



UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY

UNU-IAS

Institute for the Advanced Study
of Sustainability

GEOC Newsletter

No.10

August 2018



What is IYOR?

Special Edition on IYOR

IYOR is a global effort initiated by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) to raise awareness and understanding of the values and threats to coral reefs. 2018 is the 3rd International Year of the Reef (IYOR2018). In Japan, campaigns and events have been actively initiated by various actors. The key message for IYOR 2018 in Japan is “Connect, Disseminate and Support”.

Reference: Ministry of the Environment Japan “What is IYOR?”

<http://www.env.go.jp/nature/biodic/sango2018/index.html>





What is coral? Is it plant or animal?

Corals are invertebrate animals belonging to a group called Cnidaria. Sea anemones and jellyfish also belong to this group. Coral reefs are large underwater structures composed of the skeletons of colonial marine invertebrates called coral. Tiny plant-like organisms called zooxanthellae live in coral and these microscopic algae capture sunlight and convert it into energy.

What are the benefits of coral reefs?

Coral reefs are often called the “rainforests of the sea” as they are home to various kinds of fish, shellfish and other creatures such as sea cucumber. Coral reefs foster and create rich fishing grounds and provide us with beautiful scenery that benefits tourism. From the view point of disaster prevention and mitigation, coral reefs play an important role as a natural breakwater by weakening waves and mitigating the impact of tsunami and high tides.



What are the threats to coral reefs?

- When the ocean is contaminated by domestic wastewater or red soil, zooxanthellae can no longer carry out photosynthesis. Coral reefs die when they are covered by sediment as that prevents them from breathing.
- Anchors and divers kicking or stepping on coral reefs can also damage them.
- Coral bleaching occurs when sea water temperatures rise as a result of climate change. When sea water is too warm, corals lose the zooxanthellae living in their tissues which causes them to turn completely white. If the zooxanthellae loss is prolonged and the stress continues, the coral eventually die.



How can we contribute to Coral Reef Conservation?

As a first step, it is important to learn and disseminate information on the critical situation that coral are facing, and that of conservation activities.

It is also important to try not to touch or step on the coral when you are diving. Reexamining your life and make environmentally friendly lifestyle changes to reduce carbon dioxide and avoid ocean pollution can also contribute to the conservation of coral.

Reference for this page: Ministry of the Environment Japan “Activities for Coral Reef Conservation” <https://www.env.go.jp/nature/biodic/coralreefs/concept.html>
Japan Coral Reef Society http://www.jcrs.jp/?page_id=622



Seminar: Sustainable Coexistence with Coral Reefs



Event Summary

- Date: 20 June 2018
- Organizer: UNU-IAS, GEOC, SDGs Japan
- Supporter: SDSN Japan

On 20 June, UNU-IAS, the Global Environmental Outreach Centre (GEOC), and the SDGs Civil Society Network (SDGs Japan) jointly organized the seminar Sustainable Coexistence with Coral Reefs.

The International Year of the Reef is a global campaign launched by the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) to promote ocean conservation. The seminar was held to mark the Third International Year of the Reef (IYOR 2018). At the seminar, participants actively discussed the relationship between coral reefs and the economy, environment, and society.

In the opening remarks, Tsunao Watanabe, Senior Programme Coordinator at UNU-IAS, stressed the importance of the concerted effort of different sectors to conserve marine biodiversity as addressed in the SDGs and Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Takahiro Okano, Deputy Director of Biodiversity Policy Division, Nature Conservation Bureau, Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOEJ), explained the devastating damage coral reefs currently face due to elevated water temperatures and red soil erosion. He then introduced initiatives of the MOEJ to protect them through monitoring, education, and awareness raising.

His presentation was followed by Yukino Goya, Representative of JLE LLC. She shared her experience of being told coral reefs could die from the sunscreen she was using, which inspired her to develop coral-reef-safe sunscreen.

Next, UNU-IAS researcher, Evonne Yiu explained the multiple functions of coral reefs as a part of a diverse ecosystem which supports food supply, the economy, and disaster risk reduction. She highlighted the fact that our activities on the land impact marine environments and stressed the importance of interlinkages of multiple SDGs and taking actions through multi-stakeholder partnerships.



During a panel discussion chaired by Tomoko Hoshino, vice representative of the Environmental Partnership Council, panelists and participants discussed the challenges of disseminating information effectively and the importance of integrating conservation activities into business, considering the environmental impact of consumption, and linking the issue of coral reefs with the economy, society and consumption.

Coral-Reef-Safe sunscreen produced by Ms. Yukino Goya

The seminar closed with remarks by Miki Nagashima, Communication Director of Japan Civil Society Network of SDGs, stressing the importance of being aware of the consequences of our actions in order to achieve a sustainable society.

For related files and further information on the symposium, please visit UNU-IAS website.
<https://ias.unu.edu/en/news/news/iyor-2018.html#info>

Coral Reef Conservation Projects in Japan

Conservation and restoration projects are being conducted through close collaboration among residents, citizens' groups and the government.

Activities by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan

As a part of Nature Restoration Projects, Coral Reef Conservation Projects are being conducted in various areas such as the Sekisei Lagoon which is located between Ishigaki and Iriomote (Yaeyama Islands, Okinawa Prefecture). Also the ministry conducts coral reef monitoring to investigate the ratio of live coral cover areas as well as bleaching percentages.

Activities by the private sector and civil society

Activities such as assessment, monitoring of coral reefs, planting coral seedlings, and environment conservation tours are being conducted in cooperation with private companies, NGOs, local communities and residents and volunteers. Seminars and experience-based learning events are being organized as well to promote understanding of coral reef conservation.



**UNITED NATIONS
UNIVERSITY**

UNU-IAS

Institute for the Advanced Study
of Sustainability

United Nations University

Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability
5-52-70 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8925 Japan
Tel: +81 3 5467 1212

<https://ias.unu.edu/en/>



GEOC

Global Environment Outreach Centre
地球環境パートナーシッププラザ

Global Environment Outreach Centre (GEOC)

5-52-70 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8925 Japan
Tel: +81 3 3407 8107

<http://www.geoc.jp/english/>

