

## Initiative 6 Passing on lessons learned from the tsunami, and cultivating disaster risk reduction culture

### [Outline of Approach]

- Iwate Prefecture has a history of being hit by, and taking significant damage from, tsunami. Lessons learned from the tsunami of 1896 and 1933 have been handed down, and have become established in the region's disaster prevention culture.
- There are also cases where these lessons were utilized to keep the damage to a minimum during the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.
- The city of Kamaishi has a tradition of tsunami risk reduction education, and the Sanriku area has a saying, *tsunami tendenko*, which means “look after yourself during a tsunami”, and this embodies the regional spirit of preparedness for disasters. This is how a great many lives were saved in the 2011 tsunami.
- In addition, as the Yoshihama area of Sanriku-cho in Ofunato had suffered considerable damage during the tsunami that occurred in 1896 and 1933, the damage prevention policy of managing agriculture and fisheries in the lowlands and moving the houses to higher ground to guard against tsunami. This allowed the damage from the 2011 tsunami to be minimized.
- In order to prepare for future disasters, the prefecture has been working to further foster the disaster prevention culture by promoting efforts on Sanriku Geopark and organizing education trips focusing on earthquake study, etc.

### Approach 1: Great achievements in tsunami disaster prevention education

Sanriku's traditional saying, *tsunami tendenko*, which means “look after yourself during a tsunami”, forms a basic part of tsunami disaster prevention education. This is an ancient saying meaning that everyone should evacuate to high land by him/herself as soon as possible if a tsunami comes.

By learning this rule, the children there had improved their disaster prevention awareness by making shelter maps and doing evacuation training.



Evacuating to higher ground during the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami  
Young students (March 11, 2011)

## Look after yourself during a tsunami

The actions of students from Unosumai Elementary School and Kamaishi East Junior High School was a typical example of Iwate's tsunami disaster reduction education.

After the earthquake, junior high school students began to evacuate after everyone had gathered in the schoolyard. After seeing this, third grade students in the elementary school taking refuge on the third floor of their school followed them, and they got to the designated shelter after helping the kindergarten children they met on the way. However, after judging that the cliff to the back of the shelter might crumble, they evacuated to a care facility on higher ground. Then, after seeing the huge tsunami moving beyond the school and coming close to them, they evacuated further to a stonemason's shop along Route 45, so everyone escaped the disaster. The tsunami had almost reached the care facility.

Although the Unosumai Elementary and Kamaishi East Junior High schools were outside the flood forecast area, disaster prevention education and various training were performed repeatedly and ultimately saved the lives of the students, who concluded they were too close to the coast and there was a risk the designated site would be engulfed by the tsunami.

### Approach 2: Yoshihama area of Sanriku, Ofunato where moving to higher ground saved lives

Ever since the Meiji Sanriku Tsunami in 1896 and the Showa Sanriku Tsunami in 1933, a policy of living on higher ground and managing agriculture and fisheries in the lower land has been implemented consistently in the Yoshihama area of Sanriku-cho in Ofunato City to prepare for future tsunami.



The higher ground in the Yoshihama area damaged by the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami



Yoshihama coast can be seen from the hills

Life on the hills might not be convenient for the fishermen as there could be a travelling distance from homes on the hill to the beach, but preparation for tsunami in the Yoshihama area had the highest priority even though the convenience of daily life might be affected.

The case of minimizing the damage in this earthquake in Yoshihama area is a good example of town planning taking advantage of lessons learned from the damage of tsunami in the past.

### Approach 3: Promotion of efforts in Sanriku Geopark

Sanriku Geopark was designated as a Japan Geopark in September 2013, there are many places where you can experience the connection between nature and culture on a magnificent scale, not to mention the remains of buildings damaged in the disaster, etc.



Disaster Site  
(Takata Matsubara Road Station, which took extensive damage in the tsunami)



Geopark lesson

We are seeking to promote geopark courses in Sanriku Geopark for elementary schools and junior high schools, in order to tell future generations about living together with nature, seismic history, and the memory of earthquakes, disaster prevention education and school education.

In addition, as the biggest geopark in Japan, stretching across three prefectures (Aomori, Iwate, Miyagi), efforts have also been made to attract educational trips and information dissemination related to promoting wide-area sightseeing.