

■ Feature

**Sustainable Development Goals and Local Communities: Okayama University starts a partnership project with 10 municipalities in Northern Okayama**

As an academic institution Okayama University’s (OU) primary means of contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are through its research and education. However, engaging with and making direct contributions to support local communities is more challenging.

Northern Okayama—known as the Mimasaka district or ‘beautiful forest’ in ancient Japan—is an area with an abundance of natural beauty and historic sites such as old castles and gardens. However, Northern Okayama is suffering from the effects of an aging and shrinking population, because young people have moved to study and work in big cities. Although the region does have natural resources and places of cultural heritage such as top-quality ‘Wagyu’ beef and timber from forests, these industries are not fully developed.



Shuraku-en Garden at Tsuyama, Northern Okayama.



Historic Housing in Tsuyama City

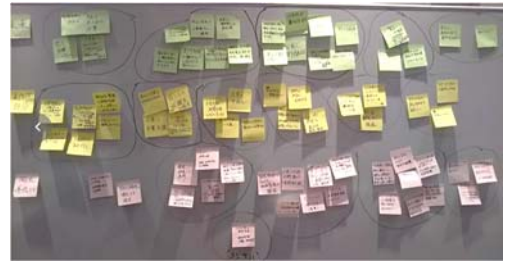
With this background, Okayama University agreed to cooperate with 10 regional municipalities to support their activities in regenerating local communities.

On 10<sup>th</sup> July 2018 Hirofumi Makino, the President of OU signed an agreement with the heads of local municipalities and Tsuyama Chambers of Commerce and Industry at Tsuyama City. Before the signing President Makino spoke about the rich history and cultural traditions of the region and how SDGs can enrich such heritage.



Okayama University President Makino and the leaders of 10 Municipalities after signing the agreement.

On the same day faculty members from OU met representatives from local authorities and businesses who shared their visions for the future of the local communities. The local communities proposed that OU conduct research on local problems, have exchanges with local communities, and give advice on local initiatives. In the discussions several issues were raised, including in the area of SDGs goals 3 (health and well-being), 4 (education), and 8 (economic growth).



Results of a workshop with local stakeholders.

It will be challenging for OU to work with local people to support them in the creation of sustainable communities for the future. Still it is a responsibility that OU as a local university must address.

**Further information**

About SDGs (the United Nations)  
<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>



About an approach to SDGs of Okayama University (Japanese page)  
<http://www.okayama-u.ac.jp/tp/profile/okayama-sdgs.html>



Okayama University (Japanese page)  
[http://www.okayama-u.ac.jp/tp/news/news\\_id7750.html](http://www.okayama-u.ac.jp/tp/news/news_id7750.html)

