

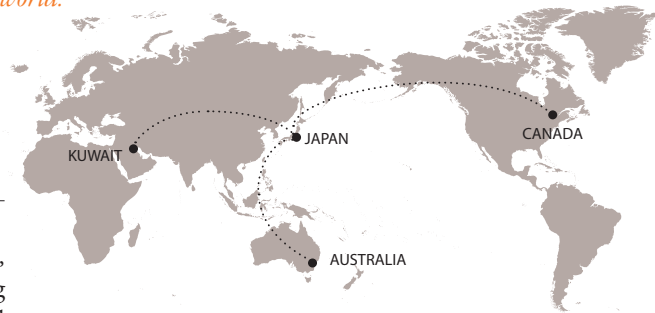
“ARIGATO” FROM JAPAN FOR SUPPORTING RECONSTRUCTION

After the disastrous Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011, which triggered a tsunami along the coast, many countries across the globe responded by donating generous amounts of aid. Now, one decade later, the time has come once again for Japan to give thanks to the world.



Natori City was hit hard by the huge tsunami, which caused unprecedented damage mainly along the Pacific coastline where Sendai International Airport is situated. Canada—no stranger to international exchange with the city—launched the Canada-Tohoku Reconstruction Project, providing aid for the reconstruction of community facilities in Natori in partnership with the provincial governments of British Columbia and Alberta, and the timber group Canada Wood.

In 2013, the project finished building the Donguri Anne Public Library, followed by the Maple-kan



morning market facility. Serving as a symbol for post-disaster recovery, the Maple-kan pavilion was constructed with Canadian timber on the site of the Yuriage Harbor Morning Market—a famous attraction in pre-disaster days—which was completely obliterated by the tsunami and since rebuilt. Local residents continually give thanks for Canada’s support, making such comments as, “Having lost everything, we treat it as a gift from heaven,” and “Now that this Maple-kan has been built we feel inspired to give life another go.”

At present, Natori’s fishing port has succeeded in building back up the local population of blood clams, reputed to be the finest in Japan. In addition, the Natori Cycle Sports Center—which had operated a roughly 4 km cycling route along the coast before it was completely destroyed—has also been rebuilt, giving cycling enthusiasts and families a renewed chance to enjoy the coastline.



Left: The Maple-kan, which has given so much hope and energy to residents. Right: The Donguri Anne Public Library offers a place of peace and tranquility to the people of Natori.



To honor the country, eight railcars bought with the aid have been inscribed in Arabic with the words “We greatly appreciate the support from the State of Kuwait” and decorated with Kuwait’s national emblem.

Following the giant earthquake, Kuwait gave five million barrels of crude oil (equivalent to \$500 million) to Japan free of charge, with the monetary proceeds donated to Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima prefectures. A portion of the aid was used for the restoration of the Sanriku Railway, an important lifeline connecting heavily damaged areas along the whole 107.6 km length of the Iwate coastline. When service was finally restored after more than three years of reconstruction work, local residents flocked to the stations waving Kuwaiti flags.

Aid from Kuwait was also being used to support the reconstruction of affected businesses and schools. Nihonmatsu City, which received the aid, wanted to repay this kindness. Knowing that Kuwait had previously won several Olympic shooting medals, the city announced that it would host Kuwait’s Olympic and Paralympic shooting teams for Tokyo 2020, utilizing the city’s clay and rifle shooting ranges. The city, along with students from the local Adachi Higashi High School, has prepared a special menu for the team based on Kuwait’s national dish, biryani, using ingredients cultivated by the students through the application of GAP.* Local residents are looking forward to welcoming the Kuwaiti team.



The students have created a vegetable-packed biryani-style curry and a consommé julienne with onions grown at the school “to help the Kuwaiti team relax in Japan.”



Tsunami waves as tall as 9.3 m devastated Kamaishi City, the birthplace of modern steelmaking that drove the Japanese economy, which is also famous as a fishing and rugby town. Ten years ago, when the disaster struck, the Australian Scott Fardy, then-member of the Kamaishi Seawaves rugby club (and later, member of the Australian national team), refused to be airlifted out of Japan against the advice from his country’s embassy in Tokyo, and instead remained in Kamaishi with his teammates to continue assisting with heavy work such as moving vital relief supplies.



At the “Welcome Back Fardy!” meeting, Scott Fardy had fun mingling with the local residents.

In 2018, the city invited Fardy and his teammates back to show them how the recovery efforts had progressed in what was dubbed a “Welcome Back Fardy!” meeting. The players from Australia toured the construction site of a rugby stadium destined to be a symbol of post-disaster recovery in the most heavily damaged area of Unosumai, and had some rugby fun with local residents. The following year saw Kamaishi successfully become one of the host venues for the Rugby World Cup 2019 in Japan, during which time the city became a bustling hub of activity.

“We live in appreciation of the support we have received, and want to say that we are working hard each and every day to rebuild the area,” say the local residents. Even now, a full decade after the earthquake struck, memories of the generous aid received still support the people of Kamaishi.



The Kamaishi Unosumai Memorial Stadium hosted a match during the Rugby World Cup 2019. It was the Sanriku Railway, rebuilt with aid from Kuwait, that brought spectators to watch rugby here.

*GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) are a set of principles, regulations, and technical recommendations applicable to production, processing, and food transport, addressing human health care, environment protection, and improvement of worker conditions. (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2007, “the guidelines of Good Agricultural Practices for family agriculture”)