

Recovery from Zero and Community Planning –Towards “Rikuzentakata: an Intentionally Inclusive Community” City of Rikuzentakata



Background

Rikuzentakata Mayor Futoshi Toba spent his early twenties in the United States. There he saw people in wheelchairs moving around the town comfortably and enjoying activities such as bowling without it being a challenge for them to do so. He was impressed with that environment, as people regarded as the minority were able to live similarly to able-bodied persons. He learned that according to some reports, the mortality rate of people with disabilities was about double that of the general population, and in Rikuzentakata as well, many victims of the tsunami were persons requiring assistance. Based on the mayor’s experiences in the United States, and the lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake, Rikuzentakata decided to set a vision for recovery and community planning: building communities where everyone, including the elderly, people with disabilities, expectant and nursing mothers, children, foreigners and people who are LGBT can live safely in peace and in one’s own way, in a society that embraces diversity.

Purpose of Project

Aims to create a society where people can live with a sense of security even if they have suffered a deterioration of their

physical or cognitive functions with age, or have a disability; where men and women can work together equally to conceive and raise children without anxiety; where it is the norm to help others in trouble, and there is no need to be conscious of the words “normalisation” or “barrier-free”.

Outline of Project

After developing the “Rikuzentakata: an Intentionally Inclusive Community’ Action Plan” in the following five areas, the citizens, communities, companies and administration of Rikuzentakata are closely collaborating to fulfill the plan.

- Disaster prevention, community, information sharing, PR
- Education, child rearing
- Health, medical care, welfare, nursing care
- Industry, employment, tourism
- Buildings, roads, parks, transportation

Progress and Achievements

The society to be realised through this project incorporates the concept of “social inclusion” that is recognised as an important theme internationally. For this reason, this project was introduced as a case study of new community planning that is not limited to recovery and restoration of

infrastructures during the “Symposium on the Elderly, Disabled, and Disaster Prevention” held in March, 2015 as a programme of “The 3rd United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR)”, and in the World Cities Summit held in Singapore in July 2016.



Packing boxes to present gifts to donors via the Tax-Deductible Donation System

Effects of Project

- 1) As a part of efforts to create job opportunities for a variety of people to exercise their abilities, the city entrusts box-packing jobs, which are necessary to present gifts in return to donors via the Tax-Deductible Donation System, to residents with mental and developmental disabilities. As the tax system becomes more popular, the people who are engaged in these jobs can earn a higher wage. One worker has even been hired as a regular employee by the General Incorporated Association Dream Project that is entrusted with operations of the tax system, and now makes a threefold wage. Such increase in wages can enhance the workers’ chance of attaining self-sufficiency.
- 2) For reconstructing the urban districts, the city developed a universal design checklist

as the guidelines for contractors to rebuild commercial facilities, with aims to “build communities and shops that are friendly to everyone”. For the creation of the checklist, the city regularly held study meetings with people with disabilities and external instructors. The shops that meet the checklist items are officially certified and their listings are posted on the city’s website.



Community planning while considering universal design through discussions with the parties involved

- 3) The General Incorporated Association Marugoto Rikuzentakata is working to expand the nonresident population in the city by providing opportunities to learn about earthquake disasters, take part in agriculture and fishing experiences, and experience home stays. In May of 2017, the association accepted a school trip of 12 students from a school for the deaf in Kanagawa Prefecture, and provided home stays for them, based on the motto, “Rikuzentakata: an Intentionally Inclusive Community.” Provision of private home lodging for students of a school for the deaf was a first for the city, and also became a rare leading-edge project in the prefecture. Furthermore, partnerships with private

companies are being formed: a company outside the city that approves of the aim of the city's efforts donated writing boards and headphones for those with impaired hearing.



Welcoming a school trip of students from a school for the deaf and provision of home stays

Problems and Responses

The future challenge is to promote “Rikuzentakata: an Intentionally Inclusive Community,” not by the administration alone but through collaboration with citizens, communities and companies. For this purpose, the city is undertaking actions to raise awareness of the motto in all communities, such as concluding a comprehensive partnership agreement with Mirairo Inc., whose philosophy is “Transform Barriers into Value,” holding study meetings and Universal Manners Tests for local officials, and hosting a “forum on ‘Rikuzentakata: an Intentionally Inclusive Community.’”

Outlook

So far, reconstruction work on the infrastructure side has moved forward, including Takata-Matsubara Tsunami Reconstruction Memorial Park, and

gymnasiums and athletic grounds. Recently, however, projects to advance “Rikuzentakata: an Intentionally Inclusive Community” on the cultural side have been gradually set in motion, such as the creation of job opportunities for people with disabilities and the elderly to utilise their abilities, and the hosting of a sports event. By enhancing these efforts across the city and disseminating information within and outside Japan, the city aims to deliver a message to people regarded as the minority that once-devastated communities can be restored this much. At the same time, the city intends to become a place where many people can feel invigorated and live as themselves.

Reference URL

- Action Plan for “Building Communities Where There is No Need for the Word Normalisation”
<http://www.city.rikuzentakata.iwate.jp/kategorie/fukkou/normalization/normalization-pdf/normalization.pdf>
- Partnership with Mirairo, Inc.
<http://www.mirairo.co.jp/archives/7639>

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