

CASE STUDY

# Using a Community-Driven Model to Build Back Better



The community can play a key role in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. Photo credit: Higashi Matsushima City. *After a devastating earthquake and tsunami struck Japan in 2011, communities in Higashi Matsushima City led recovery efforts and built a smart city.*

## Overview

The Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 devastated the city of Higashi Matsushima. This magnitude 9 quake did not only flatten homes and buildings, it also caused waves of tsunami that swept away what the quake failed to demolish.

This disaster however did not shake the city's spirit. Residents and communities immediately went back to ground zero to clear the rubble and begin the slow process of recovery and rebuilding. Backed by Japan's policies on disaster management and a collective vision to "Build Back Better," the city was able to revive key livelihoods and build new smart communities.

*This case study was adapted from a presentation made at the Asian Development Bank's Asia Leadership Program.*

## Project snapshot

<b>Dates</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>April 2011:</b> Start of project</li></ul>
<b>Institutions and Stakeholders</b>	<p><b>Financing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Government of Japan</li></ul> <p><b>Implementing agency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eight community centers (Akai, Miyato, Nobiru, Omagari, Ono, Oshio, Yamoto-Higashi, and Yamoto-Nishi)</li></ul> <p><b>Others</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Higashi Matsushima Organization for Progress and Economy, Education, Energy (HOPE)</li><li>• Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)</li></ul>

## Context

Japan is among the world's most quake-prone countries, as one in 10 earthquakes happen in and around it. However, the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 differs from the many earthquakes experienced by the country. This magnitude 9 tectonic earthquake brought unprecedented damage, particularly to Higashi Matsushima City. On March 11, 2011, it hurled waves of tsunami to the city, inundating about 65% of the land area.

## Challenges

The earthquake has left 1,109 people dead and 24 others missing. Nearly three in four housing units in the city were either destroyed or damaged. As a result, more than 15,000 people had to be evacuated to 106 shelters.

The damage caused by the earthquake and ensuing tsunami overwhelmed medical care and health services, cut power and water supply, and paralyzed transportation, communications and other logistical support for response.



The city of Higashi Matsushima before the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. Photo credit: Higashi Matsushima City.



Higashi Matsushima after the earthquake and tsunami struck Japan in March 2011. Photo credit: Geospatial Information Authority of Japan.



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## Community action

After the earthquake and the tsunami, people immediately came back to lead humanitarian, recovery, and rehabilitation efforts. Eight community centers immediately established 106 temporary shelters for residents whose houses were damaged. These centers also set up soup kitchens and developed a system for reporting missing persons and identifying recovered victims.

The eight community centers were Akai, Miyato, Nobiru, Omagari, Ono, Oshio, Yamoto-Higashi, and Yamoto-Nishi. They are self-governing bodies with civil powers that were highly maximized during the Great East Japan Earthquake and its aftermath. Each community center has a president, three vice-presidents, one accountant and 20 secretaries. Together they make up the executive committee that meets monthly to discuss community matters, such as the environment and general affairs.

## Guiding policies

These community centers implement measures before, during, and after a disaster in accordance with an agreement of cooperation they signed, together with the local construction association, in July 2005. This agreement was led by the city government in preparation for the 90% probability that a major earthquake would happen within 20 years on the shore of Miyagi Prefecture. They were also guided by the Recovery-Reconstruction Policy released by city hall a month after the earthquake. The policy detailed the measures the city and its residents need to do to rebuild Higashi Matsushima.

Financial support for the reconstruction was covered by the national government under the country's Disaster Response Basic Law. The national government also subsidizes the daily living expenses as well as the relocation of victims of major disasters.

## The reconstruction plan

### Higashi Matsushima Future City Model

