

[Column 1] Children and Young People who Work for the Reconstruction and Recovery of the Affected Areas

Reconstruction and recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake is a large issue Japan is addressing and those who will play a major role in the future are young people, who will lead the next generation. Here, we introduce the activities of children and young people who are working hard for the reconstruction and recovery of the affected areas.

1. Efforts to Create a “New Tohoku” – Reconstruction Agency –

In the Tohoku area, the issues now being faced by local areas such as the decrease in and aging of the population and the hollowing out of local industries had been prominent even before the earthquake. Therefore, efforts are being made to create a “New Tohoku” that will become a model for Japan and the world, not by simply restoring what was, but by solving these issues, taking advantage of the reconstruction from the disaster. Specifically, the “New Tohoku” leading model project, which is intended to accelerate the pioneering efforts of various leading organizations (companies, universities, NPOs, etc.), has been implemented.

The FY 2013 New Tohoku leading model project supports efforts to reconstruct the region by establishing a framework to foster local young people within the area, such as by providing hands-on social experiences and opportunities to foster their human abilities for local children and young people.

For example, in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture, local high school students are making efforts aimed at building a system to foster high school students within the area, in which they investigate and find organizations that provide workplace experience or internships, while envisioning their own futures.



In Aizuwakamatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture, efforts are being made to establish a “local cyclical education model,” in which human resources connected with Aizu develop future human resources for Aizu, centering on entrepreneurial ventures specializing in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) that formed in Aizu, and by involving the University of Aizu, established as Japan’s first university specializing in computer science, and the local government.



2. Young People Implement their Ideas for the Reconstruction and Recovery of Fukushima – Fukushima Prefecture –

In Fukushima Prefecture, young people and juveniles are proactively and positively involving themselves in the reconstruction and recovery of the affected areas and taking actions to enhance the independence of young people and their awareness about social participation.

“Young people plan and implement local reconstruction measures by themselves”

In the “Youth Hometown Recovery Support Project,” which Fukushima Prefecture started in 2013, high school students and young adults in the affected areas put their heads together in workshops for reconstruction under the theme “The things we want to do for ourselves, our families and our communities.”

In the first year, 2013, with the cooperation of professors and students from nearby Fukushima University, Iwaki Meisei University and Sakura no Seibo Junior College, workshops were held in three locations in the Hamadori area of Fukushima Prefecture; and a group from Odaka Commercial High School and Odaka Technical High School (Haramachi High School also participated in the event) in Minamisoma City, a group from Futaba High School, Tomioka High School and Futaba Shoyo High School in Futaba-gun, and a group of young adults from business offices and organizations connected to Kawauchi-mura, Futaba-gun participated.

A group of high school students in Minamisoma City proposed an idea to wrap the Super Hitachi trains that have remained parked at the JR Haranomachi Station since the nuclear power plant accident with pictures drawn by citizens and to then run the trains to increase the momentum towards reconstruction. Although this idea was not carried out on the Super Hitachi for safety reasons, a local train on the JR Joban Line was wrapped with pictures of flowers drawn by kindergarteners from the city and the train then ran. A departure ceremony, networking events in the commemorative train and events in the station square such as product and food fairs were held by high school students with the cooperation of JR East and the participating high school students felt there was a good response in favor of local solidarity for reconstruction.



A group of high school students in Futaba-gun made a plan to create a web-based map “Tourist/Reconstruction Map by High School Students in Futaba-gun” to share the current status of Fukushima with people in Japan and overseas and with young people of the same generation. In addition to tourist information intended to increase the number of tourists for the revitalization of Fukushima, the students also included information on the reopening of shops and restaurants from their hometown in the new location to which they had evacuated and their own mixed feelings, as high school students who grew up in the area where the nuclear power plants are located.¹



1 Tourist/Reconstruction Map by High School Students in Futaba-gun <http://www.furusato.fukushima.jp/futaba/>

