

Introducing the Kyoto University GSGES Asia Platform

The Graduate School of Global Environmental Studies (GSGES) fosters a number of innovative research and education programs, international exchanges and outreach activities in its efforts to address environmental, developmental and natural-disaster-related issues in Japan and overseas. The GSGES Asia Platform – established in 2005 to provide a comprehensive framework for collaborative research towards improving human security in Asian countries – seeks to enhance the synergy between research, education and implementation by conducting wide-ranging field activities in and around the cities of Hue and Danang in central Vietnam.

In the first seven years of the platform, researchers and students from GSGES and partner universities in Hue and Danang have joined forces in numerous activities focusing on disaster prevention, natural resource management and urban environment issues to tackle environmental problems and issues of community livelihood and human security. Many of the activities are documented in the GSGES Asia Platform Annual Report, which has featured 109 papers to date – 53 authored by GSGES students and 37 by researchers from Vietnam. Articles in the first five issues relate mainly to the platform's first phase, marked by a three-year Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) partnership program – Enhancing Community Resilience and Livelihood Security to Cope with Natural Disasters in Central Vietnam – which began in September 2006. The three articles that appear in the following pages of *Sansai* present some major findings from this period: two of the papers are authored by Vietnamese exchange students awarded PhD degrees by Kyoto University in 2012, and one is authored by a former JICA staff member, awarded a PhD in 2011. All three are related to their authors' PhD theses.

A second GSGES-JICA partnership program, which takes an integrated approach to helping vulnerable people cope with natural disasters in central Vietnam – is under way and will run until 2014. At the same time, GSGES is expanding the Asia Platform's focus to include other countries in south-east Asia, such as Laos and Cambodia, as well as the Japanese cities of Saijo and Tanabe. This second phase of the platform is fostering research and education opportunities for faculty members and students while improving the lives the inhabitants of the villages, towns and cities where the field activities are focused. We look forward to sharing some of the findings in future editions of *Sansai*.

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