

Training Female Disaster Prevention Leaders

Hiratsuka City



Background and Purpose of Project

It is impossible to predict when a disaster will occur. During the daytime, most of those affected in the community will be women, small children and elderly people.

In the wake of the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995, the city of Hiratsuka launched a practical programme to help women well-versed in local affairs and situations learn about disasters and obtain skills to deal with them so they can make appropriate initial responses, the most important action when a disaster happens.

Outline of Project

The training programme covered lectures (on earthquake disasters, water and wind disasters, disaster relief activities, measures for those who need support, and prevention of furniture overturning), video viewing, visits to storage facilities for emergency food and goods, portable toilet assembly, ways to use materials and equipment, and putting out fires (use of fire extinguishers and methods for containing fires from deep fryers), as well as how to provide first aid, make emergency stretchers, carry disaster victims, and knot ropes. Participants were also asked to take classes about the emergency care that ordinary people can give to disaster victims (including a lesson on the automatic external defibrillator [AED]), visit Kanagawa Prefecture's disaster response centre, and join tabletop disaster response drills (playing a disaster imagination game, or DIG, a "Crossroad" disaster prevention game, and drawing disaster maps).

The lecturers were Hiratsuka officials for disaster crisis control, fire department officials and members of women's disaster prevention team, Hiratsuka Powers.

To complete the training, participants had to take a predetermined number of courses in a year. By fiscal 2014, a total of 338 people had completed the training programme, which ended with the 20th course that year.

In a related development, women's disaster prevention team Hiratsuka Powers was set up in 1996 by those who completed the training programme and wanted to learn more and teach a wide spectrum of citizens about the importance of disaster preparedness.

Initially, completion of the programme was required to join Hiratsuka Powers. But since 2008, the group has admitted anyone who is interested in disaster prevention and eager to take part in activities.

As of April 2015, Hiratsuka Powers had 41 members. The group divides the city into six areas and assigns members to promote awareness of disaster prevention in each area. Members also give lectures on disaster prevention in community study programmes.

In addition, the group continues to improve its members' knowledge and skills through area-by-area and group-wide workshops..

Features and Advanced Aspects

The training programme was launched in fiscal 1995 to turn women into disaster prevention leaders, and a total of 338 people had completed



Members of Hiratsuka Powers demonstrate how to make slings as part of their community-based activities.



Members of Hiratsuka Powers teach how to assemble cardboard toilets as part of their community-based activities.

it by fiscal 2014. As a result, Hiratsuka Powers, a unique group of women aiming to make communities better prepared for disasters, came into being in 1996.

Under the slogan “protecting beloved family members and communities independently”, members of the women’s group vigorously participate in various disaster prevention-related activities and play indispensable and leading roles on a daily basis.

In particular, they have offered novel ideas about how to overcome natural disaster-related difficulties by using items that can easily be found at home, such as making toilets from cardboard and turning plastic shopping bags into slings.

The Hiratsuka municipal government, for its part, has helped Hiratsuka Powers to improve disaster

prevention knowledge and response skills by regularly holding joint workshops on disasters.

Effects of Project

By fiscal 2014, a total of 338 people had completed the programme. One consequence was the birth in 1996 of Hiratsuka Powers, a unique group of women aiming to make communities better prepared for disasters. The group is expanding its activities in and outside the city.

In fiscal 2014, Hiratsuka Powers held 64 events in Hiratsuka and five outside the city, mainly to teach how to prepare emergency meals using plastic bags, assemble cardboard toilets, make head-protection hoods, and use familiar everyday items to provide first aid. It also touted the importance of preparing for disasters through picture-story shows.

Hiratsuka Powers won:

- The outstanding performance award in the 15th women's national fire extinguisher operation contest in fiscal 2002
- The disaster minister award for contributors to disaster prevention in fiscal 2008
- The 23rd Kanagawa social project award from the Kanagawa Shimbun Newspaper and the Kanagawa Shimbun Welfare Organisation in fiscal 2010
- The 2nd regional revitalisation grand prix award for outstanding achievers in fiscal 2011
- The distinguished service award for residents in Kanagawa Prefecture in fiscal 2012
- The 11th award from the "Meikeikai" alumni association of the University of Tsukuba in fiscal 2012.

Problems and Responses

◆Before Project Implementation

The challenge was designing specific disaster prevention-related activities for those who completed the training programme. Thanks to the

creation of Hiratsuka Powers in 1996 and collaborative efforts by the group and the municipal government, however, such women are now playing active roles in disaster drills and other occasions.

Outlook

The municipal training programme came to an end in fiscal 2014. But the city continues to train female disaster prevention leaders by supporting Hiratsuka Powers' open seminars on disaster prevention for Hiratsuka citizens from fiscal 2015.

The municipal government plans to step up disaster preparedness in local communities by cooperating with Hiratsuka Powers while helping members of the group to deepen their knowledge and improve their disaster response skills.

Reference URL

<http://blogs.yahoo.co.jp/hiratsukapowers>

*Japanese

Contact

saigai@city.hiratsuka.kanagawa.jp

+81-3-463-21-9734

Disaster Response Division, Disaster Crisis Management Department, Hiratsuka City Office