

Ikitera Creation: An online community to create social participation for homebound elderly and to develop children who have the future in their hands.

Iki City, Nagasaki Prefecture



Background and Reason for the Project

Nowadays declining population is the norm, and Iki City has already become a super-aged society compared to the national 25-year average projection. As the working-age population declines, there is a shortage of workers in various industries and local activities, and local communities are on the path to decline. With a sustainable community where people can live in abundance despite a declining population as the goal, Iki is actively promoting regional revitalization SDGs under the SDGs future city concept.

Project Aims

In Iki City, a super-aged society compared to the national 25-year average projection, opportunities for interaction between the elderly and their grandchildren through an 'online terakoya' system that utilises ICT are being created. This system brings a sense of meaning to the elderly and an opportunity for learning to the children who will be responsible for the future in their daily lives. By creating interdependent outcomes through these cross-generational interactions, children can gain a wider range of choices for their future, as the elderly can gain a countermeasure to being homebound and a form of dementia prevention. These efforts will solve the most pressing regional issues, allowing Iki City to

become a model for regional communities that can withstand Japan's super-aged society.

Project Outline

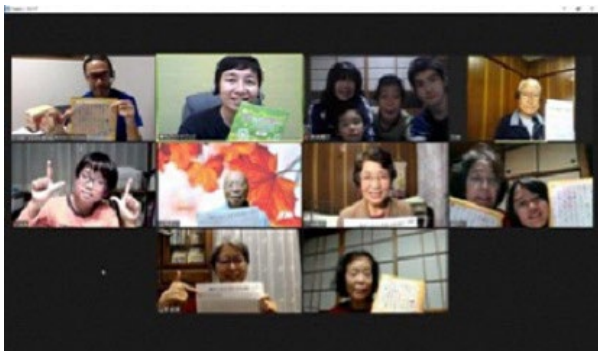
In Iki City, a super-aged society compared to the national 25-year projection, the focus is on the elderly (who have departed from society's workforce) and children (who hold the future of the island in their hands) in building an online community that creates an interdependent outcome. This interdependence creates more energy, a sense of purpose, and an environment with somewhere to go and something to do for the elderly, and an environment of mutual learning and understanding provided to the children will allow them to have a vision for the future. Through this, Iki City can solve its most pressing regional issues, and become a model for regional communities that can withstand Japan's super-aged society.

Each provincial government is taking measures to build a regional comprehensive support system for the super-aged society. However, from a perspective of prevention, although programmes that encourage the elderly to get out more and to move more have been started, many elderly people remain unable to go out or who are not interested in moving or exercising. This makes them vulnerable to becoming

homebound and so activities that encourage such elderly people to interact with others is needed.

Additionally, due to the speed of evolution of ICT, IT literacy has become an essential life skill. However, we find ourselves in a situation where it is these very elderly people who could benefit most from the technological advancements who are being left behind, and improving their IT skills would undoubtedly improve their quality of life. In this project, introducing regular internet use into the lives of the elderly, it is expected that they will acquire ICT skills naturally through enjoyment of the online community, and not focusing on learning IT itself.

On the other hand, for these children on a remote island, their interaction with society and the knowledge of possible future occupations are limited.



Ikitera in action

When these children grow up, in terms of convenience and enjoyment they are likely to choose city life, and despite multiple jobs and remote working becoming more and more common, staying on the island is an unlikely option for them. However, this project believes that feelings of connection to and pleasant memories of the island are one of the key motivators that surpass the disadvantages of living on a remote island, and through developing education and teaching in addition to having a connection with and pleasant memories of the island, they believe that it will lead to an increase in relationship population (defined as people who have

deeper connection to a particular local region than tourism) regardless of whether the children decided to live on the island or leave for elsewhere.

By focusing like this on the elderly and children, this project launched the online community Ikitera (Terakoya in Iki) as a means to create interdependent outcomes through these cross-generational interactions. The online community is provided in collaboration with 'Mirai Kodomo Kobo LLC' who provides online tutoring services and online teaching materials, and 'Ware Miru, Yueni Ware Ari Corporation' who are a nursing care and prevention business.

The programme involves a weekly 1.5hr session, using an online conference system to share brain training game materials, and to play 'buzz sessions' with a different theme each time. Special lectures are held monthly, with businesspeople and other famous people from outside the region invited as guest speakers. The elderly and children aged close to would be grandchildren come together and are given the opportunity to communication on shared materials and themes/topics.

Features and Innovations

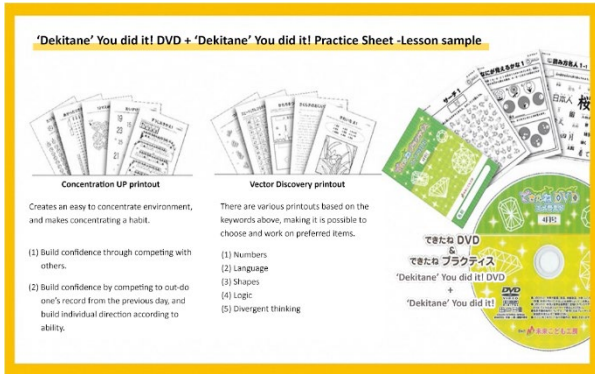
Due to movement restrictions related to COVID-19 in-person gatherings continue to be difficult, and the number of lonely elderly people is increasing. With support on how to use ICT tools, communicating with others from home was made possible. In addition to this, by establishing a system where it is carried out at a fixed time every week like a chore, taking part becomes a part of their weekly routine, and improved IT literacy and continued participation is secured.

Results of the Project

The project adopted a programme that incorporates brain training games that all participants can enjoy together from the same point of view, while working to prevent dementia in the elderly and promote

memory, hearing, and vision improvement in the children.

In addition, a 'buzz session' where experts from outside the region are invited to attend (only possible online) is a positive stimulus and is beneficial for forming a vision of the future for the children.



Brain training materials

Issues, Problems and Responses

Although the positive effects of the project are clear from participants' responses, the cost of introducing ICT tools for the elderly was an obstacle. The project collaborated with exercise-based elderly care and prevention workshops etc. and gave the elderly the important chance to try out participating. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing the elderly with opportunities to gather remains difficult.

Future Developments (expected effects and project vision and issues)

Moving towards the end of the pandemic, the project will continue to create opportunities to try out the service while gradually increasing awareness. Additionally, by encouraging participation from people in their 40s and 50s who already have high IT literacy, the project aims to promote good health by establishing preventive measures at an early stage. Furthermore, by having the those of a working age participate, the project hopes to provide the children participants with a more advanced social interaction and to expand their possibilities.

Contact:

Affiliation: Sustainability Transformation Division

Tel.: +81-0920-48-1137

E-mail: iki-sdgs@city.iki.lg.jp