

Akira Miyasada [Machi(town)-Communication]

Creation of communities by residents and volunteers in Mikura District

The daily lives of people in Mikuradori 5-chome and 6-chome before the earthquake

Mikuradori 5-chome and 6-chome are located in the southeastern part of Nagata Ward in Kobe City, covering an area of 4.6 ha. In this district, chemical companies as well as metal and machinery companies had been thriving since before the Second World War. Row houses had been constructed for factory workers. This district developed as a typical mixed residential, commercial and industrial area.

After the Second World War, a land readjustment project for post-war reconstruction was implemented. As a result, roads six meters wide were constructed at intervals of about 100 meters. However, the private roads in front of local houses were only 2.7 meters wide. In addition, when new houses were constructed, some houses occupied nearly all the area of their lots and others crossed the lot boundary and extended into the private roads since the size of the lots of the former row houses was extremely limited. In this district, the houses were therefore very close together. Furthermore, there were individual and row houses that had not been damaged during the war and these houses had become dilapidated.

Before the earthquake occurred, young people had already begun to leave this district and as a result there has been a progressive aging of the population as well as a decline in local industries. This district can therefore be considered a typical inner city area.

The Great Hanshin and Awaji Earthquake occurred on January 17, 1995. In this district, many houses collapsed, and fires broke out just after the earthquake. The fires spread in all directions and 80% of the district was burnt down. Twenty-seven people died in these fires.

Toward the creation of a community where people can feel relaxed

All the residents felt they had no hope after the devastation of this town. To restore the city districts, Kobe municipality developed an urban planning process on March 17, 1995, just two month after the earthquake. Mikuradori 5-chome and 6-chome were designated as districts covered by a land readjustment project for post-earthquake reconstruction. At this time, debris from the earthquake was exposed to the wind and rain, and most residents had been evacuated to shelters. The officials of the residents' associations were too old and the associations could not function. Some residents therefore had concerns that the public sector would promote the reconstruction of this district without taking into consideration the desires of the residents. As a result, voluntary residents established the Mikuradori 5-chome and 6-chome Community Creation Association (hereinafter referred to as the "association") in April 1995 in order to ensure that the opinions of the residents were reflected in the reconstruction of the community.

Since many parts of Mikuradori 5-chome and 6-chome were burnt down, the residents in these areas were evacuated to shelters or temporary residences outside the district. The first priority issue was therefore to promote the return of the former residents. To settle this issue, the association submitted a request on June 18, 1995, for the early construction of quakeproof housing in order to ensure the return of the previous inhabitants by providing public housing.

The association conducted a questionnaire survey and a fact-finding survey targeting former residents, house owners, and landlords with regard to reconstruction. These surveys included items concerning the reconstruction of housing and establishments. The results of these surveys made it clear that 70% or more the respondents hoped to return to the district and reconstruct their housing or establishments.

The association held workshops to discuss approaches to the recreation of the community, including the joint reconstruction of housing. Based on the results of the surveys and discussions, the association formulated a proposal for the recreation of the community and submitted it to the Kobe municipality. The slogan of the proposal was “Mikura — where housing and factories coexist and people can feel relaxed.”



A camphor tree in Mikura Park. This tree is considered a symbol of the restoration since it survived the disaster caused by the earthquake. This tree is honored in a poem of Misuga karuta (a card game), “A large camphor tree that stopped a fire and survived the disaster.”



Office of M-COMI on the first floor of the jointly reconstructed housing

Restoration of the daily lives of the inhabitants

It was one year after the earthquake that the association began to discuss joint reconstruction in Mikuradori 5-chome and 6-chome. A land readjustment project was planned for this district, and the land rights holders in this project were restricted to landlords and leaseholders. Accordingly, no attention was paid to requests by the tenants, who accounted for 70% of the former residents. The association felt a sense of crisis regarding this situation, and requested Mr. Ko Kojima, an architect and a professor of Kinki University, to formulate a plan for joint reconstruction taking into consideration the restoration of the daily lives of the tenants. Mr. Kojima frequently visited these districts after the earthquake.

A plan entitled “Our proposal for the joint reconstruction of housing” appeared in Hikobae, a newsletter published by the association, in April 1996. This proposal included the construction of housing that would be located in the northern block of Mikuradori 6-chome, which included lots that accounted for one fourth of the area of Mikuradori 6-chome. In this proposal, leaseholders and tenants as well as landlords were expected to be able to participate in formulating a reconstruction plan as rights holders and the Kobe municipality could participate in the formulation of the plan as a rights holder to regard a part of the joint reconstruction as

public housing. This reconstruction proposal represented a vision which ensured that tenants who were likely to be left out of the planning process could cooperate with landlords and leaseholders in the planning for these districts.

This reconstruction proposal, however, required considerable changes in “the vision of the community” in the community creation plan that had already been formulated by the association. In addition, a major and difficult adjustment in the various rights was required to implement this proposal.

The Kobe municipality and consultants first considered this joint reconstruction proposal to be unfeasible since its concept was so idealistic and grandiose. Community residents also could not easily accept this proposal since they regarded it as too risky. Since it was estimated that the feasibility of the proposal was low, the association could not ask leaseholders and tenants to participate. In fact, the association subsequently discussed the reconstruction of the districts with the landlords alone.

Establishment of “Machi-Communication” and the preparation for joint reconstruction

In April 1996, volunteers who had supported the association from the initial stage of its activities established Machi-Communication (hereafter referred to as M-COMI), a group established to support communities devastated by the Great Hanshin and Awaji Earthquake. Although they were non-professionals, they worked hard to support communities based on the principle that there is no restoration without reconstruction. In a situation in which only 20% of the former residents remained in the community, these remaining residents were an invaluable human resource and played an important role in providing information that was difficult to obtain by other means, such as information on land adjustment. While many voluntary groups developed their activities to support people in temporary housing sites, this group worked directly in the devastated areas. M-COMI developed its activities in accordance with its principles, although outsiders sometimes could not understand the approach of this group.

M-COMI was concerned about a desperate lack of information on joint reconstruction after the earthquake. This group promoted a partnership with Prof. Kojima. As a result, the association carried out a survey on the actual conditions of the residents. At the same time, a research group led by Mr. Masaki Urano, a professor of Waseda University, conducted a fact-finding survey.

These surveys clarified the condition of the damage to the properties, the work situation of the residents, their family situation and status of residence, as well as their former rights. In addition, taking this survey as a good opportunity, the association explained the system of joint reconstruction to the respondents by showing photos of other corporative housing situations so that the respondents could have a concrete image of the buildings and how to participate in a joint reconstruction project.

M-COMI considered that just carrying out land adjustment was insufficient for the restoration and revitalization of the community. Thus the group planned and held various events regularly in partnership with the association and the Society of Our Town, whose main members were women from the local community. These events included a memorial service, a Bon dance festival, and rice-cake making in the community. When these events were held, former residents who had moved to temporary housing returned to the community to participate. In addition, a relationship of trust between the residents and volunteers was established and the

mood for the recreation of the community grew. In December 1996, a rice-cake making festival was held on the first anniversary of the opening of the temporary assembly hall for the residents in Mikuradori 5-chome and 6-chome. As a part of the festival, Mr. Yasuhiro Endo, a professor of Meijo University at that time, provided a lecture using slides. In these slides, advanced examples of corporative housing were introduced. The purpose of this slide show was to arouse the interest of the residents in joint reconstruction by showing not only the buildings, but also the life styles of people in corporative housing. The joint reconstruction was also explained at other events so that the residents could have more opportunities to listen to these explanations.

In May 1997, Mr. Endo held a workshop concerning joint reconstruction. This workshop was not like the general one whose participants studied the substantial benefits of joint reconstruction. The participants in this workshop considered ways to live happily in corporative housing and made individual requests regarding their housing needs. This workshop focused on the establishment of an image of housing in which it was a joy for the residents to gather together and live cooperatively.

Start of the joint reconstruction project

“The preparatory committee for the joint reconstruction” was organized in June 1997 by the households that had declared their willingness to participate in the project. The committee members stated that they were interested in joint living or that there was no way for them to have housing other than through joint reconstruction since their land area was quite limited.



Mr. Yasuzo Tanaka

In the northern block in Mikuradori 6-chome, where the construction of corporative housing was expected, the negotiations related to rights were not making good progress and the site for the project was not determined. The preparatory committee frequently met and visited advanced corporative housing projects to study them. The purpose of these activities was to encourage themselves to develop activities to carry out the project with greater motivation. However, the project had not started yet since the participation of more residents was required in order to accomplish joint reconstruction. Under these circumstances, Mr. Kojima requested Mr. Yasuzo Tanaka, who was the president of a local company and owned land in the north block of Mikuradori 5-chome, to participate in the project. Mr. Tanaka was an executive councilor of the association and an advisor to M-COMI that had been promoting the joint reconstruction.

The rights holders and the designer of the corporative housing began to discuss the basic design in October. The designer at this time was Mr. Noriaki Takeda, who succeeded Mr. Kojuma. Mr. Takeda was an architect in Kobe. M-COMI, which had developed its activities for the joint reconstruction from the initial stage, watched over the progress of the whole project and played the role of coordinators between the rights holders and experts as well as among the rights holders. Although many joint reconstruction projects were implemented in areas devastated by the earthquake in Kobe, this is probably the only example in which a voluntary group



Memorial monument for the earthquake victims

whose members were non-professionals with respect to architecture played the role of the coordinator. Eventually, Mikura 5, a housing project jointly reconstructed by eleven households, was completed and a ceremony was held to celebrate the completion in January 2000. (For further information, refer to the “Report of the joint reconstruction project - To the completion of Mikura 5.” This is available at the M-COMI office.)

Difficulty of returning to the old community

Although individual houses, two buildings that were public housing (94 households), and Mikura 5 (11 households) were constructed, former residents who returned to the district accounted for as little as one third of those (100 households).

Areas that had been burnt down covered a large proportion in this district, and many former residents were forced to live outside the district. Once they moved outside the area, it became more and more difficult for them to return over the course of time. Individuals had difficulty in returning due to the trouble of moving, anxiety concerning the change of their relationships with the neighbors, and the schools that their children should attend. Business establishments had difficulties due to the considerable expenditures required for moving and the relationships with their customers and business partners.

So far, no establishments that reconstructed their facilities outside the district have returned. Public housing has accepted new residents from other districts.

Reconstruction work in the district was completed around 2002, and it was clear that no more former residents would return. The executives of the association and M-COMI were dissatisfied with and depressed by the fact that the policies and projects for the restoration of the daily lives and the creation of a new community lagged behind the actual individual restoration efforts although the earthquake was the cause. They wondered whether restoration projects were actually appropriate.

Concept for the creation of communities five years after the earthquake

(1) Placing importance on ties between people

Mutual assistance was people’s source of strength to live in a situation of devastation just after the earthquake in which people could not even provide for daily necessities. Consideration for each other was the wellspring of the power to create a new community. Based on the lessons from these experiences, M-COMI has been developing activities in the community, including holding events.

(2) Participation by residents

From its work in founding organizations through to the pouring of concrete, residents have participated in the construction of the memorial monument that was erected in the Misuga District. Residents and consultants discussed the design of Mikurakita Park, the residents planted a lawn there, and as well as the memorial monument, the park was developed by residents in January 2002. An assembly hall described below was also constructed with the participation of residents.

(3) Passing on lessons to the next generation

In order to pass on lessons from people's experience of the earthquake disaster, the association and M-COMI have accepted students to work with them from throughout Japan. Two thousand students, most of whom were junior high school students, have visited this district and listened to presentations by the residents while on their school trip.

The residents created "Misuga karuta" (a card game), a local karuta, in 2003. One hundred and thirty-three people inside and outside the district participated in composing the poems and drawing the pictures. They expressed their love for the community and memories of the earthquake. (This karuta is available at the M-COMI office.)

In addition, activities have been developed to interact with sufferers from disasters that have occurred since the Great Hanshin and Awaji Earthquake, such as the great earthquake in Taiwan, Typhoon 23 that attacked the Torii District in Ideishi Town (Hyogo Prefecture), and the Mid Niigata Prefecture Earthquake.

Securing a place where people can gather easily at any time - Plaza 5

People concerned began discussions in September 1999 regarding the use of the first floor of Mikura 5, the jointly reconstructed housing project, as a community space. This discussion was based on an offer from Mr. Tanaka, the president of a local company and an advisor to M-COMI. This community space was expected to serve as a base for local welfare borne to mutually support each other by local residents and volunteers. In addition, it was designed as a place where people can easily gather at any time to improve voluntary activities, including the organization of events that had only been held occasionally.



In January 2001, the building of Mikura 5 was completed. After its completion, actual preparation of the community space began, and the community space called Plaza 5 was opened in April of the same year. Volunteers within and from outside the community have planned and developed various activities in Plaza 5, including establishing a tea room, providing daytime care for elderly people (life fulfillment-oriented care), and holding classes to learn how to use personal computers so as to interact both parties and give opportunities for elderly people. Plaza 5 accepts supporters from within and outside the community, if necessary. The volunteers and supporters as well as the residents have supported the creation of the Mikura community, centering on Plaza 5.

Those who have developed their activities based on Plaza 5 have utilized their interests, ideas, and skills for the community, while playing their own role as individuals. M-COMI and the steering committee of Plaza 5 have been striving to systematize their ties to further utilize their activities for the future development of the community. In their daily lives, the community members act as teachers for the other members at one time and are students at another time.

Plaza 5 was reformed into the Magokoro Mikura (True heart of Mikura), an NPO, at the end of March 2005. This NPO is devoted to welfare for the community.

Restoration of the residents' association

New residents' associations started their activities in June 2001. The difference between the residents' association and the Mikuradori 5-chome and 6-chome Community Creation Association, which was established just after the earthquake, had been ambiguous. The residents, therefore, discussed the need for a real residents' association and the purpose of the association. Eventually, they approved the need for a residents' association six years after the earthquake.

The establishment of this new residents' association enabled the residents to produce young leaders, which can prevent aging, and new ideas have arisen in discussions among the residents.

Intangible effects of the restoration of the community

Principles of M-COMI

(1) Staying on the side of the residents

Understanding the needs of individuals is sometimes difficult for experts because for such experts the amount of time available for communication with the residents is limited.

As the themes discussed at the meetings of the association and the residents' associations are limited, in their mind, there are many other both serious and trivial issues faced by the community, which are not discussed at the meetings. It is impossible to discuss all these issues at this type of meeting. Although M-COMI members are not professionals in any field, they are permanently stationed at their office in the community, make friends with the residents, and can solve problems that are closely related to the residents. Through these activities, they can gain the confidence of the residents little by little, and can help enhance the motivation of the residents for the creation of a new community.

One resident stated that, "We first want people (volunteers) who stay by our side and worry about our troubles rather than experts when we have to challenge a situation of devastation."

(2) Accepting the ideas, power, and wisdom offered by outsiders at the maximum

This community has been supported by experts and other people over ten years. Although they may face limitations in their workplace, they have sincerely developed their activities in the devastated areas on their own accord. At the same time, they have provided training to young people in the community. They have also strived to establish a network of human relations as if they were friends of the residents. On the other hand, young students have devoted themselves to the creation of a community and became the drive to recreate the community although their priority objective is research and study. The residents have come to understand that people without knowledge and skills can participate in the creation of a community by looking at these young people. Many residents have been encouraged by them.

(3) Reaching a consensus

There are connections among the residents that prevent them from speaking freely. Different conditions apply to each resident, such as the period they have spent living in the community and time they have to spend for community activities. They, therefore, sometimes feel difficulty in speaking up at the meeting of the residents' association even though they want to propose some improvements. In this situation, M-COMI can play a role of a buffer. M-COMI can help to promote the improvement that a resident wants to propose by attending the meeting, playing this buffering agent role, and being accepted by the residents as if M-COMI was a member.

In the course of the creation of a community, the residents have struggled while choices have been narrowed down as the actual conditions have been clarified, and they have had to accept compromises in the final stages. Looking back at the process of reaching a consensus in the Mikura community, the residents did not accept easy solutions, but strived to select solutions that were better for the creation of a new community if these were feasible, even though it was expected that some solutions would be accompanied by hardships. They agreed to endure these hardships together. This attitude has been fostered through the mutual assistance established just after the earthquake. They knew nobody but neighbor would help at the time of earthquake.

At the initial stages of the process towards reaching a consensus or when people become motivated to cooperate with each other, they do not follow reason in many cases. It was important that the residents make friends each other through overcoming hardships together. If they are not friends, they cannot be concerned about each other or cannot support each other. Some people display unexpected abilities in such activities, even though these abilities appear hidden in daily conversation. This is the time for the residents to strengthen their relationships of trust. It is difficult to establish a relationship of trust and people may misunderstand other people through discussions alone. In addition, actions and activities through mutual partnerships are required for discussions. The creation of a new community is based on such discussions backed by actions.

The residents have realized that giving priority to action is essential for the creation of a community through a mutual partnership. Each resident will come to love their neighbors and their community through these activities.

Issues for M-COMI

The issues to be settled by M-COMI in the Mikura community in the future are as follows: (1) clarifying objectives when dealing with issues in the context that many issues have appeared as daily lives have been restored, (2) dealing with the many remaining vacant lots, and (3) encouraging people to participate in activities for the creation of a community and selecting projects to settle issues. M-COMI will strive for the creation of a community through a close partnership with the residents, while seeking to clarify what non-professionals can do. M-COMI would like to help the community so that many residents will be motivated to create a better community and that a community can be created with which residents will be satisfied. Supporting the residents, being supported by them, and confirming that people's intellectual and physical abilities are being demonstrated, M-COMI will strive for the further development of this community.

People can feel love from the following words Mr. Tanaka, the president of the association, likes.

Approach people with a warm heart like spring,
Deal with work with a burning heart like summer,
Consider things with a cool heart like autumn, and
Examine one's behavior with a severe heart like winter.

Assembly hall utilizing the traditional private house in Mikura District

Creation of a community through partnerships between residents and volunteers

The residents of Mikura District and M-COMI have been cooperating in the creation of a community, utilizing the abilities of both groups. An assembly hall, which was established by relocating a 130-year-old traditional private house, is an example of this cooperation.

History of the establishment of the assembly hall

The residents in the areas devastated by the earthquake had difficulty in finding “places” where they could discuss the restoration of their lives and the creation of the community. It was particularly difficult for the residents in Mikura District because most of this district was destroyed by the spreading fires. Residents in each district took action toward that problem by themselves just after the earthquake. In October 2001, when the reconstruction of individual houses completed the first stage, the establishment of an assembly hall became an issue for discussion. M-COMI planned to borrow land free of rent from the Kobe municipality and to utilize “the subsidy for projects for the establishment and management of community plazas in devastated areas.” This subsidy is provided by the Great Hanshin and Awaji Earthquake Reconstruction Fund. The association held meetings twice a month and visited assembly halls to study the various aspects.

History and ideas for construction of the assembly hall utilizing the traditional private house

Former ties among the residents were lost due to the disaster, and the memory of mutual assistance just after the disaster has faded over since ten years has passed since the earthquake. Under these circumstances, the restoration of ties among the residents, the restoration of *yui* in old Japanese, became an objective to be achieved.

Activities for the creation of a community are difficult when trying to obtain people’s understandings and sometimes cause misunderstandings, which are a source of trouble for people involved in such activities in many districts. To avoid this trouble, M-COMI has actively participated not only in discussions, but also in construction work when corporate housing, parks, and the memorial monument were constructed in Mikura District. While these construction projects took a relatively short period of time, the construction of an assembly hall required a long period. Accordingly M-COMI considered that it would be better to make the process of the construction visible and to gain the understanding of the residents.

The Society of Our Town, whose main members were women from the community, had held events that people can easily participate in, such as seasonal events. Various activities giving priority to ties among the residents had been developed in Mikura District under the initiative of the Society. These activities were based on the lesson from their experiences in the disaster that the most reliable person in an emergency is one’s neighbor, and the purpose of these activities was to strengthen the human network in the community. A Japanese traditional private house seemed appropriate as a place where seasonal events could be held.

A chain of abilities and the ideas of outsiders

1. Preparation stage

[Wisdom and the house]

It was decided that a traditional private house would be relocated to use as an assembly hall. The first problem, however, was whether such a house could be obtained. The association held consultations with Mr. Yuji Miyanishi, who had connections with people involved in the creation of communities throughout Japan and frequently provided advice to the Mikura District. He introduced to the association a builder in Yabu City, Hyogo Prefecture. As a result, a traditional private house that was going to be disassembled was found in Kasumi Town (now Kami Town), Hyogo Prefecture.

[Human resources]

The residents in the Mikura community needed to restore their daily lives and most of them were urban salaried workers. It was therefore difficult to restore *yui* in the community (people used to cooperate in construction work, based on *yui*). To break through this impasse, the association visited colleges and universities to gather students who majored in architecture. In response to this call, more than sixty teachers and students of the Osaka College of Technology participated in the relocation work. This college was enthusiastic about field studies and gave their students opportunities for direct experience with actual buildings after this participation. Other students participated from Kobe University, Kobe Technical Junior College, and Akashi Technical Junior College. These participants explained the purpose of this project to their parents and friends in order to persuade them to approve of their participation before engaging in this dangerous work in Kasumi Town.

[Funds]

A builder had already provided an estimate for the relocation of 60 million yen. The residents' associations of Mikura 5, 6 and 7-chome had only about 40 million yen, which consisted of a subsidy that would be applied for later and their own funds. To make up the deficit, voluntary residents and outside volunteers decided to provide their labor. It was also decided that part of the deficit would be met by raising funds. In addition, the expected subsidy would be provided only after the completion of the assembly hall. Accordingly, the community, M-COMI and other people concerned decided to raise the operating funds free of interest from people throughout Japan.

2. Disassembly stage

The traditional private house was disassembled in the summer of 2002. This disassembly work



Inside the assembly hall utilizing the traditional private house, Mr. Yasuzo Tanaka is giving an explanation to Prof. Shigeru Sato.

was carried out over two weeks during the summer vacation of the student volunteers involved in architecture. They stayed in the gym of the local village. The disassembly work began with the removal of the furnishings and tatami mats, and the participants numbered the construction materials for reassembly, and finally the house was disassembled. These volunteers worked so hard that the women in Mikura District rushed to the site to serve them meals.

At first, the residents near the disassembly site were sceptical of non-professionals being able to carry out the disassembly work. Gradually, however, they sympathized with the student volunteers through watching their efforts. The residents encouraged the student volunteers and gave them vegetables that they had grown in the fields. In the middle of the working period, the president of the Tanba Construction Union Liaison Association also visited the site to encourage the students. On the final day, a concert was held centering on folk songs so that not only could the house be relocated but also to introduce the local culture of Kasumi. A song for marriage was sung, and regarding the house as a bride, the Mikura and Kasumi people promised to continue interactions with each other in future. This event ended with *sobameshi* (rice mixed with fried Chinese noodles), a local specialty of Nagata ward, Kobe City, and served by women from Mikura district, and both people in Kasumi City and those in Mikura ward had a relationship each other. About one hundred people participated in this pleasant event in Yasugi Village with thirty households.



Assembly Hall utilizing a traditional private house (Site area: 393 m² (land on loan), Total floor area: 220 m², Building area: 190 m²)

3. Pre-construction stage

In the autumn of 2002, the Kobe municipality, which intended to offer the land, requested changes in the construction specifications to construct the house on a minimized area of land. This was related to the conflagration line for the walls of private wooden houses and the building coverage ratio. M-COMI maintained that they had an obligation to fulfill a promise with the former owner to restore the traditional private house to its original state. The municipality, however, did not accept this objection. Since Mikura residents as well as the former owner and the M-COMI executives wanted to restore the building to its original state, the residents, the municipality and other people concerned met three times. At the meetings, M-COMI strived to persuade the municipality. Consequently, it was decided that the image of the house on a limited lot would not give as much damage as that first proposed by the municipality. Through this process, all the people concerned became more interested in the assembly hall utilizing a traditional private house and were even more motivated to achieve the project.

Four trucks (15 ton truck) of disassembled materials were voluntarily transported to the site by a transportation company in Mikura. The cutting of bamboo used for the groundwork for the mud walls and the felling of other trees as well as the processing of these materials were also undertaken by the volunteers. At the same time, it was needed to knead wall mud toward the construction. The mud used for the original traditional house was going to be reused for the assembly hall. In the winter, both young and old, and men and women volunteers got into a pool that was created in order to knead wall mud. Although a professional plasterer was afraid that

the mud might not be reusable, the mud kneaded by the volunteers became viscid in May. This was a sign that the mud was usable.

4. Reassembly stage

The construction of the assembly hall began in the Mikura district in May 2003. The student volunteers involved in architecture participated in the construction on Saturdays and Sundays. Some enthusiastic students also participated after school. Mikura residents who had a job were able to participate on holidays since the construction was held in their district. Many craftsmen lived in Mikura district and they not only participate as volunteers but also displayed their skills toward the citizen. Some of them worked to set up the power line distribution and others processed metal.

People who had moved from outside into the public housing in Mikura district after the earthquake also participated in the kneading of the mud, the plastering, and other construction work. Accordingly, the construction work contributed to the integration of old and new residents, which is a significant issue in many devastated areas.

Thus, a total of three-thousand volunteers participated in the construction.

The chain of ideas and the effects of this project

Many people participated in the construction, and the ideas of these people have been utilized in the management of the assembly hall. Based on this hall, day-care services for elderly people have been provided as in the past, many groups began their activities, including a singing group that sing songs for children and school songs, and cultural lecture meetings were held. These activities have been carried out utilizing the characteristics of the traditional private house and have attracted many people inside and outside the community.

M-COMI planned to request the universities and colleges to give academic credits to the volunteer students who participated in the disassembly work. The students, however, rejected this idea, saying that they did not participate to acquire credits. In addition, they did not receive travel expenses. They had lofty aspirations and regarded all the voluntary work as a form of study. They raised many matters to be considered for the future participation of students in the creation of communities. The construction expenses that had been estimated at 60 million yen were reduced to 42 million yen. The residents and students developed self-confidence due to this reduction. Three students were deeply impressed by the carpenters and plasterers and became apprentices of the masters who had given guidance to the students.

Since not only construction professionals but also the students, as non-professionals, participated in the construction on their own accord, it was easy for the residents to also participate in the construction work. People from elementary children to eighty-year-old women participated in kneading the mud.

Those who had the physical strength used construction tools, those who were good at cooking made meals for the workers, and those who were not free in the daytime raised funds to support the construction. While all these people strived to complete the construction, they discovered the good points of other participants that were not visible in their daily lives. Since more than two-thousand people participated in the construction through their own approach, someone

stated that this building was already an assembly hall before its completion. The assembly hall utilizing a traditional private house was completed as a symbol of the community in January 2004, the ninth year from the earthquake disaster.

The enthusiastic activities carried out for the relocation have had a considerable impact. Currently, many students, experts, and other volunteers are striving to implement the Japan-Taiwan Interaction Project to Relocate a Traditional Private House. In this project, a traditional house that was constructed by Mr. Tsutomu Minakami's father in Oi Town, Fukui Prefecture will be disassembled and relocated in Taiwan, where a great earthquake occurred. In addition, Seattle wants a traditional Japanese private house to be relocated there.

References

Mitsugu Tanaka, "Creation of a community supported by outsiders (young people) in Mikura district, an area devastated by the earthquake in Kobe - Case study of the district of Mikuradori 5, 6, and 7-chome, Nagata ward, Kobe City," "Study of living and the community," Collection of papers for activities report 4

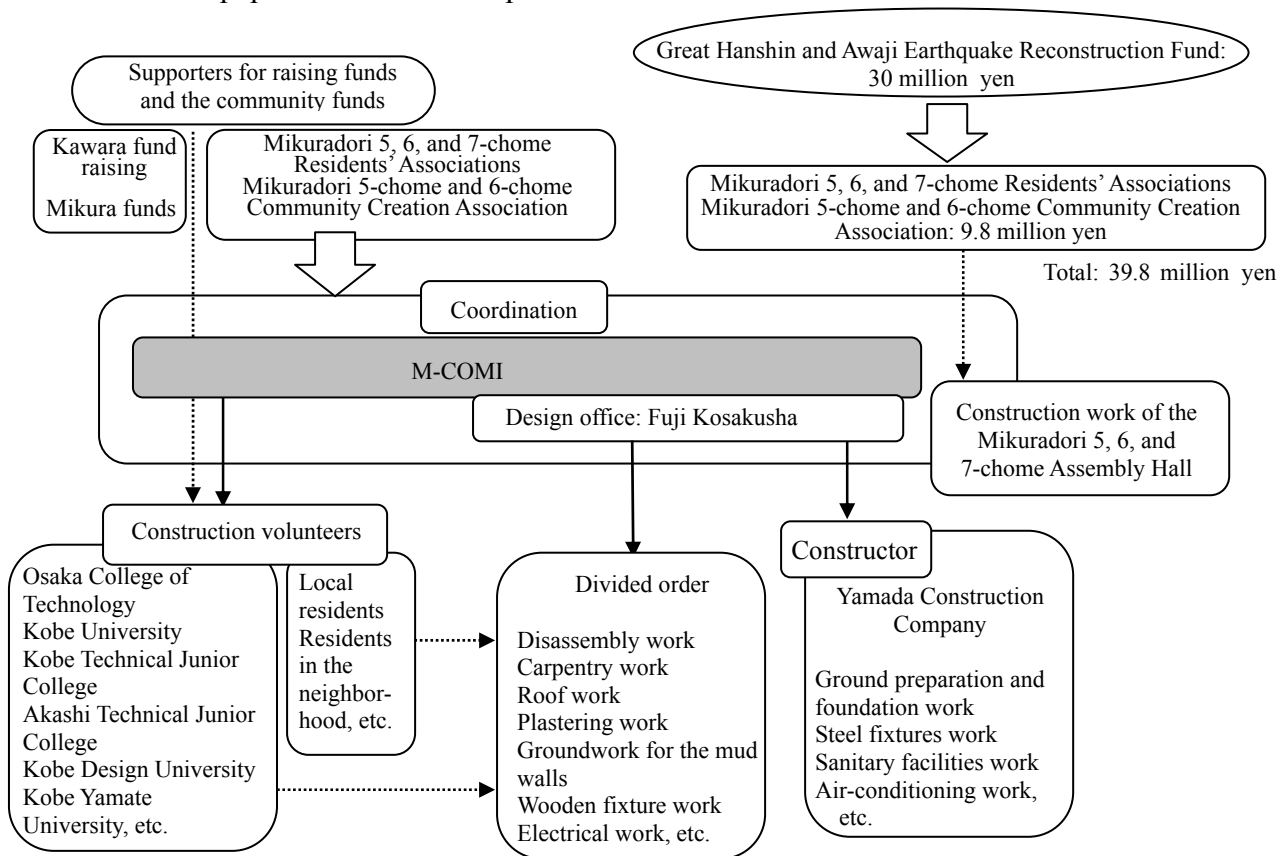


Figure 1 Framework of the construction

Information: Machi-Communication, a group to support communities devastated by the Great Hanshin and Awaji Earthquake, m-comi@bj.wakwak.com 078-578-1100

Excerpted from "The age of restoration and the creation of communities - A strategy for the next generation mapped out based on the experience of the earthquake disaster," pp.46 - 51, Zokeisoshu published by Kenchiku Shiryo Kenkyusha.