

Sustainable Destination Award Good Practice Story

Kamaishi: Memory keeper of the lessons learned from the Tsunami disaster for protecting future lives

Issues faced: On March 11, 2011, mega-tsunami hit the Northeastern coast of Japan and took over 1000 citizen's lives in Kamaishi and approximately 5000 houses were destroyed. Tourism was affected badly - many tourist facilities had to shut down, rich natural environment was destroyed including national park, in fact, tourism trade in Kamaishi became diminished. On the other hand, the number of tourists has been increasing significantly after Tsunami Memorial Hall was newly built. Majority of visitors come for learning about disaster prevention and are both domestic and international tourists. This visitor segment is new but is becoming important for Kamaishi city now. Our goal is to create and enroot a Culture of Disaster Awareness - become true disaster - resistant city where both citizens and visitors can feel safe at anytime. For example, the City recommends and supports public officers to become "qualified disaster prevention expert" because now we know that people's action, what we do first is the most thing to protect lives from natural disaster rather than worrying about buildings etc. We strongly felt importance and need of creating some kind of new system together with citizens, to actively pass on what we learned from it to the future and continuously share it with visitors to Kamaishi.

Methods / steps / tools used: Kamaishi City has established the "Kamaishi Citizens' Charter for Disaster Prevention" as an oath of citizens, to pass on what we learned from the disaster to future generations and to protect themselves from any natural disasters. In order to spread the philosophy of the "Kamaishi Citizens' Charter for Disaster Prevention" and to improve citizens' awareness of disaster prevention as well as raising awareness of passing on, we have created and established the "Memory keeper of the Great Earthquake Disaster" system. "Memory keeper of the Great Earthquake Disaster" is the person who will pass on the tragedy of the Great East Japan Earthquake and what learned from the disaster to the future. Their roles are to convey about the disaster accurately to the visitors to Kamaishi as a guide, and also as a disaster prevention leader of family or neighborhood, try to raise the awareness of disasters by conveying the stories in everyday life. We can also ensure the safety of tourists by increasing the number of memory keepers who can play their role effectively. Kamaishi City has recruited citizens who are willing to become "Memory keeper of the Great Earthquake Disaster" and provided skill-up training for them. This training is conducted in cooperation with disaster prevention experts at university institutions and will be held annually. The training program is also open to any visitors from outside the city. Specific/measurable results, benefits and recognitions (e.g. awards): After we started to recruit, a wide age range of people - from

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high school students to elderly people, applied for the training and 54 people successfully got certified as “Memory keeper of the Great Earthquake Disaster”.

During Rugby World Cup 2019, tragedy and cautionary tale were conveyed to many tourists by certified high school students to spread the message around the world. Lessons learned: To implement “Kamaishi Citizens’ Charter for Disaster Prevention” and “Memory keeper of the Great Earthquake Disaster”, it was important to keep exactly the same principle for entire process from creation to establishment. As we expected many people to be involved at each step of the process, we allocated experts and some people who actually experienced the disaster and are strongly willing the tragedy to never.

