

Supported by Dispatched Personnel

Experts who were an immediate asset



▲ A commemorative photo taken at the end of the fiscal year by dispatched personnel. March 23rd, 2018

With all of Minamisanriku's administrative functions destroyed, it was the power of the support personnel dispatched by local governments all over Japan that supported the town.

About 10 days after the earthquake, emergency relief personnel from Hyogo, Tokushima, and then from other prefectures, started to arrive one after the other, each wearing bibs that named their municipality. Working alongside local staff, they assisted in tasks such as the issuance of certificates for disaster victims. One of these relief personnel found accommodation in Ichinoseki, Iwate Prefecture. In poor traffic conditions, he spent over two hours commuting a distance that would normally take an hour. Another slept each night in a minibus that had had the seats removed.

In May, the long-term dispatching of staff commenced based on the Local Autonomy Law. Seventy-nine municipalities dispatched 521 staff, which reached a total of 746 (by end of March 2021). These support staff were brave people who volunteered to undertake the tough job of rebuilding the destroyed town. They were aware that living conditions after the disaster would be harsh. Workers who came from parts of Japan where snow does not fall were stressed having to drive for the first time on snowy roads. They struggled on phone calls speaking to people with strange accents. These support staff, who were total strangers to Minamisanriku, assembled from all over the country. They joined forces and devoted themselves to rebuilding the town. It is difficult to express how much the local staff appreciated their enthusiasm and kindness, but there were many days when tears were shed over their spirit. The massive amount of work involved in post-earthquake restoration and reconstruction would not have been possible without the help of these support staff.

Minamisanriku is now connected to different places across the country thanks to the past presence of these administrative experts. Disasters come unexpectedly; they can happen at any time in any place. On such an occasion, the network that Minamisanriku has established is sure to act as a mutual-aid, life supporting mechanism.