

The Great East Japan Earthquake destroyed urban functions and made many evacuees in the inland areas where evaded tsunami disaster. I reported Higashi rokubancho area where citizens and staff of school worked together and took effective counter measures against the earthquake.

Small rice balls

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Akihiro MIOKA



Sendai higashi rokubancho elementary school stockpiled emergency provisions by 650 dishes of alpha rice by March 11, 2011. It was said that less than hundreds of citizens near the school would evacuate to the school in case of emergency.

Many people ran to evacuate to the school after the Great East Japan Earthquake. At last one hour later, 1800 evacuees stayed there. Not only citizens near the school but also tourists and commuters who usually moved by railroad .Railways in Tohoku area were damaged by the earthquake and went out of service.

Evacuees in the School felt miserable for aftershocks. They also felt cold by snow in spite of spring.

Principal WATANABE Tsutomu says, "There were many tourists. They could not go back home and meet their families. Their impressions of Sendai would go worse if we did nothing for them. I thought what I could do best for them to give good impressions on Sendai."

President of the union of neighborhood associations and teachers helped Watanabe's wish. They resolved to treat evacuees as kindly as possible.

The president made rooms for them at the gym and the first and second floor of the school building. Teachers made rice balls. They used 150 dishes of alpha rice in the school. The size of each rice ball was just like an orange. Teachers expected that many people could share rice. So, they made very small.

They distributed evacuees rice balls and said, "Please give rice balls preferably to infants, children, women and the elderly".

"Everyone must have been hungry. Evacuees couldn't eat after the earthquake", Principal Watanabe said sadly. But no one expressed complaints for their best kindnesses.



Principal Watanabe decided to accommodate evacuees with the gym. Later, he was called by men and women who sit on the curb in the school yard. "May we enter in the gym?" they told.

They said they lived in Higash rokubancho area where Sendai city government originally appointed the school as their shelter.

"Of course, please come in." he said. There were so many unexpected evacuees in the school that men and women who lived in the higashi rokubancho hesitated to go there.

The gym was like a crowded train, so evacuees could not sit down. The school opened the first of the school building, but things did not go better. The president of the union of neighborhood associations EBI Ichiro announced in the gym.

"We hope citizens in this area transfer the community center near here. Please follow me in." There was no permission to accommodate them in the community center, but he couldn't be indifferent to the situation. After all, 300 evacuees moved from the school to the community. The second floor of the school building was also open in the end. All evacuees could sit down and take rests.

Principal Watanabe tried to open the door of the school to the area. He wanted to work together with the school. Two men trusted each other.

At night, neighborhood associations carried a floodlight projector with an electric dynamo in the gym. It seemed a symbol of the relationship.



Watanabe told the staff of the school and others to make the school a self- efficient shelter. The staff tried for themselves.

The floodlight projector was effective, but fuel was not sufficient. If gasoline ran out before the sun rose, they had to light the candles.

Teachers tried to use gasoline in their cars, but failed. According to the note of Watanabe, a nozzle of a pump seemed to be short.

Teachers asked evacuees to select managers who help preparing food, delivering water, taking care of the sick and so on. They aimed that evacuees would change from those who are supported to those who support.

Managers selected one from each classroom and four in the gym. Managers were expected to help the member of the school and neighborhood associations. For their works, Watanabe grasped the number of evacuees on March 11, 2011.

Cold night was over. The floodlight projector shined all the night. Watanabe, who eventually stayed for 16 days, remembers the morning on March 12. "It was a beautiful, sunrise. It was very quiet and peaceful."



After 3 days from the earthquake, 30 boxes with natural water which scooped in Nishikawa town, Yamagata pref. delivered to the school.

"3 official servants came here and saw what was going on. They said 'we have water' ", Chairperson of the union of shopping street near the school SATO Hiroyuki said. He carried them to the school.

The union contacted Nishikawa town for 10 years since the union fall festival. They contracted a relationship agreement 5 years ago. After then, Nishikawa town delivered relief supplies, and the union carried to the shelter.

Sato says "Water supply was cut in Nishikawa town, however, it gave us. Nishikawa town was a real family for me. I appreciated its generosities". Mutual trust made effect in emergency.

It seems to me that it is remarkable in Higashi rokubancho area that local organizations and individuals cooperate reasonably and work together. The pivot is Sendai higashi rokubancho elementary school. Their powers would unite in the headquarters for the disaster which held in the school.



The number of evacuees reduced from 1800 to 130 on 4 days after the earthquake. Passing the worst, the school asked the union of neighborhood associations to manage the shelter mainly by local citizens.

The staff of the school was extremely exhausted, and moreover, should prepare syllabus planning. They had to explain when they can resume classes in all principals' conference in Sendai.

Watanabe met Ebi and other member of neighborhood associations. He told the 3 days activities, and asked cooperation. Ebi applied, "We will manage. You teachers need time to resume the school". They soon exchanged their views over the roles in the shelter.

The headquarters for the disaster located at the second floor in the school building. 400 local citizens worked in HQ .They were led by local community for 11 days.

度末の3月に計画を完 防災訓練も行われ、年 学校を舞台に区の総合 **正され、万一に備えた 火害対応計画策定モデ** 6 じゃないか」と言う。 で分かったことがあ 空論がかなりあったん きるものではなかっ 合町内会長は「机上の 高責任者の海老一朗連 ていても、緻密すぎで しもそうだった。こと 態にはとても対応 6月の防災訓練にし その見直しを9月から と分かったわけです。 ニュアルにしても真 ないと役に立たな 「これではだめ。 大事なのかもしれな を合わせること自体が こうして日ごろから顔 た計画そのものより やろうと思うんで

The union of neighborhood associations handled the earthquake rapidly. One reason is that it was appointed as a model area of the implementation plan for natural disasters in Aoba ward Sendai city last fiscal year. It often held meetings against disasters. It planned to have a drill in June in the school and make a complete plan in next March. It took many considerations over an earthquake.

The Great Earthquake left a lesson: Even though it made a complete plan, the plan would be too fabricated to useful. "The plan would be impractical", Ebi thinks.

Drill in June was also impractical. It made many rooms for human rights----fitting room, nursing room and etc. But it is not useful for the situation which 1800 evacuees go into the school.

"A plan against disaster must be plain. We learned it in the earthquake. We will revise planning in September", Ebi says. It might be more important to meet daily.



While the leadership of the union of neighborhood associations located in the headquarters, some of the local citizens supported the shelter through their personal relationships.

A homemaker in her fifties went to the school and asked what happened in the shelter after the earthquake.

"What can I do for evacuees? I do my best", she talked in teachers' office on March 15, some teachers applied her: We wish we supply propane gas to them, take medical examinations, and distribute hot meal.

She responded promptly. She could not get propane gas, but could find a hospital near the school which accepted examinations.

Her friend showed affirmative attitude to distribute food to the evacuees when she asked aid by sending mails.

She reported to the Leadership of the HQ and the school. Sendai municipal government suggested in view of sanitary. President of the PTA SUGENO Naoko talked her, "Let's do it together". They decided distributing afternoon on 17 March.



The servants of Sendai municipal government told her not to use meat and food which is hard to be hot. "We cannot get any meat easily. It is OK to cook hot vegetables dishes with soybean paste", the homemaker in her fifties and others felt at ease.

The day before the distributing, the homemaker and SUGENO mailed their friends what they should do. "No meat. Bring everything suited for hot soup. Just bringing cups is also welcome. Please go to the school and help us".

Many vegetables were carried and five pots of soybean paste soup with full of foods were made and distributed.

The homemaker said the she related with neighborhood citizens for 20 years through voluntary activities or mothers of friends of her children, who went to the school. "The relationship worked very well for this distributing".

Her individual network supplemented with official local organizations.



"Please confirm how evacuees live in shelters as specifically as possible". Sendai city government asked the school while the number of evacuees descended. Schools in Sendai had to decide when they would close shelters and resume syllabus planning at that time. The leadership of the school started to investigate how it could work together with the HQ.

The leadership of the school set four options: 1)you can go home today or tomorrow 2) you can go home if you put home in order 3)you need official supports because of getting ill or having financially difficulties 4)you cannot go home.

The member of 45 in the shelter replied as follows; 1) 28 persons 2) 6 persons 3) 6 persons 4) 4persons unknown 1 person. The leadership arranged evacuees who could not go home to move drawing room and cook for themselves

.Thus, the students could play in the gym again. Last 4 evacuees moved to another civic office on April 1. The shelter in the elementary school was closed on the same day.

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難者の登録は必要で

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渡部力校長



が担当しました

(この連載は三岡昭

実証したように思え 行う仕組みを取り入れ 地域の人たちと一緒に ている。数々のドラマ 標設定から評価までを を生んだ同小の避難所 東六小は、学校の目 その有効性も

の男性もいた。

行方不明になった年配 てくる」と言ったまま

"Thank you for your support and encouragement in last March. At that time I visited in Sendai for business. In spite of your trouble, you teachers, citizens and Sendai city government helped me to go back home."

長の海老一朗さんはカ

"We went to Sendai by 9 members. All of us suffered, but thanks for you, we could arrive in Tokyo. Thank you very much. '

Those who evacuated in the school send e-mails endlessly. The school was written well on the Net, OSADA Toru, the official servant of the ministry of education, culture, sport and technology visited in the school with researchers.

"the reputation was true. There was no confusion while the school has little foods. I think Osada said management of principal and the tie between community and school are important. It is a very nice attitude that they treated evacuees kindly". Osada wants to exploit their activities.

.On the other hand, the school and the community learned lessons. They could not grasp where evacuees were intimately. An old man disappeared after he said" I come back soon." They could not find him and reported to police. Finally, they were told he had come home. Ebi emphasized that the names of evacuees should be registered in official authorities.

The school introduced the methods that it cooperate with community to make the aims and evaluate the activities in the school. Managing the shelter made full of drama and proved its effectiveness.



Small rice balls at Higashi rokubancho area in Sendai city

Akihiro MIOKA

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I was very surprised when I attended at a lecture by a NPO manager. The speaker told us an accident. When the Great Hanshin Earthquake happened in 1995, a shelter threw away stockpiled emergency provisions by 1500 dishes .Because it was supposed that 2000 evacuees stayed there could not find ways to of sharing dishes.

Distribution of stockpiled emergency provisions was also a big problem in the Great East Japan Earthquake. In case of shortage of emergency provisions, there are three decisions in general. (1) Giving a dish to one person. Someone would not receive dishes (2)Never giving dishes until everyone would receive each dish (3) giving dishes by reducing quantity.

Probably, many people choose (3). But I guess you need creativity and leadership if you choose this option. In our society, we usually enjoy sufficiency .We do not used to share daily necessities.

On the other hand, Sendai higashi rokubancho elementary school, one of the shelters in Sendai city, gave dishes by reducing quantity to all evacuees without hesitation after the earthquake. I reported it in the Mainichi News Papers for ten times.

Higash rokubancho area where citizens and staff of school worked together and took effective counter measures against the earthquake. Principal WATANABE Tsutomu led all members with good humor. Ebi Ichiro, president of the union of neighborhood associations, supported with decision. I recognized it was also important to keep the community network well.

Many infrastructures were destroyed by the earthquake. In some areas, gas supply service stopped for one month. It was inconvenient not to use services we enjoyed, but I think many people felt a kind of happiness so to say 'euphoria by losing'.

I boiled water by an electric kettle, and mixed hot water and cold one for washing my head and body until gas supply service resumed again in my room. I tried to use hot water as effectively as possible, and felt happy when I did it very well. We talked neighborhood we have not talked previously and exchanged information for about one month after the earthquake.

There is one hypothesis. Quantity and extent of a sense of happiness may reduce according to how we are sufficient.

This idea would be true in Japan. I think Japan seems to be almost at the limit of increasing sufficiency and growing economy. Japan faces big deficit financing and long –term deflation.

The earthquake, which sacrificed many lives, told us there was a sense of value which was far from pursuing sufficiency. I believe we Japanese should recognize the value of our neighborhood and community.