

# Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction

## 【Background】

The City of Sendai had undertaken initiatives for inclusive disaster risk reduction even before the city was struck by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Therefore, when the disaster occurred, in some cases, the City was able to provide effective support, such as safety confirmation and evacuation guidance for the elderly. On the other hand, there were cases where delays occurred in providing necessary assistance for the disabled and the elderly who did not use nursing care services. Also, female and foreign evacuees had difficulties while they were staying in evacuation centers.

## 【Response】

Employing the concepts of “self-help,” “mutual aid,” and “public assistance,” The City of Sendai established a system for supporting people requiring assistance during a disaster, as well as evacuation centers for persons with disabilities, and other systems to support the disabled and the elderly in the event of a disaster, and announced these systems to residents of the city. With regard to disaster risk reduction for women as well as foreign residents and visitors, we have promoted measures in collaboration with residents to raise disaster prevention awareness in normal circumstances, develop human resources, and hold workshops to enhance disaster preparedness.

### ① Support for people requiring assistance during a disaster

Definition of people requiring assistance during a disaster

The City of Sendai defines the elderly and the disabled (persons with physical, intellectual, mental or developmental disabilities) who need nursing care, behavioral assistance and other support in normal circumstances, as “people requiring assistance during a disaster.” In addition, pregnant women and nursing mothers, babies and infants, children, and foreign residents and visitors may be considered to be in need of specific care, and thus regarded as people requiring assistance during a disaster, depending upon the circumstances.

We have also incorporated the concepts of “self-help,” “mutual aid,” and “public assistance,” in providing support for people requiring assistance during a disaster. To ensure that these people with a higher level of priority for support can evacuate safely in the event of a disaster, the local community and welfare organizations have established a number of support systems, of which the City of Sendai has aided in the systems development.

Registration system for people requiring assistance during a disaster [Social Affairs Section, Public Health and Welfare Bureau]

Under this system, those who are in need of assistance from the local community such as requiring confirmation of their safety or evacuation assistance in the event of a disaster, are requested to register with the City of Sendai as “people requiring assistance during a disaster” in advance, and the registered data will be provided to the local community. As of March 2019, 13,021 people are registered with the system.

Those who are eligible to register are people living at home who correspond to any of the following, and also who wish to receive assistance from the local community because they cannot evacuate by themselves, because they cannot obtain disaster information due to visual or hearing impairments, or for other reasons. Registration applicants must agree to have their information provided to their local communities.

- (1) Persons who have a disability certificate issued by the local government
- (2) Persons who have been certified by the local government as being in need of nursing care and assistance
- (3) Persons who are sixty-five years of age or older and live alone, or live in a household consisting of only elderly persons
- (4) Persons similar to those set forth in any of the items (1), (2) or (3) above, or persons who need to receive assistance from the local community due to medical condition or other reasons at the time of a disaster.

Those who wish to register with the system should submit an application to the section in charge of the City of Sendai. The City will make a list of registrant information, which will be provided to the responsible person of the local community, social welfare commissioners,(\*1) and the social welfare council(\*2) or other similar organizations.

\*1 Social welfare commissioners: Persons who have a good understanding of the living conditions of local residents, and provide consultations and welfare-related information to those who need assistance due to advanced age, disabilities, etc. They are volunteers recommended by the local community and commissioned their duty by the Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare. Social welfare commissioners work in the respective areas to which they are assigned.

\*2 Social welfare council: A private organization that supports welfare activities in the local community, provides nursing care services, and acts as a bridge between welfare service providers, residents and the government. The list of registrants is given to the district social welfare council comprising residents of the respective communities.

#### Information contained in the list

- Registrant's name
- Date of birth
- Postal address
- Telephone number
- Registration category (reason for registration), etc.

A local community that has received this list will make effective use of it by establishing a system that provides support from the community, through means such as visiting the applicable persons and building human relationships with them in their daily lives.

The City of Sendai warns each organization that the list of people requiring assistance that has been received from the city should be handled only by personnel engaged in providing assistance to them, and that the list should never be given to unrelated parties. In addition, we have published a manual that introduces key points on how to proceed with support for people requiring assistance, as part of its efforts to provide residents with relevant information.

### ② Help Card

The City distributes a “Help Card” to persons with disabilities. It is the size of a business card, and is easy to carry on a regular basis

#### Information contained on the Help Card (example)

- Name, address, emergency contact
- Date of birth
- Blood type
- Explanation of disability or disease
- Medical institution at which the card holder is registered
- What the card holder finds it difficult or impossible to do
- Required support

There are various types of disabilities, at times it can be difficult to know if a person has a disability at a glance. For this reason, if a person carries the Help Card, it will make it easier for them to ask for attention or help when a disaster or problem occurs or in an emergency. We distribute this card to people who wish to have it, free of charge. This card is available for those who do not have a disability certificate.

### ③ Help Mark

The City of Sendai distributes a “Help Mark” badge, which indicates that a person wearing the badge is in need of assistance from the people around them, even if their impairment is not visible. The “Help Mark” budge is handed out for free to people with prosthetic legs, artificial joints, internal ailments, intractable diseases, and mental, intellectual or developmental disabilities, as well as women in the early stage of pregnancy. This card is available for those who do not have a disability certificate.



### ④ Welfare evacuation centers (Budget: approx. 1 million yen/year)

At the time of a disaster, many affected persons evacuate to Sendai City-designated evacuation centers (elementary and junior high schools, etc.) in each local community. Among the evacuees are people requiring assistance. While they are living together with many people in an evacuation center, it is necessary to show them consideration in various ways. For example, persons with mobility difficulties should be assigned a place that is easily accessible to a restroom, and persons with impairments that make it difficult to be with a large group of people should be assigned to a separate room.

However, even if the above-mentioned consideration is shown, some elderly people and people with disabilities still experience difficulties staying in a designated evacuation center. The welfare evacuation center is a secondary evacuation center that accepts these people. The City of Sendai has concluded an agreement with a number of special nursing homes for the aged and other elderly facilities, as well as support centers for the disabled, to designate these facilities as “welfare evacuation centers.” Meanwhile, for families with expectant and nursing mothers and newborns, the City has made contracts with a total of six nursing schools and colleges, and these schools have been designated as “perinatal welfare evacuation centers.” There were 124 welfare evacuation centers in Sendai as of August 2019.



▲ Manual for residents regarding support for people requiring assistance during a disaster

▲ Help Card



⑤ Gender and disaster risk reduction (Budget: approx. 2.2 million yen/year)

When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, many disaster victims evacuated to the regional evacuation centers designated by the City of Sendai. A large number of residents had to stay in gymnasiums of elementary or junior high schools for a long period of time. This brought to light various problems in these evacuation centers, from the perspective of women.

Examples of these problems are: evacuees had virtually no privacy in the evacuation center, since few partitions were installed in the living space; there was no dedicated area for changing clothes or for breast-feeding; the evacuation center did not secure gender-segregated places for drying clothes and separate male & female temporary lavatories; and in many cases, leaders of evacuation centers were men, and thus it was difficult for female evacuees to request their male leaders to provide them with underwear or feminine hygiene products.

One of the causes of these problems was the fact that there were only a small number of women participating in the decision-making process with regard to the operation of evacuation centers. In Japan, in addition to the city officials as well as teachers and other staff of elementary and junior high schools that serve as designated evacuation centers, officers of the local community are involved in the operation of evacuation centers. These officials are men, in many cases. Even if female officials are engaged in the operation of a center, their roles are often supplementary. The City has therefore been taking the following measures since the Great East Japan Earthquake.

・ Reviewing and revising the Sendai City Regional DRR Plan

The City incorporated the perspectives of gender equality into the Sendai City Regional DRR Plan, formulated under the laws of Japan. Worthy of special note was that female perspectives have been reflected in the operation of evacuation centers.

・ Women Support Center

The City decided to set up the Women Support Center, which grasps the needs of affected women in the event of a disaster, and provides support for disaster recovery activities in cooperation with NPOs and the like.

・ Developing and organizing a workshop

The City developed a workshop to help find solutions that will allow people in different positions and with different ideas to get along with each other in evacuation centers, by reflecting women's perspectives, based on lessons learned from the Great East Japan Earthquake.

・ Implementing a human resource development program

The City holds a human resource development program for women entitled "Decision-making and Taking Action," with a duration of about half a year. This program aims to encourage women to proactively participate and display their leadership in the decision-making process regarding local disaster preparedness and other issues of the community. (A total of 88 women have taken part in the program as of 2019.)

・ Holding events themed on "women and disaster risk reduction"

At events and international conferences held in Sendai, the city has held sessions themed on "women and disaster risk reduction."

・ Accepting trainees from overseas

The City accepts trainees from overseas through JICA, and they are given lectures regarding activities to address the issues of gender and diversity in the field of disaster risk reduction.



⑥ Foreign nationals and disaster risk reduction (Budget: approx. 700 thousand yen/year)

As of May 1, 2019, 13,096 foreign nationals live in Sendai City, accounting for about 1.2% of the population registered in the Sendai City basic residents' register. The number of foreign residents has been on the rise. To enhance disaster preparedness among foreign nationals, the City of Sendai has implemented the following measures.

・ Setting up the Sendai City Disaster Multilingual Support Center

The Sendai City Regional DRR Plan stipulates that when a large-scale disaster occurs, the City will set up its Disaster Multilingual Support Center. Since most people in Japan speak Japanese, it is necessary to provide foreign residents and visitors who do not speak Japanese with disaster risk reduction-related information in multiple languages.

The Disaster Multilingual Support Center will translate the information obtained from the disaster response headquarters of the City of Sendai into multiple languages, and then disseminate the translated information to people from foreign countries through websites, radio and by other means.

In addition, city officials will make the rounds of the designated evacuation centers to offer consultation to foreign residents and visitors affected by the disaster.

・ Training foreign language volunteers for disaster response

The City trains foreign language volunteers who provide foreign language services in Sendai City Disaster Multilingual Support Center.

・ Disseminating information on disaster risk reduction in multiple languages to foreign residents

Since the various countries and regions may suffer different kinds of disasters, there are many foreign residents who are not as knowledgeable about natural disasters as Japanese residents are. It is therefore important to provide them with information in advance regarding countermeasures against earthquakes, tsunamis and other disasters that can occur in Japan. The City disseminates such information via brochures, websites, FM radio, video and other media, in multiple languages. In addition, since Sendai City is home to many international students, the city holds orientations about disaster risk reduction for them at universities, Japanese language schools, technical colleges, etc.

・ Providing designated evacuation centers with multilingual sheets listing disaster-related words and expressions

All designated evacuation centers are provided with multilingual sheets that indicate disaster-related words and expressions often used at these centers.

・ Holding workshops

The City holds workshops on disaster risk reduction, in which both Japanese and foreign nationals can participate together.

When the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, the City of Sendai set up its Disaster Multilingual Support Center, as planned, to disseminate information in multiple languages and to provide support for foreign residents and visitors affected by the disaster. In the course of the support activities, the City found some cases where foreign residents did not tidy up their litter, made a lot of noise and caused other nuisances at evacuation centers, without observing the rules and etiquette. There were also cases where the Japanese person who operated the evacuation center was not aware of the presence of foreign evacuees, and thus failed to provide them with sufficient information. These problems remind us that it is important for the City to provide foreign residents with disaster risk reduction education in advance, and that Japanese residents deepen their understanding of foreign residents in the local community. Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, the City of Sendai has further intensified its efforts mentioned above.

