



## 2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

**Title of the Story:** Higashimatsushima's Resilience Loop nurtured in the face of adversity: Learning from and working with Denmark for a sustainable future

**Destination Name:** *(include any state, province or region)*

Higashimatsushima City

**Country:** Japan

**Submitter name:** Masanori Kudo, with the support of Hisayoshi Sugawara (Higashimatsushima City)

**Email address:** kudo@inoutbound.co.jp

**Position:** COO / CMO

**Nomination Category:** *(Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)*

*Please find detailed information for the categories below in the Top 100 training module 'Good Practice Story'.*

- Localizing the destination supply chain
- Decarbonizing the destination supply chain
- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Tourism Reset & Recovery

*Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices in the Top 100 training module "Good Practice Story".*

*Should you have any questions on your submission please refer to our FAQ page or contact [top100@greendestinations.org](mailto:top100@greendestinations.org)*

# DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

*Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.*

## Issues faced

The Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011 caused devastating damage to extensive areas in Higashimatsushima City. 45 per cent of the entire city and 65 per cent of the residential area were inundated. 1,133 people were killed or missing, which was equivalent to three per cent of the city's population at the time.

The Kingdom of Denmark was one of the first international communities to extend a helping hand to the city. The collaboration between them, which began with an emergency visit to Higashimatsushima by the then Ambassador of Denmark to Japan, Mr Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin on the 30th of the same month to donate 16.5 million yen "for the children of the affected area", provided the opportunity to explore and implement a creative reconstruction of Higashimatsushima, not just to "restore the area to its former state", but to "rebuild it for the better." It was an opportunity to explore and implement a creative reconstruction that was unique to Higashimatsushima.

In the following years, they visited each other repeatedly to learn together on the common theme of how to create a sustainable future for the next generations.

## Methods, steps and tools applied

Through mutual visits to Higashimatsushima and Lolland, Denmark, the two cities shared their reconstruction and environmental challenges and goals (i.e. to promote decarbonisation and environmentally friendly urban development), and sought to identify and resolve local issues through workshops and fieldwork on the theme of the sea.

1. Higashimatsushima: Learning from Denmark to rebuild it for the better, more sustainable city

### ► 2011

11 March: The Great East Japan Earthquake struck Tohoku

30 March: Ambassador Mellbin visits Higashimatsushima City to deliver donations.

mid-June: On the occasion of Crown Prince Frederik's visit to Higashimatsushima, the "Higashimatsushima-Danish Friendship Children's Fund" is set up. (The Crown Prince makes a return visit six years later)

22 December: Higashimatsushima selected as a "Environmental Future City" by the Japanese Government

>> Learning from the energy policy of Lolland (De-fossil fuels by 2011, 100% renewable energy by 2050), Higashimatsushima City has included in its "Reconstruction Plan" the construction of an independent and decentralized power source based on renewable energy, mainly solar and biomass, and the low-carbonisation of buildings. This was one of the main reasons for the award.

### ► 2012

9 July: Signing of the "Agreement on Cooperation and Collaboration for the Recovery from the Earthquake"



with the city of Lolland

>> The main purpose of the agreement is to make greater use of renewable energy in Higashimatsushima City with the support of Lolland.

► 2018

15 June: Higashimatsushima selected as a “SDGs Future City” by the Japanese Government

>> Based on the aforementioned “Environmental Future City” concept, a sustainable action plan for 2030 was developed with more specific KPIs.

2. Denmark: Taking what Higashimatsushima has learnt in the reconstruction process to create a more sustainable future together.

► 2015

23-31 March: With the “Higashimatsushima-Danish Friendship Children’s Fund”, 12 junior high school students from Higashimatsushima and four teachers visited Lolland.

>> The students made a presentation in English about their experiences of the Great East Japan Earthquake and recovery from the disaster, and expressed the gratitude for the support from Danish people. They also learnt from Denmark’s advance use of renewable energy through living with host families.

► 2018

6-8 August: As part of a civic exchange programme, Seaweed fisherman Futoshi Aizawa, among others, visits Lolland, Denmark.

>> Higashimatsushima City has a thriving seaweed farming industry, and despite the devastation caused by the 2011 quake and tsunami, the seaweed was dedicated to the Imperial family five years after the disaster. Mr Aizawa grew up on the Omagari-hama beach, which was heavily affected by the 2011 tsunami. Despite being affected, he is committed to the recovery of the local community, and on top of that, he also runs workshops to bring people together and create a harmonious society.

During his visit to Lolland, he inspected the local sea and learnt about the realities of the local fishing industry. Subsequently, he made a proposal for the local environment. The proposal was not to cultivate seaweed for eating, but to improve the environment of the Baltic Sea, which is also known as the “Sea of Death”, using seaweed for biomass energy.

► 2019

4 February: Mr and Mrs Svane, Danish Ambassador to Japan, visited Omagari beach to participate in Mr Aizawa’s seaweed workshop.

>> At the National Bioeconomy Conference in Denmark, seaweed and laver were featured prominently. The topic was in line with the Danish Government’s policy of “shifting to a less meat-eating diet” in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The momentum for seaweed farming is growing on the islands of Lolland and Falster.

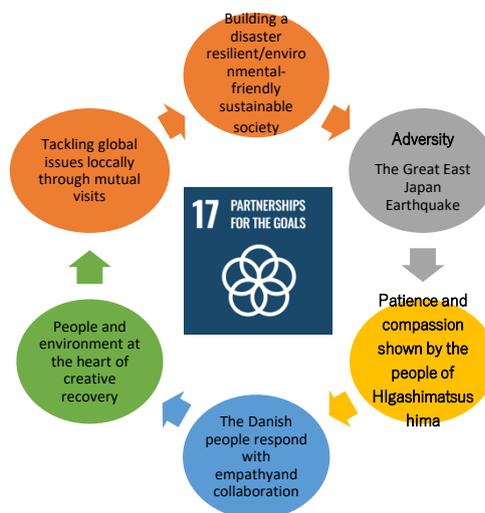
► Currently, mutual visits have been suspended due to the COVID-19, but the policy of continuous exchange remains unchanged.

### Key success factors

- In order to overcome the unprecedented disaster of the Great East Japan Earthquake, Higashimatsushima City has consistently maintained a vision of a better future, and at the heart of this vision has been the creation of an environmentally-friendly sustainable society.
- The patience and compassion shown by the people of Higashimatsushima in overcoming adversity, and the empathy and collaborative attitude shown by the Danish people, have led to a relationship of mutual learning by example through continuous mutual visits.
- Mutual and continuous exchanges have enabled each other to put common global issues (e.g., environmental protection and climate change, etc.) into local contexts, leading to concrete actions. Concrete actions, in turn, have enabled collaboration and participation, and the visualized results and challenges have provided lessons that can be applied elsewhere.
- HOPE, as a partnership between industry, academia, and government, was set up to put the vision into practice. The later Dr Michiaki Omura, who contributed greatly to the establishment of HOPE, specialised in Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), so that the collaborative work between the city and HOPE always reflected the perspective of minimizing environmental impact rather than merely reducing costs.

### Lessons learned

- In the process of overcoming the adversity of the Great East Japan Earthquake through partnership, the following “Resilience Loop” was established. Even under the COVID-19, the relationship between the two has not shaken, and it is expected that when international traffic is restored, their “localhoods” will meet again through sustainable and responsible tourism.



The Resilience Loop nurtured through mutual exchange between Higashimatsushima and Denmark Kingdom

### Results, achievements and recognitions

- The establishment of “HOPE”, an industry-academia-government collaboration initiative for regional revitalisation, and the planning and implementation of reconstruction policies based on renewable energy (October 2012)

- Okumatsushima “Kizuna” Solar Park: started solar-power generation from August 2013
  - “Disaster-prepared smart eco-town”: built a resilience model by connecting one public disaster housing complex to four hospitals and public facilities via power lines. This is a resilience model that can be powered in case of emergency.
  - Installment of locally-distributed power supply (“Smart Pole”): Smart Pole, equipped with small wind and solar power generators and storage batteries, are installed at core evacuation centres to enhance disaster-preparedness.
- >> Through HOPE’s electricity business, we create a cycle of economy, energy, and people to revitalize the region.
- Through the above projects, 8,402 tons of carbon dioxide was reduced over the five years since 2015.
  - The population decline is only around nine per cent, compared to pre-earthquake levels.
  - Miyanomori Primary School was rebuilt (completed in January 2017) as a wooden school building using renewable energy, following the model of the "Forest Kindergarten" in Lolland Island. Several families have moved to the area to send their children to the school.
  - Higashimatsushima City was selected as the “Reconstruction ‘Thank You’ Host Town” for the Danish National Team at the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in November 2017.

#### Additional references

*Provide links to further information. Pictures and videos should be available for download either from Youtube, Vimeo or other Cloud-based (Google/ One Drive) download URL.*

- Background to the Signing of an "Agreement on Collaboration and Cooperation for Disaster Reconstruction" between Higashimatsushima and Lolland.

#### ► 2011

30 March Ambassador Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin makes first visit to Higashimatsushima City to support disaster-stricken areas: Donate 16.5 million yen and toys entrusted by Danish companies and volunteers.

30 May Visit by Ambassador Mellbin and Maersk Japan: Discussions on the establishment of the "Danish Friendship Children's Fund"

14 June Crown Prince Frederik's visits to Akai Minami Nursery School, Ono Elementary School, and temporary housing sites to encourage affected children and students. At Ono Elementary School (gymnasium), he played futsal with 6th graders of Hamaichi Elementary School.

14 June Establishment of the "Danish Friendship Children's Fund"

18 June Joint memorial service in Higashimatsushima City: the Danish Ambassador to Japan lays flowers to disaster victims.

7 July Norden donates 1.5 million yen: set aside for the Children’s Fund

29 July Novo Nordisk A/S donates 1.6 million yen: set aside for the Children's Fund

29 July Maersk Broker Japan donates 4 million yen: set aside for the Children's Fund

31 August Grundfos Holding A/S drilled and donated a well in front of the Higashimatsushima Library entrance, installing its own pumps and solar panels.

15~26 September 12 Junior high school students from Higashimatsushima visited Denmark: All travel and accommodation expenses were covered by Danish companies. Homestay in Fredensborg; Accompanying staff visited Lolland City to observe low-carbon city planning. The then Danish Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Damsgaard, welcomed them at Sendai Airport.



3 November Workshop with Prince Joachim and his spouse: Art workshop in Daikanyama. 10 groups of parents and children of Higashimatsushima city were invited.

15 December DCCJ (Danish Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Japan) donates 4 million yen: set aside for the Children's Fund

22 December Selected as one of the 11 "Future Cities for the Environment": the plan was developed by learning from Danish urban planning, including the use of renewable energy, social apartments (collective houses), and citizen collaboration.

▶2012

22~30 January Visit to Denmark by the Higashimatsushima Director of the Reconstruction Policy Department and others: the late Mr Furuyama, Director of the Reconstruction Policy Department (at the time), and others visited Lolland City to study Danish urban planning.

16 February Her Majesty the Queen of Denmark Margrethe II donates 7 million yen: set aside for the Children's Fund

22 March Members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Folketing, or the Parliament of Denmark, made a first visit to Higashimatsushima City

14 July Comprehensive Agreement between Lolland and Higashimatsushima: In the presence of the Danish ambassador, the two cities collaborated mainly to promote the use of renewable energy.

○The Agreement on Collaboration and Cooperation for Disaster Reconstruction between Higashimatsushima and Lolland.



東松島市とロラン市による  
震災復興に向けた連携及び協力に関する協定書

東松島市（以下「甲」という。）とロラン市（以下「乙」という。）は、震災復興に向けた連携及び協力について、次のとおり協定を締結する。

（目的）

第1条 この協定は、震災復興に向けた課題について、甲と乙が密接な連携と協力により取り組むことを目的とする。

（連携協定）

第2条 甲と乙は、前条の目的を達成するために、次に掲げる事項について、連携及び協力を行う。

- (1) 東松島市における総合的な再生エネルギー政策に関するすべてのこと。
- (2) 東松島市における再生エネルギー技術、環境教育、人材育成に関すること。
- (3) 再生エネルギー技術の地域利用に関する実証等に関すること。
- (4) 再生エネルギー資源の活用と廃棄に関すること。
- (5) その他前条に規定する目的を達成するために必要な事項に関すること。

（秘密保持）

第3条 この協定に基づき、甲及び乙が知り得た情報については、それぞれ秘密を保持する。ただし、事前に相手方の承諾を得た場合は、この限りではない。

（協定書の期限等）

第4条 この協定は、協定締結の日から発効し、有効期限は平成25年3月31日までとする。ただし、期間満了の1ヶ月前までに甲又は乙のいずれかから申し出がない場合は、さらに1年間更新し、その後も同様とする。

2 前項の規定にかかわらず、所期の目的を達成したときは、この限りではない。

（その他）

第5条 この協定に定めのない事項について定める必要が生じたとき、又はこの協定に定める事項を変更しようとするときは、甲及び乙が協議の上、定める。

この協定の締結を証するため、本協定書2通を作成し、甲及び乙が署名押印の上、各自その1通を保有する。

平成24年7月9日

甲 宮城県東松島市矢本字上河戸36番地1  
東松島市長

阿部 泰保

乙 Jernbanegade 7 4980 Maribo  
Denmark  
Mayor of Lolland Municipality

Oluf Vestergaard

○Higashimatsushima City, a city with an environmental future

<https://future-city.go.jp/torikumi/higashimatsushima/>

○Denmark: National Bioeconomy Conference

<https://www.bioguldborgsund.dk/index.php/artikel/havets-ressourcer-webinar-og-workshop-2021>

