For public housing for disaster survivors, a total of 9,812 units were completed by the end of fiscal 2017. In Miyagi’s 210 districts in 21 municipalities, the prefectural government provided financial aid to local municipalities in reviewing support structures for public housing residents in order to ensure that they could live a stable life under permanent housing conditions after moving from temporary housing. We also assisted municipalities with conducting community monitoring activities. To step up efforts to facilitate the return of evacuees from outside of Miyagi, the prefectural government assigned personnel to its representative offices outside of the prefecture to provide consultation services to such evacuees and perform surveys to confirm their willingness to return. To redevelop local communities in affected areas, financial aid was offered for community rebuilding projects in individual districts, advisors dispatched to deal with specific local issues, and leadership seminars and networking sessions held involving representatives of community associations.

In the environmental field, while continuing to encourage use of renewable energy and introduction of energy-saving facilities as part of community development projects in affected areas, the government focused on hydrogen energy utilization projects, aiming to become a leader in the Tohoku region in the field of promoting a hydrogen energy-driven society. Concerning environmental conservation, academic research was conducted to designate areas for green conservation zones, and municipal landfill areas were carried out to safeguard rare species of wildlife in three locations near the coast hit by the disaster. The huge amount of waste generated by the disaster was completely disposed of by the end of fiscal 2017.
Economy, commerce, tourism, employment

Supporting affected smaller businesses, creating local industries, and rebuilding tourism

The prefectural government worked with individual municipalities to help affected businesses resume operations as early as possible. The SME group established business centers to restore sales networks while improving systems to provide consumer services to address management issues. We also enhanced financial support measures, mainly by launching programs for rebuilding affected businesses.

To alleviate the burden of the costs of restoring factories and facilities, the government formed group subsidy schemes for disaster-affected small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), granting 4.3 billion yen to 74 companies and 0.5 billion yen to 142 companies in fiscal 2014 and 2015, respectively.

To reduce unemployment of disaster-affected people and ensure their stable livelihoods, the government implemented various initiatives of measures, such as increasing consultation desks for displaced workers, launching low-interest livelihood support loan programs for disaster survivors, and creating employment opportunities through cooperation with emergency job creation projects. We also worked to invite businesses to set up offices and factories in industrial areas, utilizing various preferential treatment systems. To revitalize the commercial sector in coastal areas, we provided support for the relocation of shopping street operations from temporary to permanent sites. Arashima Nigai Kari, Shopping Street (Watari Town) and Segap-Per Onagawa (Omaezaki Town) opened in permanent facilities in fiscal 2014 and 2015, respectively.

In the tourism sector, as a result of a range of promotion campaigns, the number of visitors to the prefecture increased to nearly recover to the pre-disaster level in fiscal 2015. A number of new initiatives were launched to offer new aid programs for new establishment of tourist attractions and facilities in coastal areas, attract education tourists from Taiwan, and develop sightseeing routes that involve the entire Tohoku region.

Agriculture, forestry, fishery

Encouraging collaboration between agriculture/forestry/fishing sectors and commerce/industry sectors, and improving reputation of prefectoral products

In agriculture, various support programs were provided to achieve early recovery of production foundations and early resumption of affected farmland. A range of projects were planned to help rebuild farmland and improve production foundations and functions, with a particular focus on allowing large field cultivation and installing systems for agricultural water usage remote-monitoring and centralized control operation. Recipients of agricultural subsidies for multifunctional community-use facilities increased to 936 organizations managing farmland with a total of 72.096 ha, which helped rebuild an attractive agricultural business and community.

In forestry, government support was provided for restoration of affected forests and factories. To increase the supply capacity of the Miyagi brand quality wood, support was provided for development of appropriate facilities mainly for wood processing and drying. Other initiatives were under way to encourage broader use of wood biomass in an effort to mitigate global warming, and to advance the plan to restore coastal disaster prevention forests in Sendai.

In fishery, the government promoted plans to restore affected fishing ports, and partially bore the costs of collecting and disposing of debris deposited in the fishing grounds. Other activities were carried out to consider management models for each fishing type, and introduce the technology required. As part of efforts to help rebuilding agricultural business and marketing network expansion. In an effort to attract businesses from outside the prefecture, we launched incentive measures for new establishment and expansion of factories and other facilities in the prefecture, which effectively drew businesses set up by manufacturers mainly in the automobile, high-tech electronics and machinery, and food processing industries. In the area of employment, prefectoral measures centered on government-funded emergency job creation projects in addition to measures promoted for stable creation of employment opportunities as part of industrial policies. As a result, the jobs-to-applicants ratio increased to largely exceed 1.0.

Rebuilding attractive agriculture, forestry and fishery, and promoting strong food production industry

In agriculture, as progress was made to restore production foundations and resume operations, out of a total of 13,000 ha of farmland subject to restoration work was 13,249 ha and 30 ha was restored. And, 99% of the damaged horticulture business in the affected region was partially restored. In addition, 120 projects were under way chiefly to restore and improve common-use facilities and introduce the farming machines and tools necessary for resuming operations. Recipients of agricultural subsidies for multifunctional community-use facilities increased to 952 organizations managing farmland with a total of 73,240 ha, helping rebuild agricultural business and community.

In forestry, government support was provided to expand wood supply capacity and develop the industry, rebuild damaged homes and expand usage of wood biomass. To rebuild coastal disaster prevention forests, foundation development work was started for a total of 105 ha of land and planting was completed for 228 ha.

In fishery, support was provided to help early reumption of operations, achieving a restoration rate of 98% for fishing boats, 100% for marine culture facilities and 94% for fish processors. Three distribution hub markets for locally landed fish in Sendai, Kesennuma fish market, were opened to take fish from local to wholesale. Tokyo, Chiba and Minamisanriku. Recovery work was commenced for all of the 140 fishing ports located in the prefecture.

To help food manufacturers resume full-scale operations, continuous support was provided through matchmaking opportunities involving the agriculture, forestry and fishery sectors and facilitating efforts to develop new products. To improve the brand value of Miyagi’s products and expand sales networks, business support was encouraged to participate in trade fairs and business meetings.
One key road construction project planned for fiscal 2014 and 2015 was related to the improvement of the Shizen Expressway, a project funded by the national reconstruction budget, as part of high-grade expressway development at locations most at risk from disaster prevention road networks. Also, the prefectural government promoted plans to consign the operations of Sendai Airport to the private sector, seeking to enhance its functions and revitalize the surrounding areas. As measures against tsunamis and tidal waves, coastal protection projects were continuously promoted, focusing on enlarging and newly constructing coastal levees. In addition, river channel and dam improvement projects were launched as flood control measures.

To prevent container cargo, vehicles and other objects from being carried away from port areas and scattered around by tsunami waves, we promoted projects for constructing appropriate structures.

Improvement work for public utilities, such as water and sewerage, was implemented, primarily for repair, revamp and renewal of damaged water and sewerage systems, with a view to extending the service life. In preparation for possible future disasters, projects were launched to perform foundation ground surveys for high-risk spots and designate caution zones.

Reconstruction Stage
(FY2014-2015)

FY2016

Improving public infrastructures to build disaster-resistant community

Extending the Sanriku Expressway, and promoting private consignment for Sendai Airport

Improving public infrastructures to build disaster-resistant community

Sanriku Expressway’s road extension work progressed to open three sections between Tonominekai IC and Mikatoki IC on April 16, 2016, Mikatoki IC and Shizugawa IC on March 30, 2016, and Shizugawa IC and Minamisoma-ku IC on March 20, 2017. As a result, coastal areas in the northern part of the prefecture and Sendai’s urban areas have been connected by expressway networks. Following this, on March 30, 2017, road widening work was completed to allow four lanes to run for the section between Ishinomakirima-IC and Monosoizato IC. At Sendai Airport, private operations commenced in July 2016. Airport services activities were promoted vigorously (220 proposals in fiscal 2016), resulting in an increased number of flights from Tokyo and Seoul.

The coastal protection project was advanced to start construction work in a total of 59 locations as of the end of fiscal 2016, achieving a construction start rate of 96.7%. The river improvement project was also moved forward, having started work in all the planned locations and completed one. The project for designating caution zones for landslides disasters progressed steadily as scheduled.

To upgrade port functions, projects were organized to expand Takeaoguchi Container Terminal facilities and build Takeaoguchi No. 2 Quay. Improvement projects for water and sewerage and other utilities were underway with a focus on seismic retrofit and increased backup capabilities.

The community relocation plan for disaster prevention progressed to have completed residential land development for 98% of the entire planned area. Also, the project for developing regional centers in tsunami-hit areas was moved forward with development work started in all the planned districts, out of which 92% were completed and started sale of residential land lots.

Supporting studies, providing mental health care, and promoting disaster prevention education

In order to address an increasing number of school children suffering from mental health problems in the wake of the disaster, prefectural, national and prefectural mental health professionals were assigned to schools in the prefectural to provide a better learning environment and mental health care for students in need of help. Also, school expense subsidies were offered to children with financial difficulties to help them attend school regularly and study with a sense of security.

School safety education was promoted based on the Miyagi Safety School Basic Policy and in consideration of local characteristics and children’s development stages. A new initiative got under way to appoint a disaster prevention manager to every school, and a lead teacher in charge of disaster prevention at designated schools. To improve the school disaster prevention education system, a disaster prevention education book was created to be used at schools in the prefecture, and regional capabilities for cooperation with relevant communities were enhanced. As part of this effort, a database created to maintain memories of the disaster and serve education for disaster prevention and disaster risk reduction was made available to the public from October 2016. Aiming to deeply foster children’s social awareness, a parent-friendly community, and inspiring social awareness among the students, the prefecture launched a number of initiatives for disaster prevention education. The disaster science department opened in Tagajo High School in April 2016, representing the second senior high school in Japan to establish such a department. Among continued initiatives were those for appointing a disaster prevention manager for every public school and a lead teacher in charge of disaster prevention for designated key regional elementary and junior high schools.

In order to build human capabilities within the community to support parents of young children, the prefectural government held seminars for local parent support volunteers and leaders of volunteer support activities. At the same time, guidance and training sessions were organized for parents.

School safety plans were improved for every public school in the prefecture by incorporating regional capabilities for cooperation with local communities.

Out of a total of 91 preuckleure-run schools that were affected by the disaster, 88 schools, or 96.7% of the total, completed restoration work as of the end of fiscal 2017. To Miyagi Prefecture’s Kyo High School and Kesennuma Koyo High School, which were severely damaged, new school buildings or facility equipment and supplies were provided to be used in the restored facilities.

As a measure to address the mental health issues of children, in addition to psychological counselors, mental health care support was assigned to 32 senior high schools to increase opportunities to provide consultation and guidance to students with problems at each school. Looking at the gradually increasing number of students receiving counseling at school and sessions per person, the government provided adequate assistance on an ongoing basis. Continued support was provided to 13 municipalities with operations. To Miyagi Prefecture’s Takogai High School, Care House, out-of-school service to help local bullied or troubled children.

In order to enhance disaster prevention education, the disaster science department opened in Tagajo High School in April 2016, representing the second senior high school in Japan to establish such a department. Among continued initiatives were those for appointing a disaster prevention manager for every public school and a lead teacher in charge of disaster prevention for designated key regional elementary and junior high schools. In order to build human capabilities within the community to support parents of young children, the prefectural government held seminars for local parent support volunteers and leaders of volunteer support activities. At the same time, guidance and training sessions were organized for parents.

School safety plans were improved for every public school in the prefecture by incorporating regional capabilities for cooperation with local communities.

Ensuring that children can study with a sense of security, dealing with mental health problems, and inspiring social awareness

Out of a total of 91 preuckleure-run schools that were affected by the disaster, 50 facilities, or 93% of the total, completed restoration work as of the end of fiscal 2017. To Miyagi Prefecture’s Kyo High School and Kesennuma Koyo High School, which were severely damaged, new school buildings or facility equipment and supplies were provided to be used in the restored facilities.

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School safety plans were improved for every public school in the prefecture by incorporating regional capabilities for cooperation with local communities.

The Kokoroza project was promoted with a focus on activities aimed at setting a future vision and aspiration, holding the 2017 Kokoroza Education Forum and publishing the second selection of stories of great figures from Miyagi Prefecture such as Akatsuka (Bridge to the future), to be delivered to elementary and junior high school students in the prefecture.

In order to build community capabilities to support parents of young children, seminars for local parent support volunteers were held in addition to programs organized for parents of young children.
The prefectoral government supported disaster-afflicted municipalities to restore their government functions, including fire-fighting and disaster prevention services, as early as possible. To rebuild local disaster prevention functions, we provided basic knowledge on disaster hazard maps for each municipality.

To build appropriate nuclear disaster prevention systems, the prefectoral government conducted a nuclear disaster drill including evacuation exercises for local residents, a first for Miyagi, in fiscal 2014. In fiscal 2015, prior to distributing iodine tablets for thyroid protection, local briefing sessions were held in Onagawa Town.

To prepare for large-scale natural disasters, training programs were held to develop volunteer leaders of neighborhood disaster prevention forces. We also supported each municipality to increasing capabilities to perform structural risk assessment independently for key functions such as evacuation centers immediately after the occurrence of a disaster, as well as for affected housing and other structures subsequently. To raise public awareness of disaster preparedness, responsible persons were sent to give lectures to local residents.

Programs were launched to strengthen local security capabilities for new communities formed by residents of public housing for disaster survivors and community members relocated from high-risk areas. To raise public awareness of the importance of crime prevention efforts, government personnel gave lectures to the locals and public-private joint campaigns were held. To increase organized community security functions, government support was provided for forming neighborhood watch groups to play a key role in volunteer security activities.

The Ishinomaki KIZUNA Project took over the project of publishing and distributing a free newspaper for residents of temporary housing in Ishinomaki City, which had been hosted by the Peace Boat Disaster Relief Volunteer Center from October 2011 to March 2016, and has relaunched the project as the Ishinomaki KIZUNA Newspaper (monthly circulation of 6,000). The project aims to serve the following four objectives: (1) provide information to help temporary housing residents live a self-reliant life; (2) visit residents to deliver the newspaper, and take that opportunity to communicate with them and monitor their conditions, looking to reduce their mental stress and build a relationship of trust; (3) develop local volunteers to create systems of mutual help, looking to provide a sense of fulfillment to participants; and (4) welcome volunteers from outside of the prefecture, aiming to maintain memories of the disaster.

Ishinomaki KIZUNA Newspaper Project

Reinforcing community through local news publication

Matsushima Ryutoe Uminobon Executive Committee

Community activities

Praying for the repose of souls, essential purpose of observing o-bon

Matsushima Ryutoe Uminobon was launched by people feeling strongly attached to Matsushima as their hometown to commemorate victims of the 2011 disaster. We are striving to create a festival featuring the two major aspects of Matsushima—sacred spot and famous tourist destination—and looking at development into the future. Every summer, the festival takes place at the Matsushima Beach Central Plaza, as the main venue, attracting many people to enjoy various traditional events, including bon dance, food stalls, fireworks and lantern floating, a highlight of the event, illuminated by numerous lanterns floating on the water, an essential o-bon ritual to pray for the repose of souls. Matsushima Bay is enveloped in a fantastical atmosphere.

Special Report

Café Chiikyumura

Creating the café as a community center

Café Chiikyumura is a part of Kobo Chiikyumura (studio global village), a welfare facility established by Yamamoto Town Social Welfare Association to provide employment opportunities to those with difficulty finding regular employment due to disabilities and illnesses. Café Chiikyumura was opened in a house trailer purchased using donations related to the disaster to employ users of the facility who had lost jobs after the disaster.

To prepare the project, facility users and staff worked together to plan the menu of the day and the uniform to wear. The café has grown to attract customers not only from nearby areas but also from a distance even outside of the prefecture. Going forward, the café is planning to add a function as a casual community interaction center.