

NPO Hourai
(Fukushima City, Fukushima Prefecture)

URL: <http://www.npohourai.com/>

(1) Project operator: NPO Hourai (Non-profit organization)

[Establishment] November 2008

[Members] 27 local residents in various professions and with various backgrounds, including self-employed workers, farmers, city council members, and university officials (As of March 2012)

[Objectives] The group aims to conduct life-related businesses for local residents in the south district of Fukushima City around the Hourai Danchi (housing complex) and contribute to public benefits. It was established to improve favorable living environments for local communities. To that end, it set up three main goals as follows.

- (1) To establish a center (as a place or organization) that connects the areas promoting collaboration of various entities
- (2) To create a mechanism and device to promote long-term town building by residents
- (3) To organize and implement a project to deal with specific subjects associated with residents' desire and expectation.

Giving top priority to the function as a base in networking for town building in the area, the group aims to create and promote the projects most suitable to build people-to-people link and people-to-organization link (e.g., voluntary groups, regional groups, NPOs, public bodies, and private companies) and provide favorable living environments. The ultimate goal is to go beyond the area (Fukushima south district) and connect various people, organizations, and areas toward a richer society.

(2) Specific activities

As a non-profit organization, the group aims to: 1) promote insurance, healthcare and welfare, 2) promote social education, 3) promote town building, 4) promote academic activities, culture, arts and sports, 5) protect the environment, 6) conduct disaster relief activities, 7) conduct community safety activities, and 8) promote sound development of children. And its major projects include: 1) supports for local revitalization, 2) public relations newsletter, 3) supports for educational issues, 4) supports for environmental protection, and 5) supports to senior citizens. Ongoing activities include "Hoshano-o-butobase-project (Beat Radiation Project), Hourai Round Community Bus Kurukuru," and "Kururin Bus."

"Beat Radiation Project" includes radioactive monitoring in the fields around the south district, demonstration experiments to reduce radiation by using idled plots, provision of idled plots with their safety confirmed to the evacuees, and PR activities and sales events of agricultural crops in the south district. A community bus loops around three routes connecting various stops in the residential area and shopping center(s), banks, hospitals and other major facilities. In particular, "Kururin Bus" provides a means of transportation to the

evacuees from litate (living in temporary houses and public houses) in their daily life, and also runs to encourage communication (interaction) with the residents in the south district. In addition, the group is working actively on the tie-up projects with “Ka-tyan-no-chikara Project” described earlier (request for participation and cooperation of farmers and local residents in events, joint inspection of radioactive substances in local produce). Thus, it works hard to organically connect local residents and various relevant organizations.

(3) Past achievements (Only major activities described here)

i. Interregional exchange projects with Katsurao village

NPO Hourai and Katsurao Ikiiki Exchange Promotion Council exchange memorandums for mutual cooperation and exchange programs to revitalize communities, allow local residents to live active life, and create new local communities in the 21st century.

ii. Liaison Council for Local Resident Activities in the South District of Fukushima City

“Association of the South District of Fukushima City”, a predecessor of the group, as a founder, established the Liaison Council for Local Resident Activities in the South District of Fukushima City. It consists of Fukushima University and 19 residential activity groups from the districts of Matsukawa, Hourai, Shimokawasaki, Kanayagawa, Tatsukoyama, Mizuhara, and Iino. It operates a support system as “Do Tank” for the projects that NPO Hourai promotes.

iii. Support services for the elderly

The group invited Kyoichi Tounai, Assistant Manager of the Health and Welfare Bureau for the Elderly, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, as a lecturer, in the seminar (Subject - “Direction of the “5th term insured long-term care service plan” and development of safe living creation project with an eye on the regional comprehensive care”). Participants included Fukushima University, representatives for long-term care service of prefectural and municipal governments, as well as local residents.

iv. Relief supply support activities

After the Great East Japan Earthquake, we engaged in the delivery of supplies in partnership with the Nippon Foundation since March 20, 2011. With “Abukuma Chaya (tea house)” as a base and in cooperation with the Liaison Council for the South District of Fukushima City and volunteers in Arai, Watari, and Hokida districts, we delivered supplies to the affected areas in Fukushima Prefecture. Thanks to the goodwill of the Liaison Council for Local Resident Activities in the South District of Fukushima-City as established in 2011, Fukushima Medical Association, residents in many districts (Matsukawa, Iino, Tatsukoyama, Arai, Sahara, Hokida, and Watari), kindergarten related groups, hairdressers’ association, NPOs, and many more people, we delivered relieve supplies in vehicles (heavy truck, 2-tons truck, lightweight truck, and van).

(4) Future development and issues to deal with

These projects have been conducted in cooperation with various groups and communities around the district. There may be two main reasons behind their active involvement. Firstly, Hourai District, a base for our activities, was originally developed amid the high-growth period of Japanese economy, and attracted urban middle-class residents, in particular, university officials, individual entrepreneurs, and assembly members. And secondly, those residents used their own knowledge and network to deal with common problems in new town development, such as aging in the district and population or major troubles in the course of a lifetime.

As local communities face more diversifying and more complex problems, we are required to deal with new issues associated with the recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake. Mutual partnership among people, organizations and communities beyond the administrative areas is getting more important than ever before. Thus, we can easily imagine the further growth of both members and the organization itself.

In the background, our major task for the future will be to coordinate the overall projects while sharing awareness among active players and respecting independence of individual groups. Furthermore, it is necessary for major organizations to promote generational changes in key persons and administrative staff and accumulate and pass on the knowledge and know-how gained through the past activities. These activities are more effective when partners work together and cooperate.