

No.14 6 Steps for the Global Environment Issues

The environmental pollution began since the late 20th century. At that moment, the pollution was only a local level; corporations were the ones which caused the pollution and residents around those corporations were victim of the pollution. After a half-century, those pollution problems have spread out to the global level. The victims of this pollution are the global ecosystem, including human beings, and human beings (economic activities) are the ones who cause the problems. Therefore, several difficult issues come up to solve those problems.

First, the ones who will suffer the most are not the generations who get a lot of material benefit from the current economic activities, but the next generation or subsequent generations. Therefore, even though people conceptually recognize the global environment becomes worse, it is difficult to venture to change their everyday life to prevent those problems.

Second, because those in power get a benefit from the massive consuming society, it is difficult to establish the recycling-based society against their power. Moreover, since current all generations live in a market economy system, they will face with the contradiction to cope with the environment issues between their current life and the life that should be changed.

The global environment issues cannot be solved unless we establish the sustainable society, or the recycling-based society within the tolerance level of the global ecosystem. Yonemoto (1194) described as follows, "The environmental issues may need to merge the natural science with the social science by force and also to include the policy drafts. Therefore, it is necessary to put the research results into solid and effective actions and to fairly evaluate several values existing at the same time." Therefore, we need to overcome the following six steps, or considerations, against the environmental deterioration when we discuss the global environment issues.

1. Are current changes of the global environment dangerous signs? Also how is the speed of those changes?
2. Is the main factor of those changes due to human being's activities?
3. What are the estimated results? When does the time of the catastrophe come?
4. Are there any possibilities to avoid this catastrophe?
5. How will our goal's society be?
6. To achieve our goal, what steps and methods do we need during the processes?

By examining those six considerations, we become to acknowledge how to manage and how to solve environmental issues. It is considered that ways to cope with the global environmental issues will differ depending on how individual recognize those considerations.

First, the environmental changes has already become dangerous signs that may threaten the human being's survival. It is well known that those signs are global warning, endocrine disruptors, and deforestation, as many researchers point out. Then how much are Japanese people aware those problems?

Asahi Newspaper took a public opinion poll in 1997, which is described below.

- How is the health condition of the earth?
Seriously ill ... 7 %, Ill ... 57 %, Somehow healthy ... 32 % Healthy ... 1 %
- What is the most concerned issue about the world?
 1. The deterioration of the global environment ... 40 % (More than 50 % in people in their 20s and 30s, especially more than 60 % in women in their 30s)
 2. Economic depression ... 21 %
- I am interested in the global warning, or much interested in it ... 86 %
- I am pessimistic about the global environment and the situation will be much worse than now ... 77 % (more than 80 % in people in their 20s and 30s)
Global environment will be improved ... 14 %
- The amount of carbon dioxide emissions should be decreased although it may influence the economic growth and business conditions... 84 %
- What if the daily living becomes inconvenient to sustain the global environment?
O.K. ... 50 %, No, I do not want it to happen ... 44 %

It may be different how you think about those results depending on each reader's understanding.

There was indeed a big gap of understandings among different generations in the results of this investigation. The problem is that people with their 60s or older who lead politics do not have a sense of crisis toward the deterioration of the global environment compared with younger generations. In other words, they are the "eating and running" generation. For those people, it was a good deed to work hard, to produce materials, and to consume them. And it was their goal to use resources as much as possible and to become well off. Therefore, it is natural that the old generation is less interested in the environmental deterioration. However, they are the ones who broadened the environmental pollution. It may be too much for younger

people to pay for what the generation of their parents has done.

Secondly, there is a high percentage of pessimistic view that the environment will become much worse than now (77 %), especially for young people (84 %). This implies that many Japanese begin to have a feeling of hopeless toward the future global environment. However, majority of them (84%) agree that they should decrease the amount of carbon dioxide emissions although this effort will affect the economic growth. In other words, almost all Japanese hope the solution of the environmental problems even though they will experience some pains to solve those problems. The feeling of hopeless may owe to distrust to the policy making by government. Moreover, people are not sure how the recycling-based society will be and they do not have conviction that they can establish this society. In any rate, people with their 50s or 60s who is in the leading position of the society have to mainly take responsibility of the environmental issues.

*One-minute destruction of the global environment (*World Watch*, vol.12, no.4, 1999)

How incredible it is that the global environment gets worse considerably only in 60 seconds, while sands are falling in a sandglass! The examples introduced below are the tip of the iceberg and last year's data are used. The situation of the global environment will get much worse year after year.

1. In Australia, the area of forests corresponded to a soccer stadium (7,000 m²) disappears
2. The area of tropical rainforests in the world corresponded to 60 football stadiums (4,000 m² per stadium) disappears.
3. In suburb areas of the United States, 10,000 m² of farmlands and forests disappears due to urban sprawl.
4. 0.5 k m² of lands on the earth turns into a desert.
5. 570 people evacuate due to flood damages caused by rainstorm and others
6. 23 children die due to starvation and malnutrition
7. 50 people die due to poisoning of agricultural chemicals
8. Around 930 kl of sewage flows into Ganges River from the surrounding cities.
9. Endangered species equivalent to \$ 19,000 are sold in the black markets which deal rare kinds of animals/plants
10. It will take 10,000 minutes (166 hours and 40 minutes) that all plants on the earth produce the energy to burn fossil fuels for 1 minute.

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