

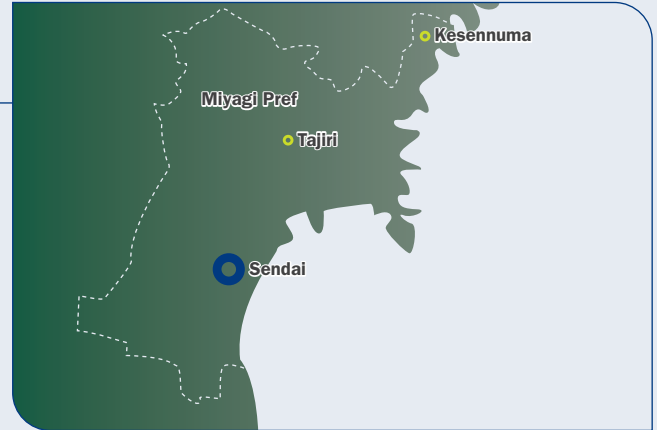
Regional Centres of Expertise

on education for sustainable development

RCE GREATER SENDAI

Geography

The City of Sendai is located in the Tohoku region in the north of Japan's largest island Honshu. Tohoku is mostly rural with a few larger cities like Sendai, the capital city of Miyagi Prefecture. Currently, the Greater Sendai Area covers the area within Miyagi Prefecture, but may include cities, towns and villages in neighbouring prefectures in the future. Municipalities actively involved in the RCE include the City of Kesennuma, Japan's first Slow Food¹ City which lies approximately 80km northeast of Sendai and is famous for its fishing port, and the Town of Tajiri, which lies approximately 50km north of Sendai and is known for abundant rice production.



Regional challenges

RCE Greater Sendai is characterised by its internal diversity. It strives to practise ESD adapted to the distinctive characteristics of the metropolitan city of Sendai with its population of one million, the rural town of Tajiri, and the coastal city of Kesennuma. The RCE aims to start from environmental education (EE) aimed at a recycling-based society co-existing with nature and by expanding EE into ESD. Sustainability issues that the RCE will address include:

- Sustainable Production and Consumption – As the largest consuming region and the business centre in Tohoku, Sendai needs to promote sustainable production and consumption through green purchasing and other initiatives.
- Community Revitalisation – Problems of depopulation and economic decline caused by out-migration have been pronounced in small towns and villages in Tohoku. Rapid depopulation has led to problems in the provision of education and other social services in such places. In addition, the aging population and the twin pressures of trade liberalisation and deregulation are having devastating effects on the local primary industries.

RCE Greater Sendai's perceived role in the region

Along with the City of Sendai, which launched the Forum for Environmental Education and Learning in Sendai, City of Trees (nicknamed FEEL Sendai) in 2004, Miyagi University of Education (MUE) is taking the lead in developing RCE Greater Sendai. FEEL Sendai is an entity that coordinates partnerships between and among NGOs, schools, universities, public administration, businesses and others. As a major teachers' training institution, MUE is in a perfect position to link local boards of education and promote ESD in local schools. Building on the activities of the Environmental Education Centre (EEC), MUE is promoting ESD through education, research, and outreach. RCE Greater Sendai will serve to coordinate disjointed grassroots activities in the region into a concerted endeavour to achieve a sustainable society. It can also address the strong role that both rural and urban communities can play in ESD.

Tanabata festival, Sendai



The bamboo from which streamers hang during the Tanabata are recycled first into lanterns and later into charcoal.

¹ Slow Food movement was initiated in Italy in 1986 in response to the opening of a major fast food chain in the country.

Goals of the RCE

- Develop public understanding and awareness about SD and ESD.
- Foster a better quality of teaching and learning in ESD.
- Develop a regional knowledge base.

Short-term objectives

- Enhance and coordinate existing activities, partnerships and networks in the region, with MUE serving as a hub of networking.
- Develop a platform for dialogue between NGOs, school teachers and administrators, and between environmental administration and educational administration.

Long-term objectives

- Raise public awareness about the value of the immediate natural environment, wildlife, and traditional knowledge on a sustainable way of life in the region.
- Enhance trainers' training and develop ESD materials.
- Create a regional knowledge management system to collect, manage and disseminate good practices and to deliver effective ESD to local people.
- Promote greening of urban Sendai district, restore Satoyama (a traditional agricultural ecosystem) in rural communities, conserve the river and marine environment, and promote eco-tourism.
- Promote green purchasing and local production and local consumption, support sustainable agriculture, and reduce waste.

Organisations involved

The initial partners include municipalities, local boards of education, local schools, and local NGOs that have worked in close collaboration with MUE. Sendai Science Museum, other educational institutions, NGOs and business organisations participate in the RCE under their long-standing partnerships with MUE and/or local schools.

Decision-making structure

The RCE Steering Committee, launched in June 2005, is organised by about 20 key stakeholders in the region to act as a decision-making body. MUE's UNU-RCE Promotion Committee hosts the Secretariat of the Steering Committee. Committee members are representatives from the three sub-regions of Sendai, Tajiri, and Kesennuma, and organisations that oversee the region as a whole.

Overarching organisations include MUE, Environment Bureau of the City of Sendai, Environmental Policy Division of Miyagi Prefecture, Tohoku Office of the Ministry of the Environment, the NGO Tohoku Global Seminar, the local newspaper Kahoku Shimpo, Tohoku Office of Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), and UNU-IAS. Representatives from sub-regions include FEEL Sendai, local municipal governments, local boards of education, local schools, and local NGOs such as Japan Association of Wild Geese Protection.

Activities

RCE Greater Sendai builds on rich and diverse activities in the region, including:

- various awareness raising and capacity building programmes run by FEEL Sendai, Tohoku Global Seminar, Igune School in Sendai and other NGOs;
- pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes developed and administered by MUE in close collaboration with local civil society;
- Kesennuma Omose Elementary School's systematic EE programme for 1st through 6th grade, developed and implemented in horizontal collaboration with MUE and various regional and global partners; and
- an experimental programme to utilise post-harvest flooded rice fields as feeding and resting grounds for wintering waterfowl and to promote sustainable agriculture in the Town of Tajiri, where the Ramsar site Kabukuri-numa is located.

Achievements

- Discussion about creating an RCE in Sendai Area started in late 2003. Many meetings were held in order to reach consensus on the concept of RCE Greater Sendai.
- RCE Greater Sendai officially started from June 2005, when the first meeting of the RCE Steering Committee was convened.
- The Liaison Council of University Centres was launched in MUE, which is led by the Vice President. The Liaison Council coordinates all six affiliated centres of MUE, including Environmental Education Centre, International Education Centre, and Special Education Centre. This facilitates MUE to address diverse strategic perspectives of ESD.
- Various new collaborative projects were developed under the framework of RCE Greater Sendai. For instance, a programme was developed in Kesennuma to promote vertical alignment of ESD curriculum from elementary through high school.

For more information

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