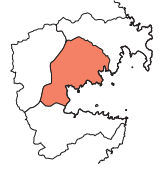


Minamisanriku Recovery Market

A Social Space That Helped Restore Livelihoods



▲ The first Minamisanriku Recovery Market was held at Shizugawa Junior High School on April 29 and 30, 2011. The names of shops that had been destroyed by the tsunami were attached to the stall awnings. The market attracted an unanticipated number of townspeople from evacuation sites.

On April 29 and 30, 2011, about 50 days after the disaster struck, the first Minamisanriku Recovery Market was held at Shizugawa Junior High School.

Most of the shopkeepers in Minamisanriku had lost their shops and homes, together with their families, relatives, and cherished friends. Against this backdrop, Yamauchi Masafumi, chairman of the Recovery Market Executive Committee, went into action without delay. In his words, "Let's not become victims all the way to our hearts. We have to cheer everyone up. Let's open a recovery market as soon as possible." Before the earthquake, the Minamisanriku shopping area had created a network with other shopping areas nationwide with the aim of mutual assistance in times of disaster. People from shopping areas belonging to this network offered their support for the opening of such a market from far afield. Even with nothing to sell, there was a desire to create a space for the community to come together. Shop owners geared into action motivated by this heartfelt sentiment.

The first Minamisanriku Recovery Market attracted 15,000 people, most of whom were town residents. People who had ended up scattered far and wide after evacuating met again for the first time after the fateful day of the earthquake. They could see with their own eyes that they were both alive. All over the venue, people were hugging each other, tears streaming down their faces.

When business owners heard visitors to the market make comments such as, "I want to eat your food again," they came to view the function of their businesses in a new way: as places where locals can interact with each other. People who had been starting to give up regained the courage to rebuild their shops and businesses.

The holding of the Minamisanriku Recovery Market was supported by the many volunteers and people who came to Minamisanriku to aid the town's recovery.