

Baseline report – RCE Tongyeong

1 The City of Tongyeong

1.1 Geography

Tongyeong City is situated at the tip of Goseong Cape in the heart of the Hallyeo National Marine Park, which is spread over the southwest coast of the Korean peninsula. Surrounded by 10,580 ha of clear blue sea on three sides, its coastline and 192 islands create a tourist attraction and Korea's finest fishing grounds. Tongyeong enjoys exceptionally good weather year round with an annual average temperature of 14.1 C, with warmer winters and cooler summers compared to other parts of Korea.

Attached to the neighbouring region by a narrow path that resembles a crane's neck, the city of Tongyeong is an area that opens like a large folding fan towards the sea with the islands, small and large, spread out like pieces of precious stone. Rich in biodiversity, the sea of Tongyeong gained international recognition for its wholesomeness by the US Food and Drug Administration.

1.2 History

Tongyeong became a synonym of Korean patriotic lore as the ground for many sweeping battles won around Hansando Island and Dangpo Estuary during the war with Japan at the end of 16th Century. The name of the city, *Tongyeong*, originates from the name of the traditional national navy headquarters *Tongjeyeong* that the city hosted for around 300 years until 1895. With the establishment of the navy headquarters after the war, the small rural fishing village was reborn as a large supply base around which craftsmen from all over the nation gathered. Today, the city with its distinct history of 402 years is proud of the rich cultural tradition of its navy's craftsmen, whose descendants, such as author Kyong-ni Park, composer Yisang Yoon, and poet Chiwhan Yu, became some of the most loved artists of modern Korea.

1.3 Local Society and its Challenges

The beautiful marine fisheries town of 240km, including 41 inhabited islands, is home to around 130,000 people. Being a small city, the local society is very closely knit; it is possible to idle outside the apartment in the morning and get a free lift to work in a passing friend's car. From the navy headquarters and the tradition of its 12 crafts' halls, to Tongyeong's famous modern composer Yisang Yoon, inspired by the sound of fishing boats, the sea has been the basis of the city. The future of Tongyeong is also characterized based on the marine resources, envisioned in the phrase "The Land of Sea."

Tongyeong's main sources of income are fisheries and tourism. Local ships sail far, oysters and pearl harvested at local fish farms are exported, and people used to say 'never brag your wealth in Tongyeong.' However with the decrease in overall fish stock and the loss of favoured fishing grounds through a convention with Japan, the local economy has been staggering and the city is confronted with the immediate challenge of finding a solution for its sustainable development.

The other important foundation for future development of Tongyeong is tourism. Moderate temperatures and delicious Korean sea food cuisine attract tourists around the year. The city

government has various plans to promote tourism, including projects to preserve cultural tradition of *Tongjeyeong* navy headquarters and develop island tour programs and diverse marine sports activities. Again, the issue of sustainable development, especially in terms of sustainable tourism, is closely related to the long-term prosperity of the city.

Korea, like many Asian countries of Confucian tradition, places great emphasis on education, and this affects the socio-economic aspects of a small city like Tongyeong. Anxious families send their children (and sometimes their mothers) to schools in larger cities for a better chance of studying at a good university, and a large portion of their income flows out with them, making education one of the main factors behind the decrease and aging of the local population. Hence, providing citizens with high quality education with emphasis on local heritage and global outlook is crucial for prosperity and the very existence of the society.

2. RCE in Tongyeong

Researchers at the Yonsei University joined with the Tongyeong City Government and Gyeongsang National University College of Marine Sciences to prepare for the establishment of the first RCE in Korea in early 2005. Representatives of diverse groups including two higher education institutions - Yonsei University of Seoul and Gyeongsang University of Tongyeong, Tongyeong City Government, local YWCA and YMCA, corporations, and the local newspaper Hansan Shinmun gathered together to form a preparatory committee in June 2005. After a series of meetings, including the Tongyeong International Workshop on Education for Sustainable Development in August 2005, a mission from Tongyeong, including the Mayor and faculties of the two universities visited Japan and on 14th October 2005, the City of Tongyeong was designated as the world's 8th Regional Centre of Expertise at the United Nations University Headquarters in Tokyo following an international workshop on RCEs.

Locally, a public launching ceremony of RCE Tongyeong was held on March 30th 2006, after six months of preparation. The launch was organized by Tongyeong City, Yonsei University and Gyeongsang University, and supported by the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development of Korea, the Korean National Commission for UNESCO, in the presence of the Rector of UNU and distinguished guests from all over the country.

After the designation, RCE Tongyeong faced the immediate tasks of raising public awareness and support for the program, laying down the founding stones of partnership among different groups, taking appropriate steps to establish the organization and determining its long and short term activities. Among these, raising public awareness on the concept of sustainable development and the possible contribution of ESD on the long term prosperity and sustainability of the citizens was, even in the initial months, particularly emphasized to secure the initiation of the program, because the Mayor and the city government were at the forefront of promoting SD and the RCE program both in terms of funding and management. From the city councillors to citizens at small town meetings, some three thousand people listened to presentations about what sustainable development means to their lives and what an RCE is, on scores of occasions, and this, along with various partnership meetings among key groups, and the public launching ceremony of March 2006, has built up a local base in the area to implement ESD programs.

3. The RCE Tongyeong network

3.1 Governance and Sustainability of the RCE

a) Organization

At the initial stage in June 2005, a preparatory committee that consisted of multiple stakeholders including the three main actors, the education board, local companies, local media and NGOs was formed. The role of the committee, headed by Dr. Eunkyung Park, was to launch an RCE in Tongyeong, raise public awareness on sustainable development and ESD, and to take decisions as the representing body until a formal organization was constituted.

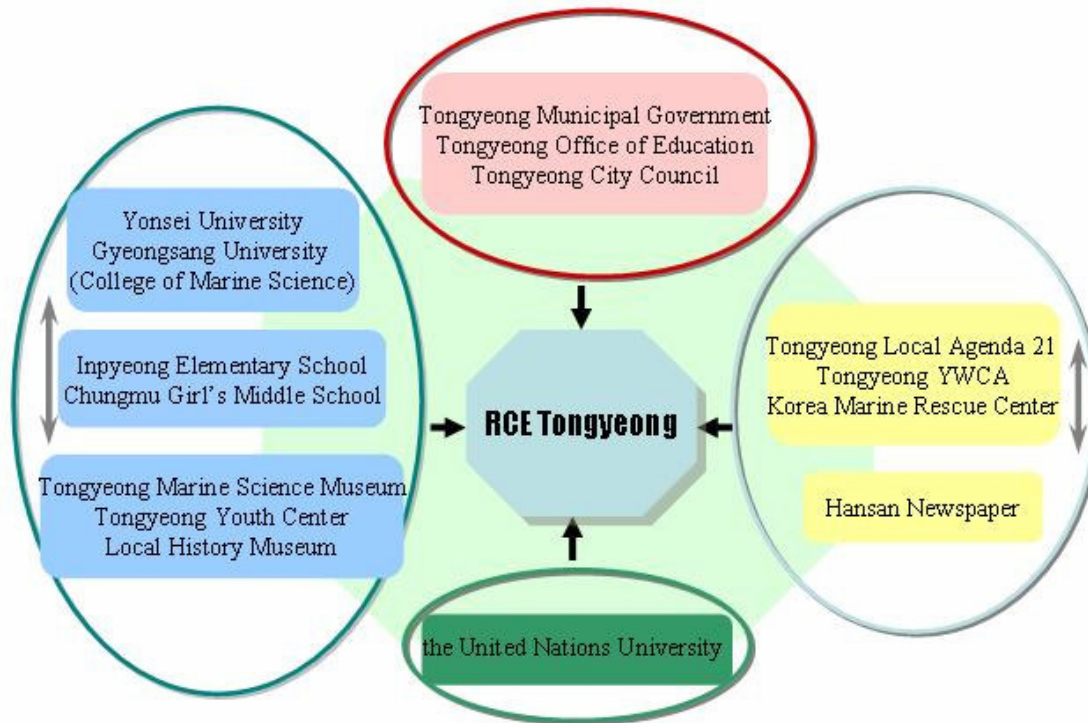
There were three possible types of institutions available to make a partnership organization such as an RCE a legal entity - a municipal committee, a corporation, or a foundation - and it was decided that a municipal committee was the most realistic form of organization at the current stage in terms of management and funding availability. Since such an organization requires a legal basis as a prerequisite, a "Rule on the management and supporting of Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development Tongyeong" was drafted in January 2006 and is currently awaiting consideration by the City Council when it opens early April 2006. Once the rule is set, the organization will be made official under the provision. The tentative structure of the organizations follows.

From the bottom, sub committees are formed to meet the needs of individual lines of the program. Participants who are directly involved with each line of the program will group together at the sub committee level for discussion. For example, a group of professors, NGO activists, government staff, Marine Science Museum researchers, high school and university students have been meeting to organize ESD programs on Tongyeong's Sea. Such groups will be formalized as sub committees which will be flexibly managed based on the needs of the field, and be open to all. The basic role of a sub committee will be to develop, implement and evaluate ESD programs of the RCE. Secondly, an Executive Committee that includes the chairs of each sub committee will be designed to facilitate prompt discussion and decision-making. Next will be a secretariat, hosted by the Planning and Audit Department of Tongyeong City Government, which will support the management of the RCE. Finally, the Board is to include multi-stakeholders and function as the platform to promote ESD throughout the region by recognizing various ESD activities; planning and supporting programs; and creating a long term vision for the Tongyeong RCE as the regional centre of ESD.

b) Financial Resources

To start an RCE, the city government is currently providing the financial resources. It has established the RCE secretariat within the Department of Planning and Audit and a new contract-based staff was employed for the task, the costs of which were borne by the municipality, and the city also allocated a budget in 2006 to support the launching stage of RCE Tongyeong and the ESD programs. However, such resources may not always be available, especially with possible changes in political will through local elections that are held every four years. Therefore together with its organization, setting a long-term vision for RCE Tongyeong in terms of financial sustainability is one of the main tasks to be dealt with.

3.2 Main Actors of the RCE in Tongyeong



▲ Current Partners of RCE Tongyeong

3.2.1 Initial partners of TY RCE

It is important at the initial stage of the RCE to strengthen existing partnerships, and since the partnerships among the initial actors - Tongyeong city government, Yonsei and Gyeongsang universities - was newly formed to prepare and promote the RCE in the region, the foremost issue concerning partnership and network among the three was to agree on individual contributions and the means and the extent of collaboration. This is more important in the case of Tongyeong because not only the organizations within the city but also a university located in the capital are working together on the RCE.

a) Tongyeong City Government

Taking on the idea of an RCE, the Tongyeong city government has been the engine behind the RCE initiative in the area as the host of RCE secretariat and promoter of its programs. Since there are only a few organizations with 900 personnel in this small area, civil servants have a prominent voice among citizens, and therefore the municipality is the main source of education for sustainable development. For example, the Empty Plate education session was a big success at the city hall, reducing the amount of wasted food by more than 50%. The impact of such a program will hopefully spread to practices in individual homes. Moreover, educating decision-makers is key in reorienting public

policies to guiding the local community's sustainability. Tongyeong City has declared the year 2006 as the year of Founding the Basis for Sustainable Development, and there are plans such as the program to send a few selected staff to Seoul for a semester to be trained on municipal SD that is currently being developed at Yonsei University to support the vision.

b) Yonsei University

Professors of various disciplines - economy, philosophy, law, medicine, and engineering - at Yonsei University started the Yonsei Environment Research Group in 1991 which later developed into the Yonsei Environment Forum with some 100 professors participating as members. This led to the establishment of the Sustainable Development Research Centre in 2002. The institution's main activities are organizing international conferences on SD, research projects on ESD, and development and management of the integrated course – 'Harmonious Life with the Environment'. With this research and education background, Yonsei University initiated the RCE Tongyeong. Despite the distance barrier between Seoul and Tongyeong, the school's expertise on integrated education is leading projects such as ESD Model Schools, and the collaboration between the capital and the southernmost city will foster balanced regional development in terms of education as well.

c) Gyeongsang National University

As the sole university within Tongyeong city, Gyeongsang National University College of Marine Sciences has been leading the development and implementation of RCE programs on the field. As specialists of the marine environment, professors at the college have been researching regional innovations based on marine resources, and the project to promote local pearl farming into a high value-added industry recently won the Prime Minister's Award for Regional Innovation. Such expertise will contribute towards promoting both environmental and economical sustainability.

Furthermore, the Empty Plate City Program was adopted as one of the main RCE ESD programs because a team of students lead by Professor KwangSoo Choi had been actively working to reduce food waste within the campus since 2005, as part of an eco-campus movement. Supported by external funding, the team's activities include promoting recycling by introducing recycling-friendly bins and establishing composting pots as a natural food waste processor. Such activities to create a green campus will develop further through projects like the zero-waste campus festival in 2006. The school also initiated an integrated fieldwork course – the *Toyeong Sea Guide* training - as a part of the ESD program of the RCE from the spring semester of 2006.

3.2.2 Current Actors of RCE

The concept of an RCE as a group of existing organizations of formal, non-formal and informal education first requires the identification and collaboration of existing groups. Though a small city, before RCE Tongyeong was established, different ESD-related groups of NGOs, museums, schools, and government were virtually unaware of each other's activities, not to mention partnership. Through various program meetings and public forums on SD and ESD since the launch in October 2005, many groups have started exchanging information and developing ideas on the possibility of collaboration for mutual benefit.

a) NGO- Korea Marine Rescue Centre

The Korea Marine Rescue Centre is an NGO with a nationwide network, actively involved in protecting the marine environment. It works mainly on the issue of trans-boundary coastal wastes, not only in the seaside towns of Korea, but also internationally through various cooperation programs including the International Coastal Cleanup event each year. The Environment Department of the organization guided coastal waste monitoring in Tongyeong area by a group of students, and since the launch of

RCE Tongyeong this has developed into active participation in initiating the *Toyeong Sea Guide* training program and an education program for local fishermen.

b) Tongyeong Office of Education and its schools

Since the launch of the RCE, one of the first tasks was to build a strong partnership with the city's Office of Education. A member of the RCE preparatory committee, the office in charge of formal education was not actively involved at the beginning due to skepticism about the concept of ESD and its compatibility with current curriculum. The partnership was made easier, however, because the city government recently established the Education Support Team within the Planning and Audit Department in October 2005 to support education issues and to host the RCE secretariat. The Office of Education has been running various programs at the school level, such as the Experience Traditional Local Culture program and the Sea School program, and such expertise can be linked to the RCE's ESD programs. The Office is currently working with the city government on an ESD Model School program which will be described later on.

c) Tongyeong Marine Science Museum

The Tongyeong Marine Science Museum, an organ of the city government, provides education opportunities for diverse groups ranging from local kindergarten children to visiting tourists. A researcher at the museum in charge of planning the exhibition has been actively participating in RCE Tongyeong, especially on marine educational programs, such as the *Toyeong Sea Guide* program. Moreover a corner at the museum is now being prepared as an RCE section to exhibit the work of local students and citizens in maintaining a sustainable marine environment.

3.2.3 Expanding Scope of Collaboration: Potential Actors of RCE

There are community centres in each district in the city that mostly provide cultural programs or sports activities for local people, particularly the youth and the elderly. These community centres, with their human, financial, and spatial resources at the grass-root level, can be reoriented as platforms for promoting regional SD in the future. Since the launch of RCE Tongyeong, local groups, businesses and media have shown interest in finding out how they may contribute to the program. At public meetings where the secretariat visited to explain about the RCE, quite a few individual citizens wished to know more about their possible role. Hence, once the RCE programs are set on track, there will be plenty of opportunities and means to widen the network and partnerships for ESD.

Apart from the link with Yonsei University, the extent of collaboration has been limited to Tongyeong area. However it is necessary to consider the role of RCE Tongyeong at the national level. There is a strong environment education base in Korea, especially through various NGO activities throughout the country. Nationwide organizations such as the Local Agenda/Action 21 have also been working on education programs for sustainable development. Tongyeong has also formed its own committee for local agenda 21 last October just before the launch of RCE and its regional activities will include various education programs to promote SD among citizens. Despite the fact that an RCE focuses on education, especially ESD rather than EE, there is need for the RCE to function at a broader national perspective in the Korean context, based on corresponding strategic partnerships.

3.3 Activities: Main Programs

Individual programs of the RCE are all designed to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration towards building a sustainable city. The major programs of RCE Tongyeong follow.

a) Raising public understanding: **RCE Forum for a Sustainable City**

As one of the four thrusts of ESD, raising public understanding is key to promoting a sustainable

future. The RCE Forum for a Sustainable City is a program to provide opportunities for the general public to learn and discuss the sustainable development of their home town. Held once every 2-3 months, the RCE Forum deals not only with general discussions of SD but also with issues concerning special interest groups such as teachers, fishermen etc. For the first RCE Forum in December 2005, two experts were invited to give talks to various stakeholders of RCE Tongyeong on the meaning of ESD and building a sustainable city. At the second forum in March 2006, teachers of two designated ESD model schools, Inpyeong Elementary School and Chungmu Middle School, discussed ways to develop ESD programs for their schools and to reorient curriculum accordingly. From these experiences it was clear that the RCE Forum effectively raises awareness on sustainability, triggers discussions, and forms networks among different groups.

b) Setting an example: **ESD Model School**

In collaboration with the local Education Office, two schools of primary and secondary education were designated as model cases of reorienting curriculum towards ESD. Located near Gyeongsang University College of Marine Sciences, the Inpyeong Elementary School and the Chungmu Middle School are typical local education organizations of 600 and 1,000 students each. These schools in Tongyeong have many highly qualified, enthusiastic teachers because of the extra performance rating points given for working in rural areas. With funding from the RCE, the schools have designated a team of teachers to develop and implement ESD programs in collaboration with other stakeholders of the RCE. Since it was only at the end of February that the schools were designated, the methods of implementation are still to be discussed and it is hoped that these schools will become central vehicles for promoting a sustainable life style in individual homes and in the society.

c) Valuing local heritage: **Training Program for Toyeong Sea Guide**

Tongyeong, 'the Land of Sea' relies on its vast sea for sources of income - fisheries and tourism. The sea is the basis of its unique culture, and as mentioned above, sustainable development of marine resources is key to building a sustainable city. Hence, education programs should be able to illuminate environmental, socio-cultural, and economic aspects of the local heritage and develop awareness on the issue of sustainable local development. Gyeongsang University, Tongyeong Marine Science Museum, the Korea Marine Rescue Center, Tongyeong Youth Centre, YWCA Tongyeong and students of Tongyeong Girls' High School have formed a network to develop training programs for *Toyeong Sea Guides*. These guides are volunteers who will introduce the value of Tongyeong's sea to tourists and to local people in various perspectives. As a start, an integrated course has been opened at the Gyeongsang University, spring semester 2006, which includes lectures from a local historian, a fisherman, a city government official, and NGO activists. Students design education programs for visitors of the Tongyeong Marine Science Museum throughout the term, and a few classes are dedicated to on-site volunteer work at the museum and for the coastal clean-up program of the Korea Marine Rescue Centre. Students are encouraged to continue volunteer work and to take the advanced course when it opens next year to certify as a Toyeong Sea Guide. This program will further develop into training programs for existing volunteer groups, school teachers and trainers at the Youth Centre.

d) Everyone, everywhere, everyday: **Empty Plate City**

In Korea, about 15 trillion KRW (appx. 15 billion US\$, including value added tax) are lost through food wastes. In order to prevent economic loss and environmental pollution, RCE Tongyeong has been preparing for the Empty Plate City Program which promotes the habit of not leaving food behind on the plate. Tongyeong city government employees and Gyeongsang University's students are currently leading the voluntary practice of emptying one's plate when eating, and some of the schools are starting to teach this concept to students and parents. The Inpyeong Elementary School and Chungmu Girl's Middle School, which are designated as ESD model schools, will, in particular, promote the

program as part of their ESD activities. Through this program, students will learn a sustainable life style through which people can live in a healthier environment, help the national economy by wasting fewer food resources, share the saved resources with global neighbours in need, and build a healthier body and mind.

4. Promises and Challenges

Initiating the global ESD program in Tongyeong has until now been fruitful in promoting general awareness and opening ESD opportunities, especially considering that even the concept of SD was almost unheard of a year ago. However, there are many challenges to the RCE program.

Raising public understanding within the city and at the national level is the key challenge. Often, the RCE concept is misunderstood as yet another environmental protection program and there are also worries that the introduction of the concept of SD into municipal management will tighten environmental regulations thereby neglecting the need for economic development. Hence encouraging proper understanding of the concept could be a starting point.

Though there is basic consensus on the need for Education for Sustainable Development, it is still a largely conceptual term even to local educators, difficult to distinguish from existing practices of alternative forms of education such as environment education, peace education etc., not to mention developing concrete and local-based definition of ESD.

No less important is the task of defining the role of the RCE in the local and national context. Strategic decisions have to be made for an RCE to become the centre of ESD activities with consideration to organizational and financial aspects, i.e. finding answers to questions of direct/indirect incentives for current partners and other existing organizations to participate in the RCE, setting a constructive relationship with Local Agenda 21 Committee of the city, and developing a sustainable financial plan for the RCE. Moreover, we need to consider the role of the RCE in the national context because the goal of an RCE includes the vision to become a platform for spreading expertise on ESD to the neighbouring regions.

The importance of ESD in a small city relying on a clean environment for its daily livelihood is immeasurable not only environmentally, but economically and socially. Efforts of RCE Tongyeong will hopefully develop concrete examples, build local expertise, and inspire neighbouring areas of Korea, the Asia-Pacific and the world for a sustainable future.