

What Event is being Held Today, and Where?

Producing a Map of Gathering Venues

With the increase in the number of nuclear families, children have fewer opportunities to talk and play with senior citizens. At the Ichinomiya Kominkan, we checked the types of games and activities held in various local places, such as salons, parks and ground golf courses, and produced a map to indicate such information.

Containing various photographs and instructors' profiles, the map shows what types of activities are held in the local community and when they are held.

We would like to ensure that the map will be used by many more organizations, including schools, for intergenerational exchange.

Ichinomiya Kominkan p42 map 3



Tanepirika, Cool Information Resource

Tanepirika Newspaper



In Takebe, a so-called "bedtown suburb" of Okayama, more and more households are moving in from other areas of Okayama and other prefectures. To provide a tool to connect the existing local residents and newcomers, the Takebe-cho Kominkan published the first issue of *Tanepirika* in winter 2012. *Tanepirika* means "now is beautiful" and "this is good" in Ainu word.

The newspaper is filled with useful information for local residents' daily lives and articles explaining excellent aspects of Takebe. It covers a wide variety of topics relating to local nature, local dishes, senior residents, newcomers, newly-opened stores, and movies.

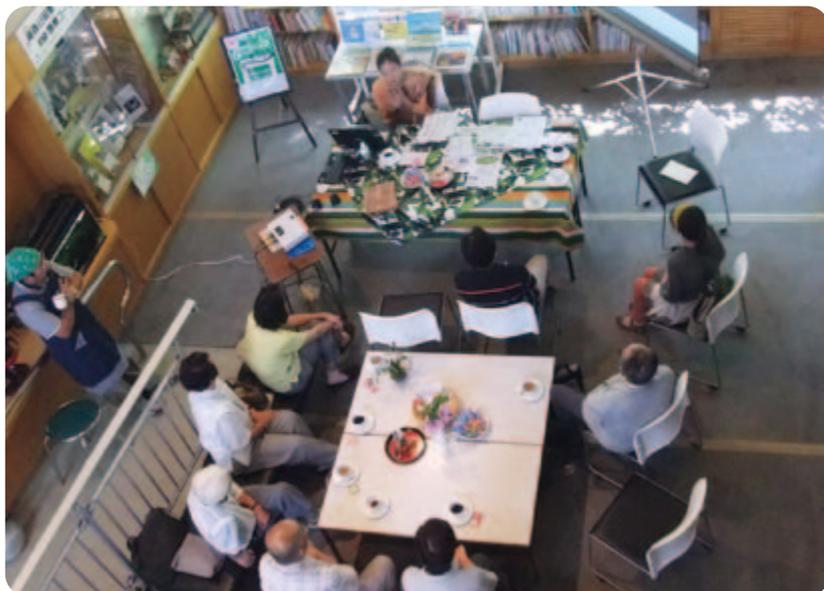
Using the Kominkan as a base, the editing committee consists of both existing residents and newcomers. They are engaged in the entire process of this newspaper from planning to editing. A wide variety of members work hard to provide a wide range of articles.

Takebe-cho Kominkan p42 map 23



Let's Talk about the World at Coffee Klatch

ESD Café



At the Kozai Kominkan, we hold a monthly event “ESD café” which can be described as a coffee klatch. However, it is more than just an ordinary coffee klatch.

Inviting a guest speaker, participants talk about a wide variety of themes selected each time, ranging from the environment, the economy, and the national circumstances of Asian countries, to problems in their daily lives, in a casual atmosphere.

It is often the case that a participant in the café is invited as a guest speaker the next month. Over coffee served by volunteer staff, the café participants and a guest speaker enjoy engaging in dialogue in a relaxed atmosphere.



We would like to ensure that this café event even attracts passersby. By extending the circle of people and the range of topics, we are taking steps forward in a slow but steady manner toward making the local community the best place to live.

Kozai Kominkan p42 map10

First Step toward Community Development

ESD Café

At the Joto Kominkan, we hold an ESD Café event every other month as an opportunity for participants to acknowledge diverse values and develop the capability to consider various issues as their own.

This year's theme is Kominkan. We would first like to talk with people around us, namely those who use the Joto Kominkan, about what purpose the Kominkan was established for, and what activities can be done at the Kominkan.

Through ESD Café events, Kominkan users who have not met each other before get together and talk with each other on a continuing basis, which is beginning to generate new movement.



Joto Kominkan p42 map16

Round-Table Talk

A round-table talk was held to consider future activities to be promoted by Kominkan. At the discussion, people involved in activities implemented by Kominkan offered invaluable opinions such as regarding their relationships with Kominkan and requests for Kominkan.



Participants in the round-table talk (from left)
Ms. Yoshida, a staff member of the Joto Kominkan; Ms. Minematsu, the director of the Kozai Kominkan;
Ms. Ikeda, a user of the Kozai Kominkan; Mr. Matsumoto, a user of the Higashi Kominkan; and Ms. Misaki,
a user of the Fukuhama Kominkan

* Could you tell us about how you have encountered the Kominkan?

Ms. Misaki --- I began to use the Fukuhama Kominkan after I got married. Right after my marriage, however, I didn't know where the Kominkan was located. When my child was two or three years old, I wanted to look for some good place where my child could play. However, I couldn't walk around my neighborhood with my small child in my arms. Also, I didn't know the neighborhood very well in those days. It was at that time that I went to the Kominkan to participate in an event for parents and children. Located right in front of a school and also near my home, the Kominkan loans books and promotes a wide variety of activities. Presently, I'm participating in a seminar held by the Kominkan's yoga club, and in a child-rearing seminar.

Ms. Ikeda --- I'm a beginner – it's only about one year since I began to use the Kozai Kominkan. The Kominkan is set far back from the main road. Each time I go there, I almost lose my way, which makes me love the Kominkan all the more.

I began to use the Kominkan in order to participate in a seminar to consider my hometown based on works by Joji Tsubota. All I knew about him in those days was that he was a children's literature writer. At the seminar, participants checked various photographs as the first step to learning about his works. Although I live outside the Kominkan area, I found that approach very

interesting, and participated in the seminar. At the seminar, participants analyzed his literature, which is created on paper, by conducting outdoor research in the local community to examine scenes described in his works, and checking various photographs to appreciate the works even more deeply. I really loved the approach of examining his works from a wide range of perspectives. Actually, I'm now participating in a subsequent series of the seminar.

Mr. Matsumoto --- Many men have few opportunities to have direct relation with their local communities; they are very busy with their jobs or they are sometimes relocated to new posts without taking their families. When I retired at the age of 64, I participated in a self-history seminar to review my life. Subsequently, I filed my old photographs and tidied up the rooms in my house. Then, I began to attend a further culture school and some other courses. However, since I was interested in a Kominkan, I visited the Higashi Kominkan.

* Could you tell us about your current activities?

Ms. Misaki --- At a child-rearing seminar, I listen to an instructor and engage in group discussions. Although they are interesting, I don't think they are enough. It takes some time for participants to get to know each other, and there isn't enough time at the seminar for participants with children to interact in a leisurely



manner. Regrettably, the seminar ends before participants can become friends. Feeling that there should be a place for participants to interact in this way at the Kominkan, which participants frequently use, I talked about the problem with staff members of the Kominkan. This has led to the setting up of the Nikkorina - Child-Rearing Dialogue Meeting.

At baby-care consultation meetings and other opportunities, I distributed brochures and posters made by the Kominkan to promote the Nikkorina. Thanks to this, the number of participants has been increasing gradually. While some people participate only once, others continue to participate. At the dialogue meeting, participants do not discuss designated themes, but talk spontaneously about a wide range of topics, such as teething rings and allergies.

Mr. Matsumoto --- I feel that the main users of Kominkan are women. However, at the Higashi Kominkan, there are also many men who use it.

I first participated in making a walking map. Walking around the community area over one year, we made a map introducing the best eight views of Hata area. This strongly encouraged me to learn more about the community and realize the importance of ties with the community. Then, I talked to a staff member working for the Kominkan at that time regarding what should be done to hold a seminar for three-generation interaction. Which generation is least involved in activities at Kominkan? The answer is junior high school students. They are old enough to act as volunteer staff for a free summer school. I believed that it would be fun to place a focus on them and hold an event from their perspective. That's how the Hometown Meeting for the Past and Present was launched. Gradually becoming even more enthusiastic about the event than the Kominkan staff themselves, I feel truly fulfilled now. I believe that the key to the success of an event at a Kominkan is how the Kominkan works with people with strong passion to make the event successful, even if the number of such people is small, and continues to encourage them. This will make the Kominkan even

more vigorous and energetic.

*** What does a Kominkan mean to you all? Is there anything that you think needs to be improved?**

Ms. Misaki --- One thing that I feel sorry about is that few people of any generation know where it is located. Even if people want to go to the Kominkan, they don't know how to get there. I'm sure that few Kominkan centers are located along the main roads in their areas. Certainly, a guide signboard is set up, but it's too small. It's often the case that you will find the signboard on the way back from the Kominkan. At the Kominkan, I don't see new users so often.

Mr. Matsumoto --- Once you begin to use a Kominkan, you will find how excellent it is. Containing a library section, the Kominkan draws not only children but other users, as well as staff members who watch over them fondly, and serves as a place to exchange a wide variety of information. I believe that the Kominkan should serve not merely as a venue of club seminars and other events, but as the key community station.

I feel that the Kominkan is a place where local community organizations, including neighborhood associations, senior citizens associations, wives associations, and child-care associations, demonstrate their capabilities to the fullest extent possible in cooperation with each other. A list of the members of the Kominkan operation committee tells you that the committee consists of influential members, such as school teachers and local representatives. I feel that this will help the efforts regarding ESD, community development, and safety measures such as disaster reduction. If local residents join an activity at Kominkan, they will feel closer to the Kominkan.





Ms. Yoshida --- The Kominkan staff members think so too. A citizen once told me that the Kominkan is where local children and local adults get together. The citizen's remarks have made me realize once again that unlike schools for students of similar ages and local meetings for adults in similar situations, the Kominkan is a place where people from all generations and with a wide variety of perspectives interact and mingle with each other. I feel that this is an aspect on which Kominkan staff members need to place more emphasis.

The remarks have also made me aware that although people perhaps use the Kominkan for their own purposes, it is necessary for the staff members to take some action to generate a chain reaction among such users.

Ms. Ikeda --- As a beginner user of the Kominkan, I have a sense of slight discomfort with the facility.

Staff members tend to think that they need to create something on their own without depending on outside resources. Although that attitude might be great in a way, I still feel that receiving "air" from outside is more important than we might expect. By involving many more people from the outside, the Kominkan will receive new, refreshing air.

It is important to learn from students and experts and acquire appropriate knowledge, and I believe that the Kominkan is the place for doing so.

* What is the ideal vision of a Kominkan today?

Mr. Matsumoto --- One reason why people of the working generation seldom use the Kominkan is the fact that the Kominkan does not provide information necessary for them. What about holding seminars which incorporate the characteristics of each area of the city?

Director Minematsu --- In the years of the retirement of the first baby-boom generation, a wide variety of seminars were held at many Kominkan centers. Since it was said that participants in such seminars did not even know about their local communities, the focus



was placed on helping them learn more about their communities. It would be fun if several Kominkan centers organized joint projects to interact with one another.

Ms. Misaki --- If children want to participate in an activity promoted by a Kominkan, their fathers will join in it, too. I feel that few fathers are willing to join in Kominkan activities on their own during their holidays. Therefore, children might serve as a helpful tool to encourage their fathers to learn and talk about a wide range of topics together. In addition, the process of such talking and learning will provide them with food for thought.

Ms. Yoshida --- It depends on staff members' competencies if such good project can be realized.

Mr. Matsumoto --- It may be good for parents and children to spend just 30 minutes talking with each other or cooking dishes together. If a Kominkan provides an opportunity to do so, it will be able to involve many more people.

Ms. Ikeda --- It would be good to provide opportunities for both fathers and children to cooperate with each other. Also, if there is an opportunity for fathers to teach something to their children at a Kominkan, the children might work on activities at the Kominkan when they grow up.

Mr. Matsumoto --- I'm sure that there are many people like me — people who feel the same way and

have a lot of time after retirement. I hope that such people will come to know more about the activities promoted by Kominkan, and that the range of such efforts will expand.

Director Minematsu --- I love my Kominkan so much that I wish I could die at the facility! [laughs out loud] After working in the private sector, I took an examination to work for the Kominkan. Since I began to work for the Kominkan, I have wanted to make the facility a place to support the growth of people.

When we ask local residents to do something, they are willing to accept the request and do it as volunteer work. Although I feel this is great, I hope that they will make their own proposals to us on their own initiative in the future.

It is certainly necessary for staff members of a Kominkan to identify local problems and to provide opportunities to learn about such problems. Still, I hope that local residents themselves will also identify local problems. Actually, the purpose of our ESD Café event is to stimulate local residents to search for an opportunity to learn about various things. Spontaneous conversation in a casual atmosphere serves as a source of a wide variety of ideas. At the café, various people express opinions, and I feel that this is very helpful for us.

Ms. Yoshida --- Amidst this situation, I feel that staff members at Kominkan need to extend their networks and the range of their interest, and prepare for a wide range of scenarios.

It might be good to pursue one theme. Considering that there is a wide range of needs, however, it is also important for staff members to extend the range of their interest. I believe that it is essential for staff members to know as many information and people as possible, and to be connected with them.

Mr. Matsumoto --- What counts in this situation is the accumulation of information. To ensure that each Kominkan is well connected, the centralization of information would be ideal. I feel that this will also help each Kominkan demonstrate its own

characteristics.

Another thing I would like to mention is that a Kominkan should be shared by many more people beyond the boundaries of areas. This might be related to the point raised by Ms. Ikeda, the “air from outside.” Such outside people bring what they have learned to their local communities, which helps the growth of leaders for their communities.

Ms. Yoshida --- For the Joto Kominkan, some residents are shooting videos of the Kominkan’s activities. They are making records with a focus on the significance of each project promoted by the Kominkan.

Ms. Misaki --- Since staff members are very busy with their daily duties, it would be difficult for them to do so. Such active residents who take initiative are really helpful for the community.

Mr. Matsumoto --- If we take action to share Okayama City’s assets of activities promoted by Kominkan and hand them down to the next generation, the range of activities can surely be extended.

(On November 13, 2013, at the Okayama Municipal Kozai Kominkan)





First of All, What is a Kominkan?

Kominkan means a “house of citizens.” This indicates that the facility is a big house to be shared by everyone! At a Kominkan, everyone can learn what they would like to learn, and enjoy various activities. It is a place for people to gather, learn, demonstrate their capabilities, and make friends.

A Kominkan is an educational institution to establish a peaceful, democratic society by attracting various people and providing them with opportunities to learn from each other.

What Can You Do at a Kominkan?

Learning

You can learn what you would like to learn through seminars and clubs organized by a Kominkan, as well as through club activities organized by individuals and held at the Kominkan. You can learn a wide variety of things for the benefit of yourself, other people, and your local community.

At seminars organized by a Kominkan, you can learn the following themes:
Disaster damage prevention, child rearing, the environment, human rights, PC skills, community welfare, skill improvement, etc.

At clubs organized by a Kominkan, you can learn the following themes:
A wide variety of cultural themes, etc.
Engaged in the operation of such clubs, participants are able to obtain know-how regarding self-dependence, which will contribute to improving their local culture and community.

Reading Books and Relaxing Yourself

At most Kominkan centers, there is a relaxation space and a library that are open to everyone. At a Kominkan, you can do the following things:

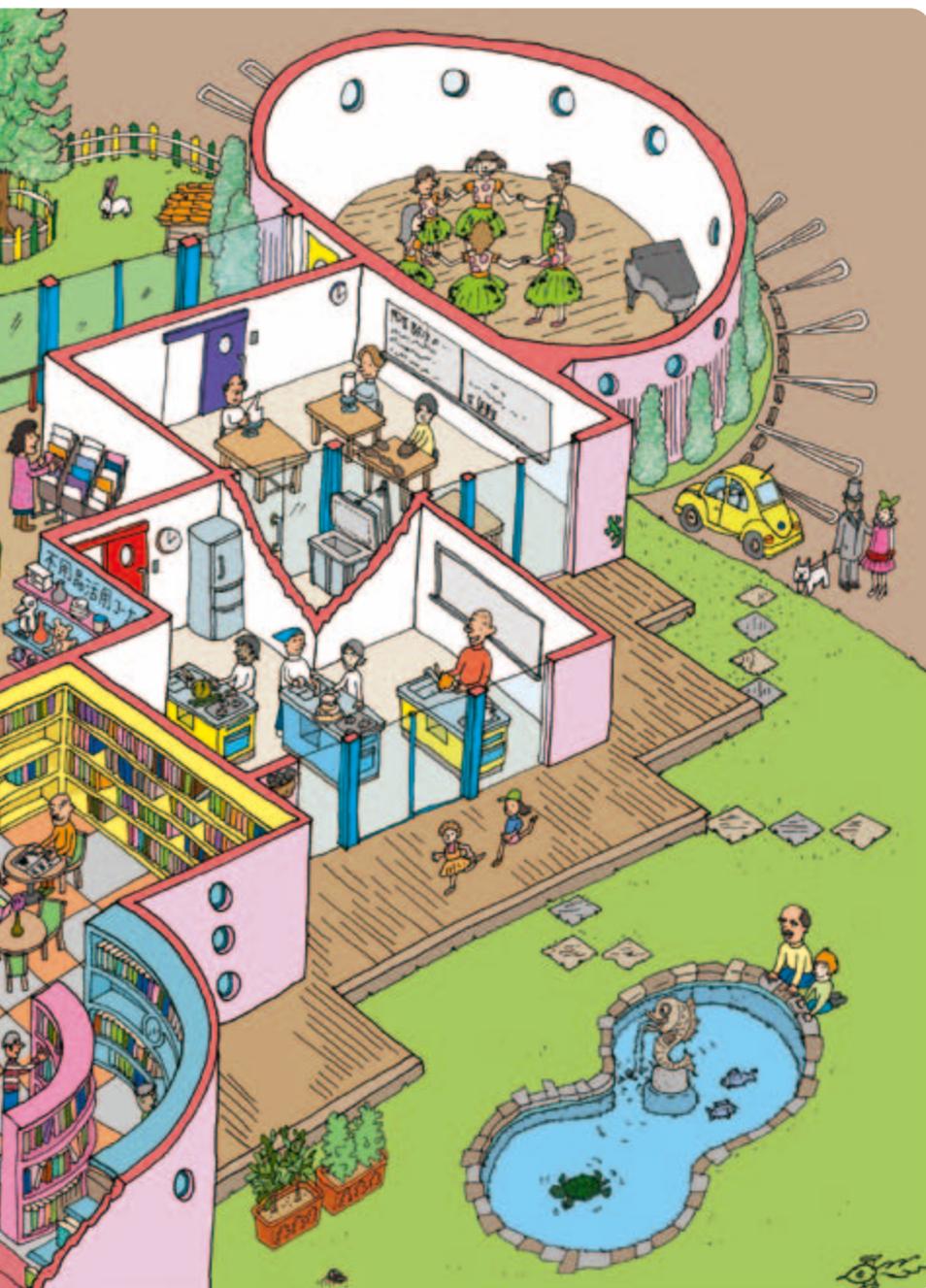
- Read books
- Have some tea
- Have some dishes





Kominkan Open to Everyone

Pregnant women, babies, children, adults, mothers, fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers, school students, full-time workers, part-time workers, Japanese people, foreign people, NPOs, clubs, neighborhood associations, etc.



Using Rooms

You can use rooms at a Kominkan alone or in a group, such as for doing a club activity or holding a neighborhood association meeting.

E.g.

- Holding a neighborhood association meeting
- Holding an event as part of a kids' club's efforts
- Practicing uraja performance
- Practicing a musical instrument alone

Obtaining Information

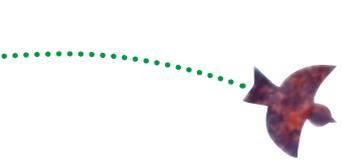
At a Kominkan, there is a wide variety of information, such as regarding seminars held at other Kominkan and institutions, as well as regarding local topics. In addition, you can observe an exhibition of works created by local residents.

Asking for Advice

If you have any problems, you can ask for advice at a Kominkan. In cooperation with other local organizations, the Kominkan will consider together with you how to solve the problem.

E.g.

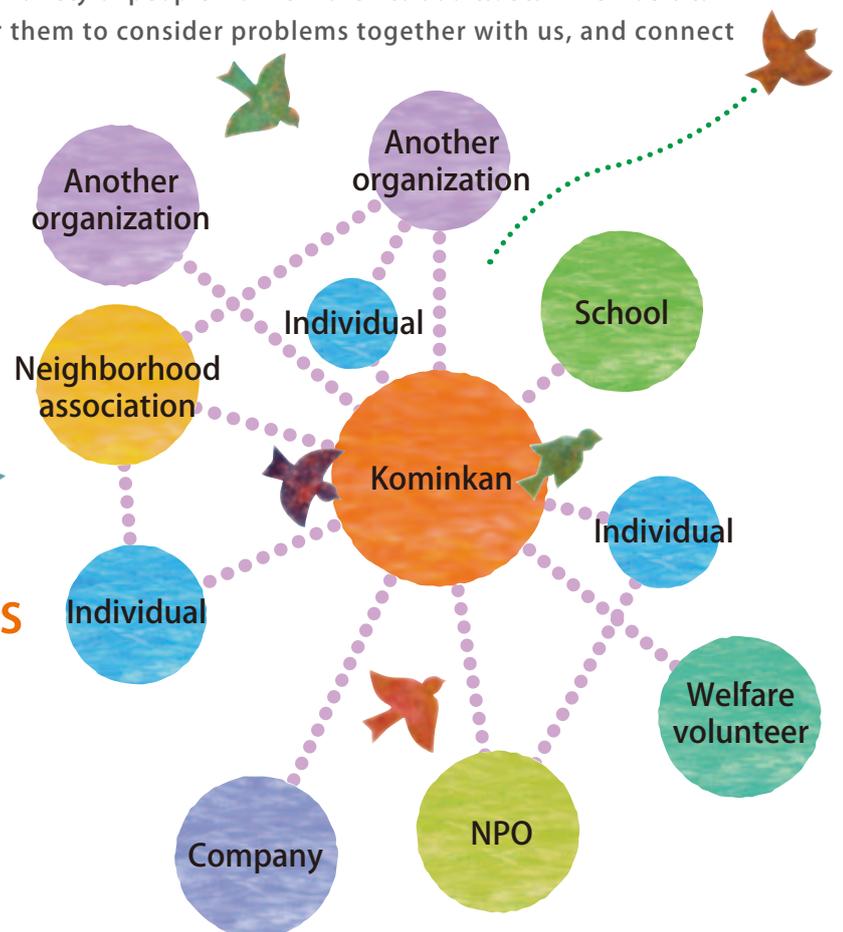
- How to deal with stray cats
- How to improve your skills before finding a job



Kominkan in Okayama City

In Okayama City, there is one Kominkan at almost every junior high school district. To ensure that everyone can speak out and learn freely, such a facility is positioned as part of the municipal board of education. A Kominkan is operated by the Kominkan's director, as well as project staff and night-time staff. This citizen-oriented facility is used by a wide variety of people from children to adults. Staff members talk with such people, provide opportunities for them to consider problems together with us, and connect individuals with individuals, as well as groups with groups. In so doing, staff members expect that a chain reaction will be generated.

A Kominkan serves as the base for all people to use when learning and considering problems in the lives of individuals, as well as local and social problems, and then taking action against them.



Wonderful Encounters

The Kominkan in Okayama City strives to serve as a base for promoting ESD efforts. The facilities can cause unprecedented changes by involving not only neighborhood associations to preserve the lives of residents in their local communities, but also NPOs with specific missions, companies, experts, and other individuals and organizations.

Kominkan x School, Kominkan x NPO, Kominkan x Company, etc.

If a local network is formed to cover various organizations, it follows that the range of their activities will be extended.

If such a network also connects individuals and groups, the network will become far-reaching and eventually cover the entire area.





Is There Kominkan in Foreign Countries?

In foreign countries, there is an educational facility similar to a Kominkan. Called a community learning center (CLC), the facility serves as a place where local people can get together, learn, and get connected. Through learning, CLCs strive to revitalize people and local communities.



CLCs are now gaining attention as life-long learning facilities that have taken root in local communities. Currently, there are more than 170,000 CLCs and similar facilities in 24 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In Indonesia and Thailand, there are laws regarding CLCs. Additionally, CLCs are being established in Arab countries and in Africa.



The structures and activities of CLCs vary depending on the country and region. In light of the needs and problems confronting local communities, CLCs provide literacy education, vocational training, programs for participants to increase their income, classes to hand

down culture to the next generation, and alternative education through which participants can obtain graduation status from elementary school, junior high school, or senior high school. CLCs are operated mainly by local residents. Supported by national governments, NGOs, temples, companies, and other organizations, CLCs strive to create a learning environment for local residents.



In Okayama, the Kominkan Summit was held in 2007. At the event, the Okayama Declaration was announced jointly by Kominkan in Japan and CLCs in foreign countries, in order to make a proposal on the role to be played by Kominkan and CLCs in promoting efforts regarding ESD. Since then, Kominkan and CLCs have been learning from each other through interaction at international conferences and other opportunities.



Where are the Kominkan centers?

Kominkan Areas in Okayama City

