



Collaboration between International Union of Soil Sciences and national societies in promoting soil education and public awareness as a pillar of International Decade of Soils (IDS): A good practice of “Shiny Soil Balls” in Japan

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The International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) started International Decade of Soils (IDS) Project in 2015 to advance scientific knowledge and technology, promote public awareness and enhance involvement in policy making about soils and soil sciences and one of the major topics during the decade is surely soil education. The volunteers in the Japanese Society of Soil Science and Plant Nutrition (JSSSPN) and the Japanese Society of Pedology (JSP) have been developed tools and materials and organized seminars and field schools for soil education in collaboration with the IUSS as well as NPOs, NGOs, etc., sometimes with private companies as a part of CSR activities. Based on the feedback from the above activities, we found that 1) small school children (hopefully with their parents) are one of the best targets, 2) workshop-type activities are efficient in giving satisfaction to with a sense of accomplishment and possibly withdraw further interest in soils from the participants. A workshop of "Shiny Soil Balls" is one of those that meet the above criteria on which we could promote in soil education for the future.

We prepared the special soil ball materials and showed them how to make "Shiny Soil Balls" by polishing with the bottom of a spoon in a workshop. In making "Shiny Soil Balls" within 5 to 30 min., most children, even their parents, got concentrated, enjoyed, and satisfied, when completing "Shiny Soil Balls". By preparing them, most children paid attention to the soil characteristics which affect the quality of "Shiny Soil Balls". We analyzed the questioners for children in different ages and confirmed that "Shiny Soil Balls" was mostly attractive for those > 4-years, and was rather more for older children, though it is still unclear whether such positive attitude does really lead to an "interest in Soil and Environment" or was just due to a fun. Questioners to the parents showed that many of them highly appreciate it that their children touched and played with soils since they hardly provide a chance for them to do so, particularly in urban areas, and are hoping them to be more concerned about the environment in the future. We concluded that the workshop for "Shiny Soil Balls" was proved successful and could be a promising tool for education, in an introductory step in particular, for school children and their parents and public awareness of soil and soil sciences.

The followings are the summary of the workshops with number of participants involved in "Shiny Soil Balls".

- 1) "Youngsters' Science Festivals in Tokyo" in 2009 to 2017, 500 children and their parents out of 1,000 participants.
- 2) "School of Soil for Children and Parents" in 2011, and 2014, ca. 50 per year.
- 3) "Eco Products (Exhibition for all sectors working for environment)" in 2013 to 2017, 600 out of 160,000 in 2016.