

Column 3

Measures taken by local governments for crime victims

Dissemination of the victim support ordinances in Okayama Prefecture

In Okayama Prefecture, the Prefecture and all 27 municipalities within have enacted the ordinances for supporting crime victims by the end of March 2012 and all went into force by the April of the same year. Such collaborative efforts of prefecture and municipalities are first among the nation.

1. How Okayama came to promote the enactment of crime victim support ordinances

The Okayama Prefecture started its serious efforts to support victims from establishing a comprehensive response desk at the Office of the Governor in April 2006, and formulating the "Guidelines on Efforts for Supporting Crime Victims in Okayama Prefecture" in March 2007, the lists of measures to be addressed in the Prefecture. In addition, considering that the environment surrounding the crime victims had changed dramatically, such as the establishment of victim participation system and Saiban-in (lay judge) system in criminal proceedings, Okayama Prefecture kept considering over enacting the ordinance and concluded that in order to promote the support for crime victims by the society as a whole, appropriate support shall be provided not only by the government but also with the residents and business organizations in the Prefecture with the compassion towards the situation of crime victims and the importance to support crime victims thus the Prefecture enacted the ordinance for the support of crime victims in March 2011, which went into force in April of the same year.

In addition, Okayama city, the prefectural capital and also an ordinance-designated city, begun to study its needs for the ordinance and support measures since January 2009. Based on the requests from civil support organizations and the discussions at the City Council, Okayama City established the ordinance in December 2010 as the first ordinance-designated city and also for the first municipality in the prefecture. Furthermore, during this period, civil support organizations conducted similar advocacy activities towards Soja city along with galvanized and gained approval from the mayors association and the municipalities association within the prefecture. These situations brought about a general sentiment in favor of establishing ordinances at all municipalities in the prefecture.



Meeting of the managers of municipalities

As the result, the ordinances of Okayama Prefecture, Okayama city, and Soja city went into force simultaneously in April 2011/ Soja city also introduced an ordinance regarding economical benefits for supporting victims. Subsequently, the next being June 2011, other municipalities started to follow and by the end of March 2012, all municipalities in the prefecture passed the ordinance on victim support for the first time in the nation.

Behind such development in the whole prefecture, the steady efforts by civil support organizations, which were fully aware of the importance of from the administrative sector in the support of victims and also the active support from the prefectural police to back up the activities of civil society..

2. Current initiatives

In the fiscal year of 2011, in order to disseminate the growing movement within the administrative sector to whole prefecture and to deepen the understanding on crime victims among the residents, the Prefecture, the prefectural police and the prefectural education board along with the support from the Cabinet Office, hosted the "Meeting of Residents to Support Crime Victims," and also in order to grow further momentum in the society to promote crime victim support, a variety of advocacy projects in cooperation with civil support organizations were conducted mainly around the Crime Victims Week. In addition, experts on victim support, the municipalities and prefectural police are making efforts to strengthen cooperation for seamless support by regular liaison meetings and other measures.

Not only that, as the result of the establishment of ordinances and comprehensive response desks at all municipalities within the prefecture, those officials of municipalities would likely to have more opportunities to serve crime victims. Therefore the Prefecture conducted a training aiming to improve the capacities of officials in order not to cause any second victimization by their careless behaviors. Various personnel those who heard the word "crime victim", not limited to the officials in charge of crime victim policies at the Prefecture/municipalities, participated in this training such as diverse desk staffs at municipalities who have opportunities to have a direct contact with residents through various consultations and procedures, officials of national government offices such as unemployment offices and tax offices, and officials of pension offices, who heard the word "crime victim" for the first time. This training widened the circle of understanding within the administrative sectors.

Because the prefectural ordinance defines the business organizations' responsibilities related to care and support for victims, the Office of the Governor is making efforts to advocate the leave system for victims to recover damages in such occasions as meetings with business sectors. Also, prefectural police, utilized the Regional Revitalization Grant from national government ("Grant to Focus Light to the Lives of the Residents"), to allow civil victim support organizations to conduct awareness-raising activities to visit business owners and discuss situations crime victims are in and the necessity of stability of their employment.

Moreover, Okayama's efforts to promote the understanding among younger generation, to conduct the "educational activities for mind and life" by collaboration of the Prefecture, prefectural police, education board and civil support organizations have been one of the earliest movement among various regions in the nation. The activities includes bereaved families of crime victims visit junior and/or senior high schools and convey the importance of life and norms through their experiences to children. In the fiscal year of 2011, activities toward 19 schools and 9,200 children had been conducted. The total number of children reached out is 42,500.



The meeting of residents to support crime victims



Panel exhibition for awareness-raising in the Crime victims' week



Training relevant officials



Educational activities for mind and life

3. Future Developments

As mentioned above, establishment of ordinances and efforts triggered by ordinances are progressing step by step within the Prefecture. On the other hand, there are still challenges such as coordination and cooperation between medical institutions and organizations related to supporting victims as well as reducing the burden for the victims of sexual crimes. In addition, it is necessary to convey to every citizen that issues of crime victims are not applicable only to a few people facing violent incidents but are relevant to everyone living in the community since everyone has the possibility to become victims, including victims of traffic accidents which result in the death of more than 100 people each year in the Okayama Prefecture in reality.

Currently, although the ordinances are simultaneously in force throughout the Prefecture, these efforts are just about started, thus it is mostly important not to finish the movement for victim support by establishing ordinances only but to further extend substantial support for those who have been victimized by crimes.

Okayama Prefecture will implement specific measures based on the "Second Guideline on Supporting Crime Victims in Okayama Prefecture" established in March 2011 along with the Prefectural Ordinance. The Prefecture will continuously and steadily implement already introduced measures such as a wide range of awareness-raising activities, educational activities to convey the importance of life to children and seamless support by cooperating with civil victim support organizations and relative organizations, and will further deal appropriately with new challenges as well.

Just as establishment of ordinances had spread over municipalities in the Prefecture, hopefully the series of efforts for crime victims could bear the fruits and spread as a movement throughout the Prefecture, the prefectural government will further promote efforts along with whole residents and aim to create a safe and secure environment for everyone in Okayama.

Okayama Prefecture Crime Victims Support Ordinance			
Purpose			
[Article 1] The purpose of this ordinance is; by providing the basic principles, clarifying the responsibilities of the Prefecture, residents, business organizations and support organizations, and defining matters that will be a basis of the support for crime victims, to promote the support for crime victims comprehensively and systematically, and thereby to protect their rights and interests.			
Basic Principles			
[Article 3]			
All crime victims shall have rights to be respected for their individual dignity and be assured of treatment appropriate for their individual dignity	Support shall be provided properly according to the situation that crime victims are in, and other circumstances	Support shall be provided continuously until the crime victims restore their peace in life again	
Responsibilities			
[Article 4] - Prefecture - Formulate and implement the measures with regards to support for crime victims, based on the appropriate role sharings with the national government and municipalities	[Article 5] - Residents - Give sufficient consideration not to harm crime victims' honor and/or peace in life, and make efforts to cooperate with the support for crime victims provided by the Prefecture and other providers	[Article 6] - Business Organizations - Develop the understanding of the situation in which crime victims are in and carry out business activities with full consideration not to harm crime victims' honor and/or peace in life, and make efforts to support crime victims.	[Article 7] - Civil Support Groups - Support crime victims and make efforts to cooperate with the support for crime victims provided by the Prefecture and other providers by making use of the specialized knowledge and experience in support of crime victims.
Basic support of the Crime Victims			
[Article 9] Providing consultation, information, etc. [Article 10] Providing healthcare and welfare services [Article 11] Securing safety [Article 12] Stabilizing residence, etc.		[Article 13] Stabilizing employment [Article 14] Fostering understanding among residents [Article 15] Developing human resources [Article 16] Supportingcivil support organizations	

Column 4

Responses to the Great East Japan Earthquake by Civil Crime Victims Support Organizations

In the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, the reconstruction efforts are underway.

Followings are articles (*) to introduce some of the responses by civil crime victims support organizations to the Great East Japan Earthquake .

○Non-Profit corporation Victims Support Center of Miyagi

March 11th (Friday), 2:46 pm. An earthquake registering seven on the Japanese seismic intensity and nine on Richter scale magnitude suddenly occurred.

"Earthquake!" We were not able to sit or stand when we heard someone's voice yelling out: "Everyone, get under a desk!" Though getting under the desks, our bodies were about to fly out, so and we clung tightly to the legs of the desks. Sounds of lockers falling all over the room or breaking cups and plates and the scream of a young staff "I'm scared! Help!" all made us expect to die.

When the trembling settled, we found everything in the room terribly scattered. One of the telephone counselors wasn't able to stand up because of fear. In the hallway, people with pale faces from every other room were just standing and talking about how terrible and scary it was.

Lockers, large and small all fell down. Documents were scattered. Picture frames, large vases, tea-ware, pots, phones and other things had fell down. Walls were cracked. Doors had distorted so cannot open and close properly. Everyone were paralyzed to see such office, interview room and training room in chaos that there are hardly anywhere to put a feet down

[Actions immediately after the disaster]

From the day after, our phone for consultation kept running for safety confirmation of families coming from afar. Also those staff members who were able to come to the office went out to confirm the safety of every other staffs of the Center and it took eight days after the earthquake to confirm everyone's safety.

On the other hand, when we tried to confirm the safety of self-help group members and crime victims we had provided direct supports, it took us one month to contact everyone in the prefecture. As we came to know that some victims lost relatives and some houses were swept by water, we could not find words of consolation for victims of both crimes and the disaster.

A victim supporter in coastal area, the most severely stricken area, was so concerned of the safety of an on-going client, a bereaved family of a murder case. Since there were no means of transportation and the telephone line was not working, the supporter had walked through rubbles and aftershocks to evacuation places, and when finally found the client, the two embraced each other for the delight to find each other safe.

[Request for Support]

On the sixth day after the quake, the police headquarter contacted the Center to request us to attend to the "Grande 21," the prefectural gymnasium, which became the biggest morgue in the prefecture. The request said that the "Prefectural police and officials of prefectural government are working day and night to support the bereaved families at the morgue every day for the verification

of unidentified bodies or to see if their families are yet found. However there is a limit for current staffs to handle the depth of the grief. Therefore we would like to request assistance in supportive counseling for them.”

We immediately contacted the Center’s Chairman, decided to meet the request for assistance on the ground for Article 3 of the articles of the association, had a working level meeting with the chief of office for crime victims in the police headquarter and the Secretary General of our Center, and then started support activities from the next day.

[The main types of support provided]

1. To be side at the bulletin boards of photos of the bodies found
2. Accompany to the morgue
3. Listen closely to the requests and/or grief of the bereaved families



Accompanying those who were looking for family members among the photographs of the found bodies. The Center’s staffs are wearing a white vest.



Staffs responding to one family



Organizing various materials for those who come to search for their family

[Supporters’ activities seen from records]

- A college student, the eldest son whose father died in the tsunami, was in the car with his father and got off by himself right before the car had washed away. While he kept blaming himself, a

staff member put the hand on his shoulder and said: "It was not your fault, but the tsunami's." He kept crying and his mother bowed quietly to us.

- A grandson, who was in an elementary school, collapsed in tears to see his grandfather's corpse. When a staff member spoke to him "Your grandfather has a good face. He doesn't look like he's in pain," the grandson proudly said "Grandpa didn't run but went to help someone else."
- Young parents, whose 5-years-old daughter got carried away by the wave with her grandfather, were crying over their daughter after they found her body among the photos, "She lived only for 5 years!" Holding their hands tightly, our supporter accompanied them into the morgue. The mother collapsed in tears in front of the coffin again. Gently patting her back sympathizing to pain and sadness, the supporter told her "You can cry, it's okay." She looked up and said: "Can I?" the supporter nodded silently, and the mother spoke to the daughter in the coffin for a while, apologizing for not being able to help. Then thanked the supporter and said "We should go look for her grandfather."

[Reduction of the stress and indirect traumatization of supporters]

Among the disaster relief activities, services related to bodies are said to be one of the most severe operations.

The reasons that these supporters were able to complete the mission to the end, without their spirits lowering, even though they were enduring intense emotions such as misery, fear, etc., and bearing stress, such as aftershock, cold, damage to their own home or problem with obtaining food, were that they took time to talk each other in their cars every day to maintain the stability of the minds, caring affection and consolation by other staffs waiting them at the Center, and warm support from the National Network for Victim Support and each affiliated Centers.

○Non-Profit Corporation Victims Support Center of Iwate

The center is located in the second floor of a robust three-story reinforced concrete prefectural building. The earthquake of March 11 with the seismic intensity of lower 6 brought a violent shaking that we had never experienced before.

When the earthquake struck us, three staff members were in the office and two supporters were in the telephone consultation room next to the office. Various things fell off from the shelves but we had escaped out thus there were no human casualties.

(Actions immediately after the disaster)

Immediately after the earthquake, lifelines, such as electricity, water, telephone, were stopped, so we closed the center at 4:00 pm and went home that day.

Electricity and telephone lines were partially restarted on the 13th (Sun), so our Executive Director and Secretary-General went to the Center to check the safety of the Center's Chairman, other officers and staffs, and confirmed that everyone was safe.

We resumed regular activities of the Center from 14th (Mon).

On the 14th (Mon) an emergency meeting of five officers was held to discuss future activities and confirmed the followings:

- Supporters in Morioka City or surrounding areas are to continue with support activities and not to cause any gaps.

- The Center is to make a proposition to the prefectural police that the Center would like to assist in the support activities for the victims of the disaster though there would be a limitation on the number of staffs capable to participate.

(Main support services)

1. Pass on the donation from South Korean victim support organizations to the Prefecture
2. Dispatch the clinical psychologist by the request from the Chief of the police
3. Visit 12 coastal municipalities of the affected areas and the 5 police station jurisdictions for consolation and other assistance.

○Non-Profit Corporation Victims Support Center of Fukushima

The earthquake on "2:46 pm, March 11, 2011" followed by massive Tsunami brought great disaster to the Pacific coastal areas of Northeastern Japan. Moreover, Fukushima Prefecture suffered from the radioactive contamination from the successive nuclear power plant accident.

(Actions immediately after the disaster)

The Center was able to confirm the safety of all supporters only by 14th (Mon).

Since the articles of association of the Center does not include the support for victims of disasters as its objectives but facing one of the worst disasters in history, we wondered; "What shall we do?" and "What should be done?" We thought:

1. There should be many ways to utilize the knowledge and experiences this Center has acquired.
2. If so, it should be important for us to apply back our knowledge and experiences to the society.
3. We should do something for Fukushima residents who are facing this catastrophe.

Immediately, we researched the locations of evacuation shelters within the Prefecture and we learned that the largest evacuation shelter in the northern part of the Prefecture was the "Prefectural Gymnasium Azuma General Athletic Park.", which was about 60km away from the Fukushima First Nuclear Power Plant. So we established a "consultation desk for supporting victims of the disaster" there on weekdays from April to June, and 3 days a week in July and August and were able to provide consultations or just to be the partners of conversation over a cup of tea. The service provided for the total of 81 days and approximately 1,800 cases. The topics discussed were serious, including anxiety and frustration with living in shelters, housing problem for temporary housing, fear of radiation damage, complaints about Tokyo Electric Power Company and the government, health problems, etc.



○Non-Profit Corporation Victims Support Center of Ibaraki

On March 11th, two staffs were at work. Things fell off from the shelves, but no one was injured. It was difficult to contact all the supporters after the earthquake but the safety of all was confirmed. We were able to return to the office building from March 23, and our office resumed the support activities from the 25th.

(Actions immediately after the disaster)

We were on standby on following policies:

- Telephone consultation and direct support activities are to be carried on as usual.
- Provide support for the requests from the transferred junior high/ high school students from Fukushima Prefecture who were accepted by Tokiwa University even if their requests do not directly relate to damages.

○Non-Profit Corporation Chiba Crime Victim Support Center

The Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred on March 11 registered seismic intensity of a lower 6 in Narita city and Inzai city of Chiba Prefecture and the intensity of upper 5 in many other municipalities. Many damages caused by tsunami and ground liquefaction were reported.

In our office too, lockers and other furniture fell down and staff members evacuated to a nearby park.

Currently, we are resuming with telephone consultation and direct support activities as before, but we were forced out to move out to current location on November 25 because our former office building are to be demolished after its earthquake resistant examination.

(Actions immediately after the disaster)

The Center created the “‘Guidelines’ - the changes of mind and body that can happen to anyone after an "Event" as a stress response (natural, normal reaction)- ” for the affected people and were distributed to those in the evacuation shelters through the relevant municipalities.

* Quoted from "Victim Support News No. 5," issued on December 15, 2011 by certified NPO National Network for Victim Support.