

# NEWSLETTER

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## 1st CeSDeS Open Seminar on SDGs

Ikuko OKAMOTO, Deputy Director



The Toyo University Center for Sustainable Development Studies began a priority research program titled “Research on Development of Resilient and Sustainable Society through Inclusive Implementation of SDGs” in the present academic year. With the easing of restrictions on human activity that were implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, our researchers have resumed their research activities in Japan and overseas. We believe we will be able to share various research output in the near future.

One of our newest efforts to disseminate such research output is CeSDeS Open Seminar on SDGs. We plan to hold these seminars several times a year. As we also encourage online participation, we hope to

share our research activities and results with a broader audience.

The first Open Seminar, titled “How the coup in Myanmar has disrupted progress toward meeting SDGs,” was held on May 13, 2022. Professor Marie Lall of University College London joined me in discussing how the coup d’état of February 2021 affected Myanmar’s society and economy. Emphasizing how the coup made it difficult to achieve the SDGs, Professor Lall focused on education and health care, and I focused on poverty and food security. The seminar attracted approximately 45 participants.

In 2011, Myanmar transitioned to a civilian government with the launch of economic and educational reforms. However, the coup d’état and subsequent developments brought these efforts to naught, with the population’s hopes for social and economic development seemingly tragically crushed. For example, on the economic front, the poverty rate has reverted to 2005 levels; foreign companies have steadily left the country; unemployment is up; and inflation has been persistently high. What is more, Myanmar is the only Asian country to record significantly negative growth. Even in the rural areas where 70% of the population lives, such economic turmoil is serious, with people’s lives becoming increasingly difficult as reflected by agricultural production and daily livelihoods. In terms of education and medical care, while certain improvements are evident, such as an increase in school attendance and a decrease in the malnutrition rate, the coup d’état and COVID-19 crisis resulted in school closures and the resignation or dismissal of teachers and doctors. Thus, both education and health sector has fallen into a state of paralysis. The seminar concluded that even though some form of national reconciliation would be necessary to improve the situation, such a prospect was unlikely at present.

We look forward to making future open seminars a forum to discuss pressing global issues.

# “MeW Project” at Toyo University: An Attempt to Shed Light on Various Issues surrounding Menstruation

Kyoko NAKAMURA, Researcher / Elli SUGITA, Visiting Researcher



In recent years, menstrual hygiene management — in other words, the access to sanitary products, the improvement of toilets that make it easy to change sanitary products, and menstruation education—has been recognized as a development agenda in the field of international development assistance. Various organizations, including NGOs, are providing more support in this area. Menstruation is not only a problem in developing countries but also in developed countries, and there has been a growing movement to overcome what has become known as “period poverty.” There also is a growing trend in Japan toward questioning the act of concealing menstruation and sanitary products. This movement seeks to discuss menstruation and sanitary products more openly and broaden understanding in this area (Sugita 2022: 5–8).

The “MeW project” was launched at Osaka University by Dr. Sugita and has now been adopted by Dr. Nakamura and her team at Toyo University. “MeW” stands for “Menstrual Wellbeing by/in Social Design,” which, as a project concept, aims to rethink the status quo of society and seeks to improve the social design to resolve issues surrounding menstruation.

Specifically, the project involves installing MeW dispensers for free sanitary products in restrooms. The presence of the dispenser and a questionnaire that is accessible from the restrooms creates opportunities for concerned individuals to express their feelings about menstruation, such as the pain and dissatisfaction they are usually bottling up. The purpose is to clarify the various issues surrounding menstruation from different angles by giving individuals a voice when analyzing these issues.

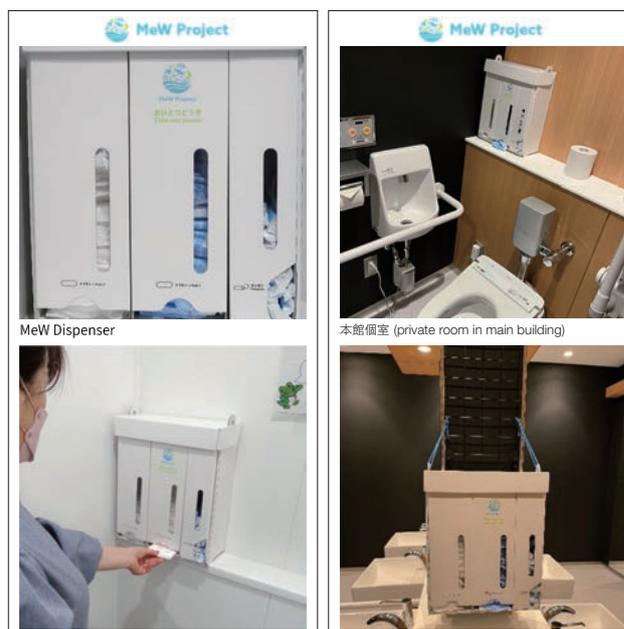
This unique dispenser provides three types of sanitary products free of charge in the restrooms at Toyo University. A QR code linked to a questionnaire is displayed on the dispenser to collect user feedback regarding menstruation and the sanitary products. The project has collected opinions from a wide range of users by selecting restrooms that are used by, among others, international students and multi-purpose restroom users. Moreover, sanitary products will be restocked as needed, and consumption is recorded at the time of restocking. Through this experimental

research and opinion gathering, we seek to clarify the various menstrual issues prevalent in Japan and improve the lives of menstruators.

This project aims to contribute to alleviating the problem of “period poverty,” identifying health issues related to menstruation, improving educational opportunities adversely affected by menstruation, highlighting discrimination and gender disparities related to menstruation, improving the toilet environment by installing dispensers for sanitary products and unravelling various aspects of sanitary products’ disposal problems. Therefore, this project addresses SDG 1 (No poverty), 3 (Good health and wellbeing for all), 4 (Quality education for all), 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), 6 (Clean water and sanitation for all), 10 (Reduce inequality amongst people and countries), and 12 (Responsible consumption and production).

## References

Sugita, Elli. 2022 “Introduction” Elli Sugita and Mariko Shinmoto Eds. *Anthropology of Menstruation: “Period” of Schoolgirls and Development Assistance*. Sekaishisoshia (in Japanese).



MeW Dispenser

本館個室 (private room in main building)

# Survey Report on the Impact of Solar Lanterns on Ethnic Minority Villages in Northern Vietnam

Kozue KASHIWAZAKI, Visiting Researcher



A field survey was conducted in the Hoàng Su Phi District of Vietnam from July 29th, 2022 to August 3rd as part of a joint research project with Landport Co., Ltd. (<http://www.landport.co.jp>). In January 2022, 200 solar lanterns (CARRY THE SUN®) were donated to children in the area through their elementary schools. The purpose of this survey was to understand the living environment and electricity usage in the target area, and to verify the actual impact of the lanterns on people's lives.

With the cooperation of a Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) provincial chapter and elementary school teachers, we were able to visit the homes of students in Nam Ty, Dan Van, and Tan Tien villages to conduct interviews. These areas are home to various minority ethnic groups, including the H'mong, Tày, Nùng, and Dao, and are famous tourist destinations thanks to their terraced rice fields. However, in recent years, locals' lives have become increasingly difficult due to the effects of reduced yields resulting from climate change, groundwater pollution from chemical fertilizers, and higher prices. In the target area, some small private hydroelectric power plants are in use, but these cannot be used in the winter when there is little rainfall, and cases have been confirmed of fires being caused by electric wires igniting. State-owned power distribution got a gradual start in the late 2010s, with maintenance managed by neighboring organizations,

but cash payments for electricity are putting additional pressure on household budgets.

Although the solar lanterns that were provided are not particularly powerful, they have proven quite popular, with children using them for studying, fetching water buffalo at dusk, and doing housework in the dark. What is more, to make the act of charging the lanterns more efficient, it has become customary for multiple individuals, including adults, to be in charge of them.

During the interview process, while some locals confided that they felt it was important to protect the land and culture that had been passed down for generations, some parents also wanted their children to get an education and a good job, and did not mind leaving their place of birth to achieve this. On the other hand, children said quietly, "When I grow up, I want to be a teacher and come back to my old school" and "I want to acquire knowledge and skills to help my father with farm work." Such words afford us a glimpse of the possibilities for local sustainability.

National Highway No. 2, which runs from Hanoi to Ha Giang Province, is currently under construction, with bare mountain surfaces and underwater streams exposed to the naked eye. As development progresses, we plan to continue our research in the hope that, in the future, the experience of using solar lanterns will provide further options to improve their lives sustainability.



Interviews at a student's home



Children climb the hills everyday

# Online EcoSchool Certificate Training for Youths and Households in Various Philippine Communities/Ecosystems

Maria Rosario Piquero BALLESCAS, Visiting Researcher  
(with Jon Gil Azcarraga Ramas, Zenaida Tabucanon, and Gerran Simacon)



Last October 8, 2022, the first Online EcoSchool Certificate Training for Youths and Households in Various Communities and Ecosystems was launched by the Regional Center of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development (RCE-Cebu) together with BioNutrient PDO (Philanthropic Development Office) and other partners.

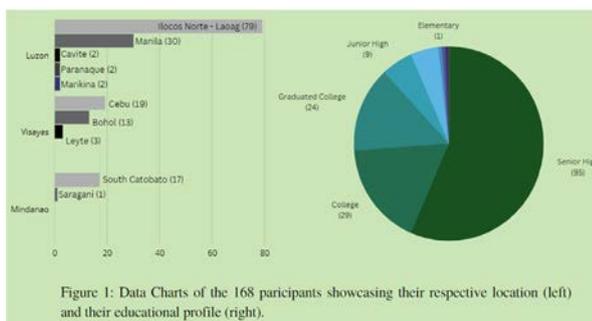


Figure 1: Data Charts of the 168 participants showcasing their respective location (left) and their educational profile (right).

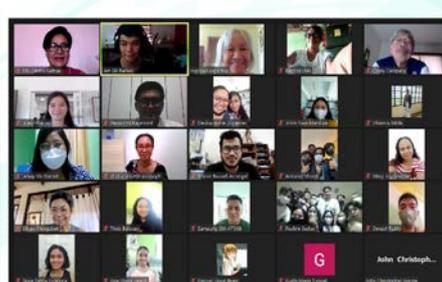
This online Education for Sustainable

Development (ESD) initiative proceeded from the recognition of the following multiple, simultaneous crises/challenges confronting people and planet globally and locally, including the Philippines: global warming, covid pandemic, hunger, poverty, resource mismanagement, among others.

The online training project was intended to educate youth participants and their households to manage their existing community resources, particularly, three types of household wastes—kitchen/biowastes, paper, and plastics—for their immediate and sustainable food supply, livelihood, and sustenance.

The 4-week October online session conducted every Saturday, from 10–11:30am Philippine time, was intended to showcase, by December this year, instead of waste-littered communities, green vegetable/herbal plant gardens grown on kitchen waste/biowaste compost which could result in sustainable food supply, livelihood from waste products, and cleaner/healthier households and communities of participants. (Refer to Figure 1 for Participants' Profile).

RCE-Cebu coordinated the themes, topics, learning materials (videos, PowerPoint presentations), resource persons, technical support for the October module which centered on two strategies, AGAPE (a garden per ecosystem diverting kitchen/biowastes to compost) and DEO (daily eco-offering promoting segregation of wastes primarily to benefit participants and their households, then later their communities or commercial ventures. (See Figure 2).



Left: Our Infographic  
Middle: Participants from Laoag, Ilocos Norte in Luzon amidst a Typhoon  
Right: Our first Photo Taking during the Online Eco-School Session

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## Toyo University Top Priority Research Program Research on Development of Resilient and Sustainable Society through Inclusive Implementation of SDGs

CeSDeS has published CeSDeS Mail News. This newsletter is also available to read via email. To sign up, please scan this QR code. Also, please scan this QR code if you would like to stop receiving this newsletter or change your address.

