

Private-public partnership in the 3Rs

As a part of its Green Productivity (GP) initiatives, the APO, in collaboration with the Japan Productivity Center, organized a workshop on The 3Rs in Japan, 28 September–2 October. It was the fourth of its kind to impart knowledge of 3R approaches and their applications in Japan and the region. The following article was contributed by one of the 18 workshop participants from 14 member countries, Chief Strategist of Kairos Management Technologies Reylito A.H. Elbo, the Philippines.



Reylito A.H. Elbo

implementing the 3Rs not only as a profitable business undertaking but also as a crucial tool to protect the environment, which is a clear case of ensuring corporate profit with honor. Workshop participants learned the following.

First, Japan has many specific, focus-oriented national regulations designed for easy implementation of the 3Rs, unlike the watered-down versions in many countries. These include the Promotion of Recycling of Containers and Packaging Law, Home Appliance Recycling Law, Food Recycling Law, Construction Waste Recycling Law, End-of-Life Vehicle Recycling Law, and Green Purchasing Law.

The fundamental relationship between the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle) and sustainability deserves special attention. If the 3Rs are the “trees,” sustainability is the “forest.” The United Nations defines the 3Rs as a strategy to “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The recent APO workshop in Japan demonstrated strategies for

Second, a 3R program is best implemented through a comprehensive “resource recycling model plant” comprising a private recycling plant, privately financed thermal recycling plant, landfill sites, and research facilities. These are clustered to achieve both economy of scale and efficient recycling. This was evident at the Sai-no-Kuni Resource Recycling Factory, where thermal recycling by Orix, food waste recycling by I’ll Clean Tech, and recycling of fluorescent tubes by Um-Welt Japan are integrated.

Third, another good business model is the integrated operation of recycling facilities at Re-Tem Corporation, which performs “urban mining” of used metal and electronic/electrical equipment. Used products are disassembled to recover materials. Re-Tem is known as the cost-effective operator of the Japan Recycle Improvement Committee established in 1998.

Fourth, many Japanese organizations practice “design for the environment,” and Mitsubishi Electric collaborates with those efforts to reduce toxic elements and waste. Mitsubishi Electric also established 48 Hyper Cycle Systems plants nationwide for end-of-life home appliances and office equipment. These plants, including the one in Chiba prefecture visited by participants, show the 3Rs in action with maximum recovery and reuse coupled with safe disposal.

In all these examples, it was easy to identify the formula for success: strong private-public partnership. Without this, 3R initiatives cannot contribute to the ultimate goal of sustainability. 