

Preface

Future Earth is a new international research platform launched in June 2012 by the International Council for Science (ICSU), the International Social Science Council (ISSC), and other international academic or funding organizations for a sustainable world. The Global Land Project (GLP) has been chosen as one of the first such international projects it has endorsed that originated from the International Geosphere–Biosphere Programme (IGBP) and/or the International Human Dimensions Programme (IHDP). The choice is a clear indication of the importance of the issues related to land, its use, and change. Monsoon Asia, with its huge and still increasing population and rapid socioeconomic changes, is regarded as a major hot spot of global change in general and of land use change in particular. This book is the outcome of a project entitled “Towards Sustainable Land Use in Asia (SLUAS),” which was the pilot undertaking for development in a series of projects on land use carried out between May 2009 and March 2014. The study areas included China, India, the Russian Far East, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Japan.

The major issues of the SLUAS project included sustainability, urbanization, rural development, land-related problems such as food problems, and land-related disasters. It was, therefore, natural for the project to incorporate the Great East Japan Disaster which was triggered by the M9.0 earthquake of 11 March 2011. SLUAS carried out a number of field surveys in East Japan, observing the extremely uneasy situation of the tsunami-stricken areas and the hopelessly battered land and people’s lives in the areas contaminated by the radioactive substances emitted from the Tokyo Electric Company Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

Future Earth, which is intended to restructure the framework of global change research internationally, has been another great concern of SLUAS, and the project has been deeply involved in the process of framing Future Earth in Asia. This book reflects these concerns and activities.

Land use change is an essential driving force of environmental change, a result of socioeconomic and environmental changes, and is a major environmental change itself. Because of this complex and multifaceted nature and the difficulties in obtaining relevant data with historical depth, this phenomenon has not been studied

fully in the context of global change or sustainability. It is hoped that this book is of use to those who are concerned about the present and future land use in the world as well as in their locality.

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