someone say, “It is not 100 steps taken by one person, but one step taken by 100 people that is crucial.” The meaning of that is clear. Rather than relying on the efforts of a small number of people, if everyone sees the SDGs as their own and makes an effort in whatever way they can, we will get much closer to our goals. If someone uncovers problems in that process, please give voice to those concerns by all means. We are building our city's capacity to solve problems as a system, receiving support from inside and outside. Through interaction with other towns and people from other areas, the City of Rikuzentakata will gain strength and become full of life once again.



## “Sustainability” Means Everyone Can Be Active

I see a sustainable society as one in which all people, including the elderly and the disabled, feel a sense of purpose and are empowered to play an active role in society. Having felt utter hopelessness after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, by rebuilding Rikuzentakata into a place where all people can play an active role, we will be able to reach the state where we can overcome any circumstances no

matter what. That is what sustainability is all about. That is what is sought after in a disaster-hit area. It is a message that only a city like ours can generate. With our own hands, let us turn Rikuzentakata, an “SDGs Future City,” into a community where every single citizen can live energetically with smiles on their faces, and where people who visit can gain strength and vitality.

**Futoshi Toba**  
Mayor, the City of Rikuzentakata

\*Accessible and inclusive: Aiming for a society in which people can lead vibrant, full lives, whether or not they have disabilities and/or differences.

## Efforts by Rikuzentakata to Achieve the SDGs

### Economically:



- (1) Achieve cutting-edge, high added-value agriculture, forestry, and fishery industries that anyone can work in.
- (2) Provide job opportunities to people with disabilities, foreigners, and others in the manufacturing and processing of specialty products, various public facilities, and the like.
- (3) Accept people with disabilities in companies and provide opportunities for interaction through rehabilitation and Paralympic sports.
- (4) Establish a center to support community development R&D and business creation for products and services based on universal design.

### Socially:

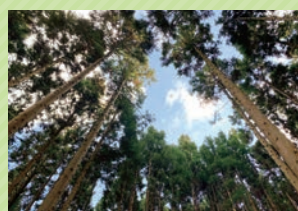


- (1) Promote efforts to build facilities that adopt universal design (including environmental improvement and universalization).
- (2) Create a diverse, multicultural society.
- (3) Improve the childcare support environment (anti-poverty, schooling support).
- (4) Promote sports exchange activities with Japanese and foreign Paralympic athletes.

### Environmentally:



- (1) Revive the famous Takata Matsubara pine tree forest and pass it on to the next generation.
- (2) Promote the introduction of renewable energy.
- (3) Promote sustainable forestry and fisheries.



“ You know, I love Takata so much.  
It has everything you could ask for  
from the sea and the mountains,  
and the people are so friendly and kind.  
I want to live here until the day I die. ”

From “Treasure in Our Hearts,” a record of the proceedings  
of the Rikuzentakata Mukashi-gatari no Kai (Reminiscence Society)



**With Everyone's Hopes on the SDGs**

