

Passing Kumamoto's treasures down through the generations - Establishment of a Restoration Support System for Disaster-stricken Cultural Properties (2016 Kumamoto Prefecture Earthquake Disaster

Kumamoto Prefecture



Recovery Project)

Background and Reason for the Project

- The Kumamoto Earthquake, which struck Kumamoto Prefecture in April 2016, was a rare large earthquake where two major earthquakes with magnitudes of over 7 occurred in a row within a very short period of time. It killed 270 people and damaged approximately 200 thousand houses.
- This large earthquake destroyed parts of Kumamoto Castle, the well-known symbol of Kumamoto Prefecture, its magnificent stone walls, and caused significant damage to the beautiful castle tower overlooking downtown Kumamoto. Also, many cultural properties including Aso Shrine and buildings and personal effects with historical value were devastated.
- Although designated cultural properties by the national or local governments were supposed to be entitled to receive public financial support to recover from the disaster, some required the owners to bear part of the financial burden. Also, many cultural properties were not entitled to receive public financial support at all because they were not designated by the Cultural Assets Preservation Act. This brought about concerns that a lot of historical heritage with cultural value could

be lost if the owners were unable to bear the financial burden and gave up on restoration.

Project Aims

This project aims to reduce the burden of private owners of disaster-affected cultural properties and promote their recovery.

Project Outline

Subsidy system by Kumamoto Earthquake Recovery Fund for Damaged Cultural Assets
The recovery fund-raising campaign for damaged cultural assets started by local business communities gathered momentum, and using the money donated, the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake Recovery Fund for Damaged Cultural Assets was founded in October 2016, as well as its subsidy system in February 2017. The outline is as follows.

- Subsidy system to reduce the burden on private owners
Reduce the burden of private owners by subsidising from one-half to up to two-thirds of their burden of payment.
- Subsidy for undesignated cultural assets
The subsidy shall also be granted to undesignated cultural assets not entitled to receive any public subsidy under the

Cultural Assets Preservation Act, including historical buildings such as town houses and personal effects such as folding screens and armour with historical value.

■ Financial aid for Kumamoto Castle reconstruction

A lot of donations are being made to restore Kumamoto Castle, the symbol of Kumamoto. They will be used for construction expenses related to the recovery.

Features and Innovations

The establishment of a subsidy system for undesignated cultural assets by the national and local governments is the first attempt of its kind in Japan.

Results of the Project

The burden of property owners was reduced and many cultural properties and buildings and personal effects with historical value were saved.

Issues, Problems and Responses

- This was a response to exceptional circumstances where many cultural assets

were in need of restoration at the same time due to the large earthquake disaster, and it is special measure by the Policy of Protection of Cultural Property that will not be a permanent response.

- The subsidy is funded by donations and its use is restricted by the will of contributors. Therefore, if a similar situation happens in the future, it needs to be dealt with individually depending on the situation.

Future Developments (expected effects and project vision and issues)

The prefecture promotes the passing of Kumamoto's treasures down through the generations by encouraging the registration and designation of restored undesignated cultural assets to access the legal system for cultural property protection.

Reference URL

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