

Dialogue for Change with Rakuten 2022 Activity Report

Sustainability Dept.
Rakuten Group, Inc.

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Introduction

Promoting a new vision of the future through dialogue

Through the Dialogue for Change with Rakuten program, launched in 2022, Rakuten joins hands with a diverse range of stakeholders, leveraging the power of **dialogue** to spark social change and positive impact going forward.

By turning dialogue into action, we are promoting new value and a new vision for the future.



What is dialogue?

Dialogue is not a discussion aimed at finding a single answer, but rather a means to understanding each other's differences of opinion on a specific topic and drawing out new knowledge through questions.

As we face an increasing number of complex social issues for which solutions are difficult to find, dialogue is playing an ever-growing role among diverse stakeholders.

A GUIDE TO DIALOGUE

With the aim of facilitating dialogue in various social situations, we developed a guidebook in which we introduce the 7 steps of dialogue to aid understanding of our approach to dialogue.

The guidebook is available for download from the following website.

<https://global.rakuten.com/corp/sustainability/dialogue-for-change/>



A means of arriving at a single answer through a spirited exchange of ideas

DISCUSSION

DIALOGUE

A means to understanding each other's differences of opinion on a specific topic and drawing out new knowledge through questions

CONVERSATION

An exchange of words for enjoyment (relationship building with the other party)

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2022 agenda

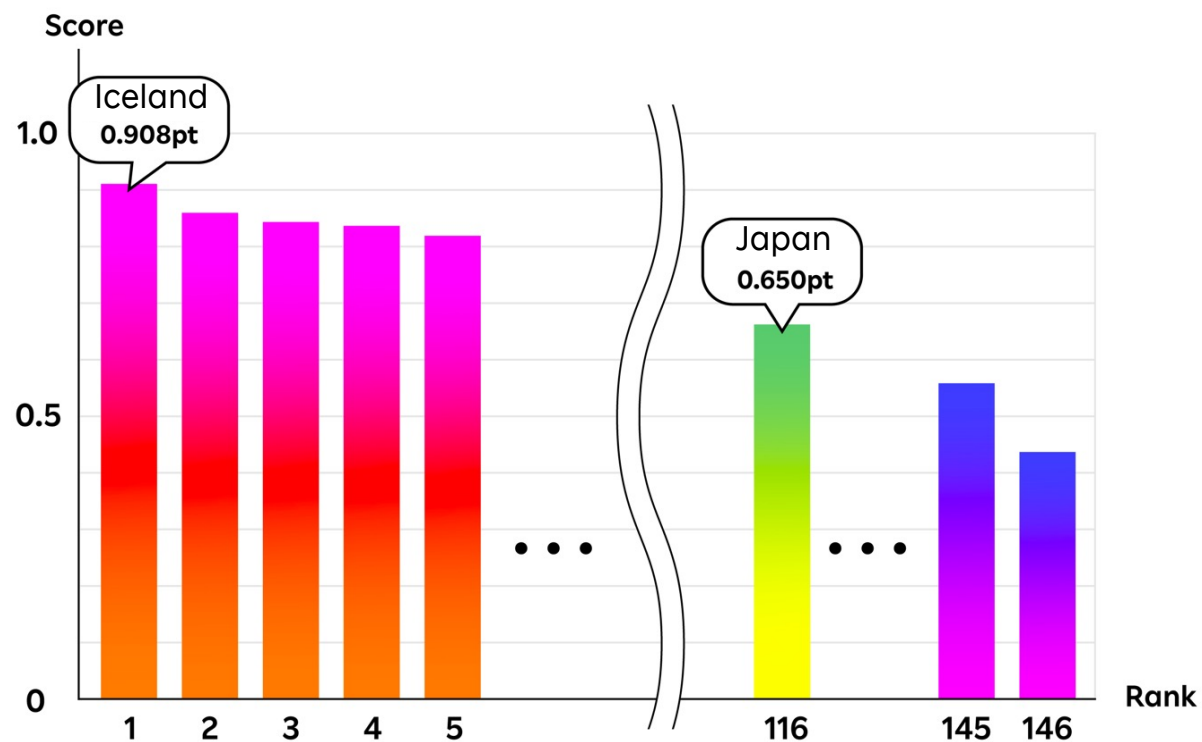
Women's Leadership and Empowerment

On the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2022, Japan ranks 116th out of 146 countries. The disparity between men and women was particularly large in the economic and political spheres.

For Rakuten, which views diversity as a driving force for innovation, closing the gender gap is also an important issue.

Many companies, including Rakuten, are making efforts to boost the ratio of women in management and executive positions while creating comfortable working conditions.

But in order to achieve gender equality, we believe we must not limit our focus to within the company, instead expanding our perspective to include various aspects of society. By widely sharing the lessons we learned from this dialogue with diverse stakeholders, we aim to contribute to achieving gender equality in Japan.



Based on the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2022

Program flow

1. Dialogue between diverse stakeholders, 2. Actions based on dialogue outcomes, 3. Sharing new visions and messages gleaned through actions

Through these activities, we aim to promote a vision for a better future.



Kickoff session

Dialogue workshop
July 30–31, 2022
(Kesennuma City, Miyagi Prefecture)



Action interim report
August–December 2022



Activity report conference
January 21, 2023



Kesennuma Workshop: Day 1

July 30, 2022

Fieldwork



After visiting the fish market and the Ruins of the Great East Japan Earthquake Memorial Museum, five groups conducted fieldwork.

Destinations	Initiatives at destination
Tsurukame no Yu / Tsurukame Shokudou	The revival of a public bathhouse that was closed after the earthquake. Women who moved to the area play an active role at the Tsurukame Diner.
General Incorporated Association Kesennuma Asobi-ba	Operates a playground and a children's cafeteria that got its start as a way to provide mental health care to children after the earthquake.
Specified Nonprofit Corporation Peace Jam	An NPO that supports mothers and children through the production of jams and baby-related goods.
General Incorporated Association Pensea	Provides design education programs that nurture children's creativity.
Surf Shop Kabutomushi	Connecting the ocean, people and communities through surfing, stand-up paddleboarding, and other marine sports.

Dialogue sessions



Participants deepened their learning with speakers on six topics

Themes	Speakers
Multicultural Coexistence in the Community as Viewed by a Kesennuma City Council Member	Nobuko Murakami (Kesennuma City council member)
Rakuten Ichiba Merchants Talk about Changes in Work Styles and Women's Empowerment in the Wake of the Earthquake	Akemi Kimura (Minato Suisan, Inc.)
Gender Gap in Inquiry-Based Learning as Perceived by an Inquiry-Based Learning Coordinator	Takafumi Narumiya (NPO Sokoage)
Status of Gender in the International Community and JICA's Efforts	Tomohiro Iwabuchi (Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA))
Efforts and Future of Women's Empowerment in Ishinomaki	Yosuke Takahashi (NPO Yappesu) Yoshie Kaneko (General Incorporated Association Retreat)
Challenges for Women in Technology and Innovation and Cross-Border Human Resources	Yoko Kamimura (SUNDRED Corporation)

Kesennuma Workshop: Day 2

July 31, 2022

Dialogue workshops



Adopting a “world café” format, dialogue partners and Rakuten employee teams discussed “the future we envision.” Participants from different backgrounds created a diverse ring of dialogue.

Editorial meeting for the future



The “desired future” that emerged through dialogue was expressed in the form of future media. As a result, diverse seeds of action were born, such as “Leveraging the Metaverse to enable diverse life choices,” “Encouraging diverse careers to boost employee happiness,” “Changing the perception of such color biases as blue for males and pink for females,” and “Making sports enjoyable regardless of gender.”



Participants:

Approximately 70 people (Rakuten employees and business partners, local governments, NPOs, JICA staff, high school students, etc.)

Venue:

Kesennuma City Machi/Hito/Shigoto Koryu Plaza, others

Support:

maru-office, Future Sessions Inc.

Team A: Rakuten Dialogue Club

Rakuten members:

Atsuko Shitomi, Tatsuhiko Maekawa, Momoko Yamaguchi, Lee Seungyun, Ye Sangyan

② Action

Question(s)

**Does realizing a diverse career boost happiness?
What's needed to realize a diverse career?**

Activities and Learning

A podcast to communicate diverse careers

The club produces and distributes a podcast program to widely share dialogues with people working in diverse careers. The program showcases such varied careers as entrepreneurs, civil service officials, and female executives of Rakuten, and presents the issues they face. The club also conducted a survey of Rakuten employees to explore “happiness at work” and what initiatives are needed by the company. According to the survey results, a key factor in achieving happiness at work and realizing a diverse career is “**connections with people.**”

Looking to the Future

Systematizing “connections with people”

As Rakuten employees, while working we will create positive “connections with people” both inside and outside the company.

We would also like to encourage the company to create a system that enables us to realize more diverse and happier careers.

Envisioned Future

Creating a world in which people aren't afraid to deviate from the “right” answer

By enabling women to choose more diverse careers, we can increase the level of happiness in their lives.



Podcast program: The Rakuten Dialogue Club

An episode being recorded

Dialogue Partner Comment

I felt that everyone on the team did a good of speaking and eliciting ideas. I also thought it was wonderful that they chose podcasting as a way to communicate their diverse values. Although I've yet to find my “right” career, I'd like to support new possibilities and experimentation through podcasting, and I think it would be interesting to discover the perspectives that various people have to offer.

—Ami Miura, maru-office

Team B: Team Nana-iro(Rainbow)

Rakuten members:

Kikka Sue, Motoki Kobayashi, Hibiki Hirano, Aya Tokunaga

② Action

Question(s)

How can we create a society where everyone can define and choose their own happiness? (Can dialogue help?)

Activities and Learning

Verifying whether dialogue can overcome stereotypes

In a survey of Rakuten members, 73.9% responded that they do not feel discriminated against or any discomfort based on gender. Some, however, do feel uncomfortable in various situations in their daily lives, such as at work or at home.

During the dialogue session, participants were asked questions related to familiar topics such as, “Are the heroes in movies male?” and “Is red the color for the elementary-school satchels used by girls?” As a result, the participants learned that “dialogue” can provide a means to notice unconscious biases, expand options, and promote change.

Looking to the Future

Sharing information to expand the value of dialogue

To expand the possibilities of “dialogue” that was felt through this program, Rakuten employees and dialogue partners who met in Kesennuma are writing articles together.



Volunteer
[blog](#)

Envisioned Future

A world where you decide your own happiness

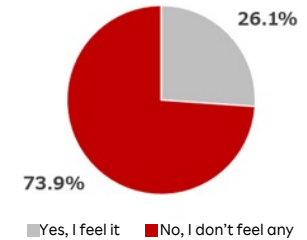
A world where each person chooses what he or she likes without being swayed by stereotypes or the opinions of others, and lives a life of happiness as they define it.



High school students also joined in the dialogue

We asked some 10,000 Rakuten members!

Do you usually feel discrimination or discomfort based on gender?



73.9% of respondents said they do not feel discrimination or discomfort based on gender

Dialogue Partner Comment

Joining the dialogue from my unique position as a high school student, I wanted to thank you for speaking to me from the same point of view. The online meeting was also a lot of fun. In the blog we launched, I also wrote an article about bias. I'd like to carefully re-read it, including what other people wrote.

—Kao Iwatsuki, 2nd grade of Kesennuma High School

Team C: Empower Team

② Action

Question(s)

How can we create a venue for the sharing and solving of problems associated with changes in life stages?

Activities and Learning

Event realized through dialogue with internal stakeholders

Through interviews with female executive officers and those in charge of diversity, we learned that Rakuten already had measures and an internal community that support women's working styles. We also realized that these measures had not been sufficiently communicated to the company's employees, and that opportunities to share and resolve concerns related to life stage changes were lacking. Accordingly, we organized and held an internal event featuring a guest speaker, a female executive officer who is one of our role models, to consider the topic of career planning.

Rakuten members:

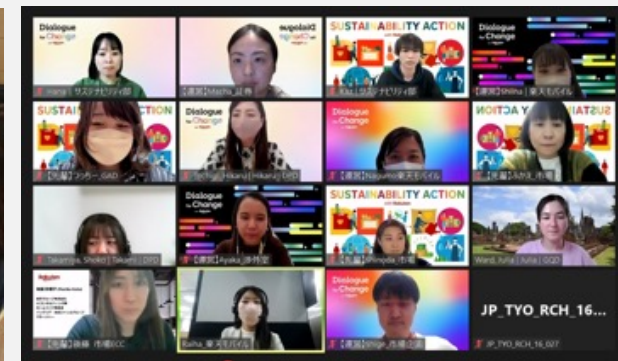
Shiina Nagano, Takashige Aoki, Nagumo Shiraki, Tomoka Matsui, Ayaka Ishikawa

Envisioned Future

Rakuten becomes a leading company in empowering women
Realizing as many diverse working styles as there are employees.



Dialogue with a female executive officer



The in-house event focusing on careers

Looking to the Future

A venue for dialogue that transcends departments and generations

The in-house event received high marks from attendees, who said that it enabled them to view their careers in a positive light. In order for Rakuten to become a leading company in empowering women, we will continue to provide opportunities for dialogue among employees across departments and generations and reflect this in the company's policies.

Dialogue Partner Comment

Although Rakuten has achieved rapid growth and systems have been put in place, female employees still have various concerns. There is no right answer to how to deal with life stage changes, but I think it's important to hear from senior workforce members about their past choices and decision criteria, and to connect as many of these perspectives as possible to your own awareness. I felt that was precisely what everyone in the session was doing.

—Kumi Nambu, Executive Officer, Rakuten Group, Inc.

Team D: Marble Chocolate

Rakuten members:

Hikaru Tochigi, Li Qi, Chen Betsy, Tabassum Nusrat, Keita Kondo

② Action

Question(s)

What do we need to do in order to recognize and empathize with each other's ways of being and thinking?

Activities and Learning

Researching and experiencing a board game that encourages dialogue
Building off the idea of the “Hyper Life Game,” a game realized through dialogue in Kesennuma that lets players experience the lives of others, we researched a board game that encourages dialogue. In the process, we considered the role of the game and how it coordinated with and influenced issues. As we began the activity, we focused on creating a new utopia, but as our dialogue progressed, we understood that in order to create a better future, it's important to first accept the current reality and determine how to make it interesting. Through the experience, we realized the potential that games offer as a means of viewing oneself objectively.

Looking to the Future

Realizing the future you envisioned with games
Through the program, we realized the potential of games as a means of realizing the future we envision. From here, we would like to proceed to the phase of putting these tools into practice. And through this realization, we would also like to support as many people as possible in realizing the future they envision.

Envisioned Future

A future in which everyone can live in a parallel world through other possible worlds and stories
~ A society that empathizes with the roles of others through a cycle of understanding and improvement ~
Empathizing and understanding one another by seeing and hearing the worlds of others will help lead us to the right answer in realizing an ideal future.



Developing the board game with feedback from Rakuten employees

Dialogue Partner Comment

We often talk about viewpoints, fields of view, and perspectives, and putting yourself in someone else's shoes is definitely one way to change your viewpoint. If you change your viewpoint, your field of view will change, and the perspectives you notice will also change. I like that they've designed these aspects into the game. I think the game resonated with so many people because it's set up so that you start by taking an interest in the other person.
—Masatada “Seichu” Kobayashi, Chief Well-being Officer, Rakuten Group, Inc.

Team E: Marina Collab

Rakuten members:

Atsushi Matsuoka, Poliakova Elizaveta, Choi Benny, Calderwood Feren, Sato Adriane, Levantino Valeria

② Action

Question(s)

How can we empower communities and women through entrepreneurship?

Activities and Learning

Conducted interviews and surveys with various people

Through a workshop and dialogue, we recognized the importance of supporting women entrepreneurs in the community. We held interviews with various people living in the community to study current systems and formulated a hypothesis of the type of support that is needed. Based on our hypothesis, we conducted a questionnaire-based survey covering a wider area and, in accordance with our findings and the connections we gained through this activity, considered how to go about designing a workshop.

Looking to the Future

Entrepreneurship workshops and development support for women entrepreneurs

Based on the survey findings, we would like to contribute to the development of women entrepreneurs by designing and conducting entrepreneurship support workshops in Kesennuma and other regions.

Envisioned Future

An increase in the number of women who launch their own business in the community

A future in which launching a business is an option available to all women, including those living in rural areas or raising children.



Most of the members were from overseas, so had to overcome language barriers to work together

Dialogue Partner Comment

I was involved in the activity as an interviewee. Thanks to the dialogue I had with everyone, I started my own business. First of all, we are going to try to move things forward, even if we do so at the bare minimum! Based on this initiative, I'd like to work together with all of you and would appreciate your support!

—Natsuko Kanno, Joseiga Hatarakiyasui Kaisha, Inc.

Team F: We wanna surf!

② Action

Question(s)

What can sports do to boost children's self-efficacy regardless of gender?

Activities and Learning

Examining the potential of marine sports

Upon meeting Yumi-san, who runs a surf shop, we hypothesized that marine sports, which involve nature and require those who take part in them to face themselves rather than be compared with others, might lead to self-efficacy.

In January, Yumi-san taught a stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) class for elementary school children in Kesennuma (in a pool rather than the ocean because it was winter). The children who participated commented that they felt a sense of accomplishment and were able to feel a connection between marine sports and self-efficacy.

Looking to the Future

Boosting self-efficacy through sports

Applying what was learned in the SUP class in January, we would like to hold the next SUP or surfing class in the ocean during the summer. We would like to get local communities and governments involved and hold SUP classes at schools to expand the environment for nurturing children with self-efficacy through sports that require them to face themselves.

Rakuten members:

Maho Hosoda, Takayuki Kawamura,
Anna Sugiya, Yuna Takahashi

Envisioned Future

A society in which outstanding female leaders play active roles

Producing female leaders who leverage the self-efficacy they acquire through sports.



An encounter in Kesennuma led to a SUP class held in a swimming pool

Dialogue Partner Comment

It was like a dream come true to realize my wish of holding a SUP class in a swimming pool. And I hope the children will fondly remember the experience and that they will feel a connection to their hometown of Kesennuma, which was made possible by the adults around them who set up this opportunity to face the water, even if it wasn't the ocean. See you again in the ocean.

—Yumi Suzuki, Surf Shop Kabutomushi

Debriefing session: Insights 2022

Dialogue for Change with Rakuten: Insights 2022 was held at Rakuten Crimson House (the company's global headquarters) in Tokyo on January 23, 2023.

Some 100 participants, including such diverse dialogue partners as local government officials, NPOs, and students, along with Rakuten employees and experts, shared the insights they gained through the activities. All participants deepened the dialogue toward further action in the future.



Activity reports by each team



Dialogue among participants



Declaration of "Action from Tomorrow"

Asako Osaki
Director, Gender Action Platform



Gender equality and women's empowerment are core goals of the SDGs. Gender equality is a state in which men and women enjoy equal rights and opportunities, share responsibilities, and participate equally in decision-making. Currently, such care responsibilities as housework, childcare, and nursing care are disproportionately handled by women, but it's important to enable both men and women to shoulder these responsibilities together, not only in the home but also in society as a whole. It's also essential that we increase the number of women in decision-making positions. Empowerment, on the other hand, is about giving women the power to live while making their own decisions. By empowering and connecting women, we can lead the transformation of society as a whole, which is the essence of the SDGs. Toward this objective, I'm looking forward to taking concrete action.

When ordinary citizens start something new, they're often denied by those around them, who say, "There's no way you'll be able to do that!" It's easy to share a sense of camaraderie with people who share a background that's like yours, but in order to realize a better society, I think it's important to recognize diversity and make the most of each other's strengths.

In my dialogue with people from Rakuten, I heard their words of encouragement about their desire to create such a wonderful world.

Through the realizations I gained in our dialogue and by leveraging the connections that each stakeholder has, I'm looking forward to seeing the creation of new things and world-firsts.

Yoshie Kaneko
Executive Director, Retreat



Ayako Sonoda
Representative Director, Cre-en Inc.



The content of the presentation on the importance of deciding on your own career resonated with me. From my own experience as an entrepreneur, I also believe it's important to decide for yourself.

For dialogue, working backwards from your ideal future, or "backcasting," is very important. Basically, human beings are creatures that can only realize what they think, so I hope that you'll imagine and realize the long-term future that you'd like to achieve, and I don't mean just two or three years from now, but rather a future that will make the entire world better. I'm rooting for you, so please give it your all.

I think we all gained many new insights in the wonderful city of Kesenuma.

For many years I have been involved in green business, earning money while improving the environment.

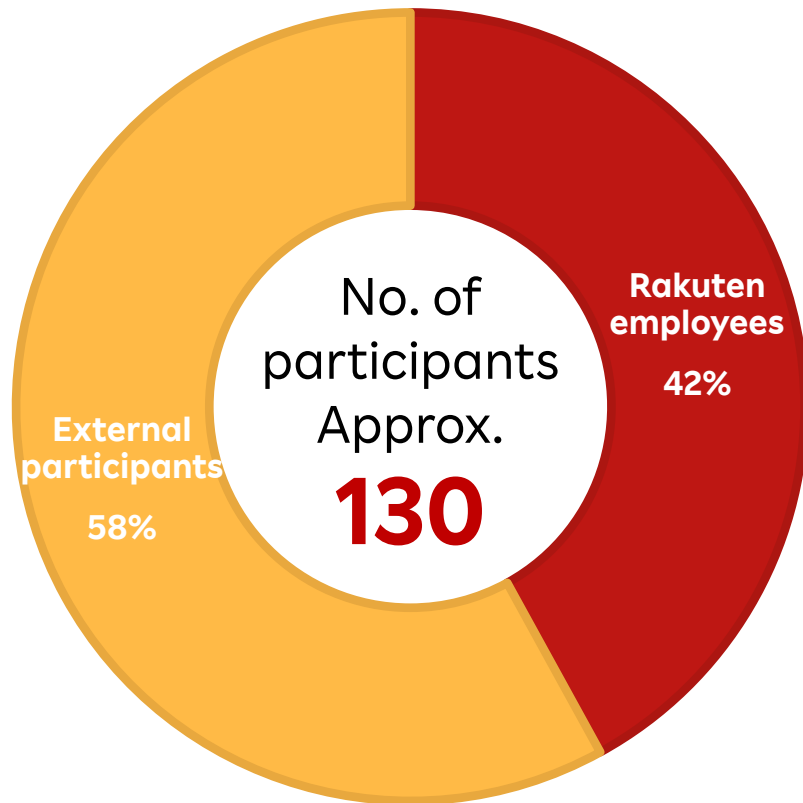
I believe that women play a very important role in creating a sustainable society. In various communities, I meet many women entrepreneurs who are desperately thinking about the future of their communities and their children. The next steps are crucial for such activities.

It's better to take some kind of action rather than to do nothing, and I believe that moving forward one step at a time will lead to a better tomorrow. I look forward to your future success.

Mari Yoshitaka
Representative Director, Virtue Design
Visiting Professor, University of Tokyo



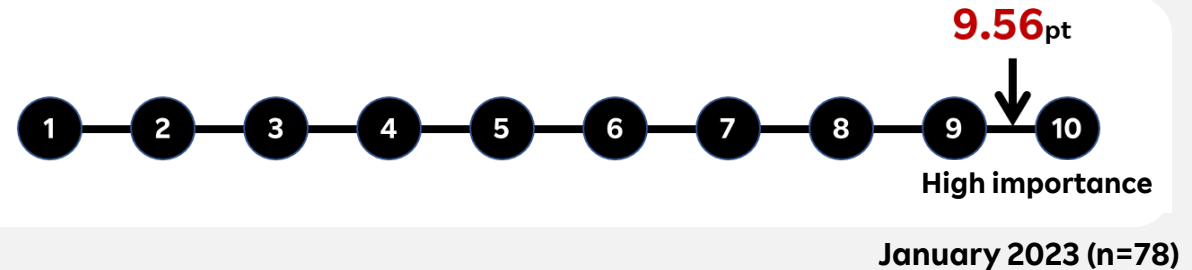
Dialogue for Change 2022: From the participant survey



Background of participants:

Government, high school students, university students, teachers, independent administrative agencies, NPOs, start-ups, freelancers, Rakuten Ichiba merchants, etc.

Q: Do you think “dialogue” is important to create a better future?



Q: By participating in the program, what kind of changes or realizations did you have?

• Gender equality issues

I felt the importance of involving not just women but various stakeholders when taking action. I also felt the challenges that are in the environment and social structure systems.

• Diverse forms of leadership

You don't have to be strong to be a leader. Anyone can pursue such a role if they have the desire to. I realized that leadership can take many forms.

• The power of dialogue

I now understand the difference between dialogue, discussion, and conversation. I was again able to sense the potential that dialogue offers. I want to consciously make use of it in my daily work and life.

• Connections to the community

I was able to experience firsthand the lifestyles and thoughts of the local community. I felt that you need an “opportunity” to gain a connection to the community and the region.

Looking ahead

At the 2022 Dialogue for Change, we addressed the agenda of “**Women's Leadership and Empowerment**,” which led to various actions through dialogue. While the contents of each action differ, common elements to realize the following “envisioned future” emerged.

Individual

- **Learning about diverse ways of living**

Getting to know the diverse ways in which different people live and work will enable you to think about your own way to realize happiness and expand your career options without limiting yourself to one correct answer.

- **Being aware of biases and stereotypes**

Engaging in dialogue with diverse people can also provide you with opportunities to become aware of your unconscious gender biases and stereotypes.

Organization

- **Demonstrating commitment**

Making a clear commitment to gender equality as a company or organization will help promote the empowerment of women not only within the organization but also throughout society.

- **Promoting dialogue and community building**

Providing employees with a place where they can easily share and support each other's life-stage concerns across departments and generations will help create a workplace where they can continue to work with peace of mind.

Society

- **Supporting challenges**

An increase in the number of women entrepreneurs in various regions will lead to increased work options for women and revitalize the region. To this end, it is also important to support new challenges.

- **Empowering the next generation**

Providing education and creating an environment where gender equality can be taken for granted from an early age is up to society as a whole.

Many of the Rakuten employees and dialogue partners who were involved in this Dialogue for Change program commented that they were able to reaffirm the importance of “dialogue.” At the same time, they were able to catch a glimpse of the importance of sharing the process of “change” with diverse people. We don't want the actions that were generated here to come to an end here; we would like to connect them to various forms of change.

In closing

We also received comments from two people who provided their generous support in running the program!

Kanako Chiba
maru-office
Kesenuma City,
Miyagi Prefecture



Thank you so much for allowing me to help with the fieldwork! I'm glad I was able to participate.

Kesenuma, having experienced the Great East Japan Earthquake, has had many “dialogue” workshops. For me, who also experienced the disaster, dialogue offered “a way to appreciate each other’s differences.” But the dialogue with everyone from Rakuten was “change, toward action.” Through dialogue, the rules of dialogue changed within me. As an accepting person, this came as a great shock. When welcoming people into the community, the local people usually are the majority and the rule. On an unconscious level, we accept this rule. But now that times are clearly changing, the question is: “How will *you* change?” In such times, many outsiders go out of their way to create opportunities for us to change. This is truly amazing! To everyone in the regions where Dialogue for Change with Rakuten is headed, I hope you enjoy this chance to the fullest!

Yuta Uwai
Future Sessions Inc.



In my more than 10 years of dialogue and co-creation facilitation experience, I was impressed by the degree to which one company has been able to produce action with diverse stakeholders centered on “dialogue.”

I was particularly impressed by the Rakuten employees who served as facilitators. Immediately after the basic facilitation training, they joined each of the six teams in their planning and practiced, practiced, practiced. Although they occasionally hit a wall, they facilitated the activities of each team with a focus on “dialogue.”

I really felt that the Rakuten facilitators were an indispensable presence behind the flexible creation of the actions taken by the more than 50 diverse stakeholders.

I have great expectations for the development of Dialogue for Change as a new model, and I will continue supporting it! Thank you for this valuable experience!

Kanako Sakimura
Sustainability Dept.
Rakuten Group, Inc.



At Rakuten, we’ve conducted employee-participation social contribution activities with a diverse range of partners, including social entrepreneurs, NPOs, local governments, and high school students. I feel that there’s great value in the new encounters and insights that we gain through these initiatives.

I believe that going beyond the framework of conventional social contribution activities, bringing together a diverse range of people to engage in dialogue from a flat perspective, can lead to action that will fundamentally change society. It was with this objective in mind that we launched Dialogue for Change.

Recognizing the importance of “dialogue,” we first planned fieldwork and workshops in Kesenuma, and through the subsequent process, we came to realize the importance of “change.” Diverse members work together to bring about change, even though such change may be small. I’m convinced that the accumulation of such experiences will eventually bring about major social changes.

I’d like to thank everyone in Kesenuma who joined us in this first attempt, and the dialogue partners from across Japan who participated. In order to create changes toward a better future, we’d like to continue our dialogue in various places and with various people.

Dialogue for Change with Rakuten website

<https://global.rakuten.com/corp/sustainability/dialogue-for-change/>



Dialogue for Change with Rakuten Management Team

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