






EIJI OISHI









Eiji Oishi was born in Osaka in 1969. After graduating from Meiji Gakuin University, he joined advertisement production company Toppan Printing CO., LTD., where he took part in the establishment of digital content distribution, imaging, and fashion businesses before starting up Minna-denryoku in 2011. At this company, he developed an electricity traceability system using existing infrastructure, thereby giving visibility to power producers.




SAORI IWANO









Saori Iwano is a 16-year-old environmental activist. She first took an interest in climate change and other global environmental issues after watching a speech by Severn Cullis-Suzuki. Resonating with the message of Greta Thunberg, who organized a school strike to promote climate awareness, Iwano joined Fridays For Future Tokyo with the aim of taking such action herself.



ISAO SAKAI





Isao Sakai is a 19-year-old environmental activist. He first became aware of the crisis our planet faces from the environmental science curriculum he experienced while studying in the United States. This prompted him to join Fridays For Future Tokyo and take part in activities such as marches for encouraging the fight against climate change issues.



EMIKO SHIMBA





Emiko Shimba joined MARUI GROUP in 1999 before being transferred to MARUI FACILITIES in 2016. She has been promoting the use of renewable energy (green businesses) in her position responsible for power procurement and planning in this company's Eco Management Division since 2019.

Creation of Green Ecosystems through Power with Visibility of Producers

Climate change has recently come to be referred to as a climate crisis, drawing attention to the efforts of companies to address this issue along with the idea of a green recovery aimed at preventing us from returning to the way things were before the COVID-19 pandemic. The following pages chronicle a discussion on the potential for a green ecosystem based on the conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic and projected after the pandemic by Eiji Oishi, who is promoting the idea of giving visibility to power producers; Saori Iwano and Isao Sakai, members of Fridays For Future Tokyo; and Emiko Shimba, who is responsible for renewable energy procurement at MARUI GROUP.

Stakeholder Connections formed through Visibility of Power Producers

Shimba: MARUI GROUP is working to source 100% of the electricity it uses from renewable energy. This goal extends to the power used in Marui and Modi stores as well as in the offices and at other business sites where we work. We have previously focused primarily on reducing electricity consumption and switching to energy-efficient equipment. However, the recent rise

in tenants dealing in food has made us realize that there is a limit to the extent to which we can curb electricity use, prompting us to shift toward using renewable energy. This undertaking led us to talk to Minna-denryoku and eventually to switch to using renewable energy in Shinjuku Marui Main Building in September 2018. We have been progressively introducing renewable energy at other stores since with the goal of having 50% of our power coming from renewable sources in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2021.

Oishi: Minna-denryoku is currently supplying Shinjuku Marui Main Building with electricity originating from wind power generated in Aomori, hydropower generated in Nagano, and solar power generated in Fukushima.

Shimba: What encouraged you, Mr. Oishi, to begin developing services for promoting the visibility of power producers?

Oishi: It all started when I was riding a commuter train. My mobile phone was running out of battery when I saw a woman with a solar panel keyholder hanging from her handbag. I thought to myself, "I wonder if I can buy some power from her?" This experience made me realize that we were now entering into an era in which electricity, a resource that was previously monopolized by a few oil and power companies, could be produced by anyone. The basic concept of our business is to alleviate wage gaps and reduce poverty. As anyone can produce electricity, I figured that we could break up the prior power monopoly if power producers could inject additional value into their electricity in the form of their personalities. I thus established Minna-denryoku in 2011 with the goal of providing visibility to power producers.

Sakai: Traceability is rare for food and other commodities used in our daily lives, making it increasingly difficult to see how one is

related to environmental and social issues. I therefore feel that your efforts to grant visibility to producers and business operators is something really impressive.

Oishi: It is not as though any company will do so as long as they are using renewable energy. This is especially true given the recent trend toward greenwashing, or using green ideas purely as a marketing ploy. There are some companies that destroy local mountains to develop large-scale solar power generation operations or cut down rain forests in the Philippines to build biomass plants so that they can sell "renewable" energy to Japan. This is why the visibility of producers is so important.

Shimba: We are grateful for the opportunity you provided to adopt renewable energy. I have spoken to many other companies on this subject, and Minna-denryoku frequently comes up in conversation, especially with regard to your impressive blockchain technologies. We have also invited Mr. Oishi to speak at MARUI GROUP meetings. These efforts have proved beneficial as we have seen a rise in employee awareness as well as in people switching to purchasing electricity from Minna-denryoku. MARUI GROUP is also currently engaged in joint projects with Minna-denryoku. For example, we are developing a scheme through which EPOS cardholders can help us popularize

renewable energy. I am thoroughly enjoying these projects, which only increases my desire to spread renewable energy.

Iwano: I am overjoyed to see companies commit to visions of the societies they want to shape or the future they want to protect and take steps to resolve the issues along these paths. It is not enough to look to increase the value of one's company through green initiatives. I have high praise for how Minna-denryoku goes further to promote a green supply chain and to encourage a wide range of companies to adopt renewable energy.

Sakai: Miss Iwano and I have come up with an idea that we want to propose to MARUI GROUP. I understand that you plan to switch to renewable energy for all of your offices to accomplish your goal of sourcing 100% of your electricity from renewable energy. Given that teleworking is becoming increasingly common amid the COVID-19 pandemic, how about extending the scope of this renewable energy target to include employees working at home?

Shimba: We are currently procuring high-voltage electricity for large-scale facilities. At the moment, we are not procuring the type of low-voltage electricity used in households. However, after we have converted our stores and offices to renewable energy, we would definitely consider using a scheme for selling electricity to standard households should such a scheme exist.

Need to Change Views of Consumers

Oishi: I believe that increasing consumer awareness is an important task to be tackled with regard to renewable energy. When selecting power suppliers, consumers tend to use price comparison sites to choose the most affordable option. I hear that you, Mr. Sakai and Miss Iwano, are using our services. What prompted you to do so?

Sakai: In my case, I heard about you during the shooting of an online program I was invited to take part in. My mother watched the program and decided to switch to your services.

Iwano: Last year, I took part in some activities together with activists promoting carbon-free approaches. They told me that climate change and energy issues were intimately connected and that nationwide measures are being implemented to address these issues. This caused me to modify my own energy use. When researching options for adopting renewable energy, I happened upon Minna-denryoku, and my decision was made.

Oishi: Thank you for your patronage. When consumers become aware of climate change issues and start to adopt renewable energy, it will have an impact on companies as well.

Shimba: MARUI GROUP is developing a system in which the customer information stored by Epos Card is transferred to Minna-denryoku to allow for easy application for their services. We look to engage in full-fledged initiatives beginning in fall 2020 to accelerate the move toward renewable energy by capitalizing on this system, the desire of our customers to switch to renewable energy, and our co-creation activities with various stakeholders. If our more than 7 million EPOS cardholders were to all embrace renewable energy, it would definitely help transform the world.

Sakai: A lot of people are convinced that renewable energy is expensive. Currently, the primary users of renewable energy are companies. So, changing the views of consumers across society in this regard will require companies to increase their use of renewable energy, demonstrating that it is an affordable and viable option.

Potential for Individual Action to Grow into Larger Movements

Oishi: I understand that you both sent a proposal regarding renewable energy to the Ministry of the Environment. How did that go?

Iwano: At first, the minister stated that it was not the place of the Ministry of the Environment to become overly involved in energy policy, but that it would do what it could. When we pushed back saying that it was indeed Japan's energy policy that we wanted to change, he responded by saying that recognition of the need for cross-organization, government-wide action in this regard is spreading.

Oishi: That is very powerful. When advocates for future generations, for which my generation is creating an increasing burden, speak up in objection, it is greatly persuasive.

Sakai: I think it is important to shape the new normal to be more friendly toward the environment, rather than allowing us to return to the way things were before the COVID-19 pandemic after it ends. The recent rise in meteorological disasters makes it painfully clear that we are approaching our time limit for addressing environmental issues. We therefore must act immediately, banding together with others from our generation to present a unified voice.

Shimba: Did you see any changes in the people around you as a result of your activism?

Iwano: My family has changed the most. I think it is rare to talk about social issues with your family, despite how you are always together. I, however, was persistent in talking about climate



change and renewable energy. I continued to participate in marches and other activities, and in September 2019, my mother chose to take time off from work to join me in a march. We were also able to switch to renewable energy thanks to the approval of my mother. A lot has changed. Today, we are even working to reduce animal products in our diet.

Oishi: I am amazed. Hearing about how our services have sparked family discussion and eventually action, leading you to adopt renewable energy, has truly made my efforts thus far worthwhile. I am sure that my employees will feel the same.

Sakai: If everyone does what they can, I am sure that those around them will take notice. It is enough for everyone to do just what they are able to. In fact, I think that lowering the barrier to action to allow for more widespread action is important. Our mission is not to judge the intent of others; it is to continue to advocate our ideals. It is crucial for us to remain free of unneeded worries so that we can keep broadcasting how we think the future needs to change.

Oishi: I completely agree. I expect that we will remove various barriers going forward, allowing people to live more creatively. One of these barriers is a lack of visibility of the involved parties. This is why I think that building relationships in which both parties are visible to one another is the most important theme when it comes to shaping the world after the COVID-19 pandemic. I was amazed to see how deeply you two have thought about these issues. I did not practice anywhere near this deep a level of introspection when I was in school. I hope that you will maintain this confidence to communicate how you think we should shape the future and your belief that it is your generation who should shape this future while also turning those words into actions. I have no doubt that your efforts will help guide society in a positive direction.