

50) Restoring tourist facilities and functions [emergency response phase, and recovery phase]

[Issues] (1) How to proceed with the restoration of damaged tourist facilities and equipment
 (2) How tourism businesses in the affected areas realize business continuation.

[Situation and issues created by the Great East Japan Earthquake]

The Great East Japan Earthquake forced about a quarter of the 285 registered ryokan and hotel facilities in the six Tohoku prefectures to temporarily close down, and these included eight facilities that were severely damaged. Many other registered ryokans and hotels were forced to operate on a limited basis due to damage to their facilities.⁽¹⁾

In order to revive all industries in the affected areas, it was important to attract more people from outside the affected areas. A major challenge was to secure accommodations and quickly restore tourist facilities in order to create an environment that would enable large numbers of people to visit the affected areas.

[Initiatives in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake]

- Sand beach revitalization movement by local residents (Issue 1)

The Namiita Beach in Otsuchi Town, Iwate Prefecture, was known for its beautiful white sand and green pine trees, and its one-way waves, where waves come in but do not go out. The beach used to be bustling with surfers and bathers. Because the sand beach was swept away in the tsunami, in June 2012, local surf shops and surfers led the Namiita Coastal Beach Restoration Project to clean up the beach and dispose of debris so that they could open the beach as soon as possible. In December 2015, the Japan Amway Foundation built the Remember HOPE Namiita Beach Village, which houses a surf shop and cafe, and serves as a center for personal exchanges between people from the community and elsewhere. Taking these actions into consideration, Iwate Prefecture began holding the Nebama Coast Reconstruction and Beach Care Technology Review Committee and other meetings in 2019 to investigate whether restoration of the beach would be technically feasible, and is working on beach restoration construction.^{(2) (3)}

- Reopening facilities quickly by networking with industry peers (Issues 1, 2)

Aquamarine Fukushima (Fukushima Marine Science Museum), an aquarium in Iwaki City, Fukushima Prefecture, suffered no human casualties from the earthquake disaster, but the tsunami isolated the facility, and many fish were killed due to damage to buildings, tanks, and electrical equipment. After evacuating the surviving captive fish and other animals through a network of neighboring aquariums, the facility was restored and reopened in July 2012.

At the 10th World Aquarium Congress held in Onahama in 2018, Aquamarine Fukushima presented its activities to the world. Although the number of visitors has remained sluggish since the

earthquake, the aquarium has friendly relations with 13 facilities in Japan and abroad, especially with five facilities in China, South Korea, and Hong Kong, with whom it will cooperate not only on staff and technical exchange but also in attracting visitors (Case study 50-1).

- Hotels continuing their business and serving as hubs of information on reconstruction (Issue 2)

The Minamisanriku Hotel Kanyo in Minamisanriku Town, Miyagi Prefecture, became an evacuation shelter for 350 hotel guests and 600 local residents since the building was left undamaged although the tsunami had reached up to its second floor. A month after the earthquake, the hotel decided to reopen its restaurant given that general recovery was long delayed. Four months after that, it began operating a storytelling bus service to keep memories alive with hotel employees acting as storytellers to let the many town visitors learn about the realities of the disaster. The hotel also created a Minamisanriku Ten-Ten Map that showed stores that were open in town, and extended hotel guests' check-out times, contributing to the revitalization of local commerce. Hotels are where visitors stay when they visit the town, and the role that they play as hubs of information on the region's reconstruction contributes to reconstruction.⁽⁴⁾

- Hotels continuing their business and serving as hubs of exchange with other regions (Issue 2)

The ryokan "Hamabe no Ryoriyado Horaiken" in the Unosumai district of Kamaishi City, Iwate Prefecture, was hit by a tsunami that swept into the second floor of this four-story building, and most of the sand beach on the Nebama coast which could be seen from the ryokan was lost due to land subsidence. Horaikan reopened for business in January 2012, and the proprietress of the ryokan herself worked to disseminate information about the region such as by telling stories about her own personal experiences from the disaster. In 2016, she also established Nebama MIND, a general incorporated association engaged in disaster prevention and mitigation activities, developing local specialty products, and taking in volunteers and sightseeing tours from within and outside the prefecture. Furthermore, the association is actively engaged in exchange activities to attract people from other regions to Kamaishi, which is not a tourist city, including its work in bringing a 2019 Rugby World Cup game to the city. In addition, Iwate Prefecture has been conducting the Nebama Coast Sand Beach Reclamation Project since 2019. The project was partially completed in 2020, and the beach was opened to the public for the first time in nine years.⁽⁵⁾

- Recovery of railroads as a tourism resource (Issue 2)

Sanriku Railway Co., Ltd. (headquartered in Miyako City, Iwate Prefecture), which has a total line length of approximately 100 km along the Sanriku coastline in Iwate Prefecture, suffered extensive damage from the tsunami, including the loss, damage, or destruction of bridges, rails, and station buildings. The company was forced to suspend operations on all lines. As part of its efforts to encourage disaster victims, the company decided to reopen operations on partial segments 10 days after the disaster, and then two months later launched a disaster area front-line training tour, with crew members acting as guides explaining the disaster situation. Subsequently, the national government and Iwate Prefecture established a new restoration support program for third-sector

companies, and in April 2012, a portion of the North Rias Line reopened for operation. This was followed by the resumption of full operation in April 2014, encouraging residents to return and live along the line which had become a symbol of reconstruction for the Sanriku region. The company developed businesses that made use of its railroad resources, including the sale of damaged rails as Great East Japan Earthquake Reconstruction Prayer Rails. ⁽⁶⁾ In FY2013, the Sanriku Railway Rias Line attracted significant attention as a location for the NHK morning TV series "Amachan," which contributed to the growth in the number of people engaging in personal exchanges, and attracting tourists.⁽⁷⁾

→ *Related Item: 35) Recovery and reconstruction of railroads, ports, and airports*

[Lessons learned and know-how gained]

(1) Achieve early restoration of facilities based on networks and cooperative relationships that were already formed in normal times.

- Utilize networks with industry peers to promote the early resumption of business.
- Utilize overseas networks to promote exchange of staff and technology, and increase the number of visitors.

(2) Businesses attract visitors by disseminating information on their own experience of reconstruction.

- Store owners and innkeepers themselves disseminate information about their reconstruction and have exchanges with people from other regions.
- People who sympathize with a community's revitalization efforts promote exchanges with other communities.
- Promote the attractiveness of local railroads, etc., as regional tourism resources to increase the number of people engaging in personal exchanges and tourists.

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