

4. Environmental risk management (3) Environmental health measures

[4] Promotion of measures on Minamata disease

Description in the plan

- Based on laws such as the “Act on Special Measures Concerning Relief for Victims of Minamata Disease and Solution to the Problem of Minamata Disease (Act No. 81 of 2009, hereinafter referred to as “Act on Relief for Victims of Minamata Disease”)”, we will implement compensation, medical treatment and welfare measures, and revitalization and reconciliation of local communities in collaboration with relevant local governments and others so that all victims and local people can live in the community with peace of mind.

Progress and assessment of measures

i) Progress since 2018

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| 2018 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Held the Memorial Ceremony for Minamata Disease Victims (with attendance of Masaharu Nakagawa, Minister of the Environment) (May 1, 2018)- Held the 42nd Special Certification Council for Minamata Disease (4 cases reviewed → 4 cases dismissed) (May 12, 2018)- Held certification councils in each prefecture and city (431 cases reviewed, 1 case certified)- Payment of medical expenses to Minamata disease victims (<u>approx. 9.9 billion yen</u>), and promotion of development and revitalization projects in areas affected by Minamata disease (<u>220 million yen</u>) |
| 2019 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Held the 43rd Special Certification Council for Minamata Disease (2 cases reviewed → 2 cases dismissed) (Sept. 7, 2019)- Held the Memorial Ceremony for Minamata Disease Victims (with attendance of Shinjiro Koizumi, Minister of the Environment) (Oct. 19, 2019)- Held certification councils in each prefecture and city (509 cases reviewed, 1 case certified)- Payment of medical expenses to Minamata disease victims (<u>approx. 9.9 billion yen</u>), and promotion of development and revitalization projects in areas affected by Minamata disease (<u>260 million yen</u>) |
| 2020 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Formulation of “National Institute for Minamata Disease Mid-term Plan 2020” (Apr. 1, 2020)- Held the 44th Special Certification Council for Minamata Disease (2 cases reviewed → 2 cases dismissed) (Mar. 15, 2021)- Held certification councils in each prefecture and city (174 cases reviewed, 1 case certified)- Payment of medical expenses to Minamata disease victims (<u>approx. 10.1 billion yen</u>), and promotion of development and revitalization projects in areas affected by Minamata disease (<u>240 million yen</u>) |
| 2021 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <u>Held certification councils in each prefecture and city (179 cases reviewed → 179 cases dismissed)</u>- <u>Payment of medical expenses to Minamata disease victims (approx. 10.3 billion yen), and promotion of development and revitalization projects in areas affected by Minamata disease (440 million yen)</u> |
| 2022 | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Held the Memorial Ceremony for Minamata Disease Victims (with attendance of Tsuyoshi Yamaguchi, Minister of the Environment) (May 1, 2022) |



Memorial Ceremony for Minamata Disease Victims



Memorial Ceremony for Minamata Disease Victims

* The Memorial Ceremony for Minamata Disease Victims in FY 2020 and FY 2021 was cancelled due to COVID-19.

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Progress and assessment of measures

ii) Quantitative assessment of progress

- **Certification under the Pollution-related Health Damage Compensation Law**

Since April 2018, four new cases (two in Kumamoto prefecture and two in Niigata prefecture) have been certified as having Minamata disease under the Pollution-related Health Damage Compensation Law. As of June 2022, 3,000 people have been certified.

- **Changes in the number of undisposed persons by the Special Certification Council for Minamata Disease**

The number of undisposed persons decreased from 10 as of April 2018 to 3.

- **Changes in the number of undisposed persons under the Act on Compensation**

The number of undisposed persons decreased from 2,042 as of April 2018 to 1,572.

- **Number of visitors to the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum**

42,935 in FY 2018, 38,533 in FY 2019, 2,671 in FY 2020, and 9,722 in FY 2021

- **Number of lectures by the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum Storytellers' Association**

284 in FY 2018, 265 in FY 2019, 2 in FY 2020, and 94 in FY 2021 (all lectures held online).

- **Number of papers published at National Institute for Minamata Disease**

26 in FY 2018 (including 10 joint papers), 22 in FY 2019 (including 10 joint papers), 24 in FY 2020 (including 9 joint papers), and 29 in FY 2021 (including 9 joint papers)



Minamata Disease Municipal Museum

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Progress and assessment of measures

iii) Overall assessment of progress

- Compensation and relief for the damage by Minamata disease have been steadily promoted through the accumulation of disposition under the Pollution-related Health Damage Compensation Law and the payment of committed medical expenses to the victims of Minamata disease (FY 2021 result: approx. 440 million yen).
- Through the implementation of regional development and revitalization measures, including the promotion of eco-friendly beach development projects and environmentally friendly agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, projects to create a strong economy and spiritually rich local communities have been promoted in areas affected by Minamata disease, using the “environment” as leverage.
- Even in the midst of the spread of COVID-19, environmental education and other projects related to the Minamata disease issues have been promoted by taking measures such as holding remote lecture meetings and distributing DVDs.

Direction of future measures

- (1) **Notify** those who have applied for the certification of Minamata disease under the Pollution-related Health Damage Compensation Law **of the results of the disposition** as soon as possible.
- (2) Contribute to the medical treatment and welfare, regeneration and reconciliation, and development and revitalization of the areas affected by Minamata disease through the implementation of projects to **promote the health** of local residents, **eliminate their health concerns**, **restore community bonds**, and **promote local development**.
- (3) Conduct comprehensive surveys and research on Minamata disease and collect, organize and provide information from Japan and abroad to **contribute to the prevention of recurrence of pollution** in Japan and abroad and **the welfare of the affected areas**.

Issues and challenges for the next plan

- (1) **Maintain and strengthen necessary systems** for early disposition under the Pollution-related Health Damage Compensation Law
- (2) **Promote effective and efficient medical treatment and welfare, regeneration and reconciliation, and development and revitalization projects** that contribute to the areas affected by Minamata disease
- (3) **Promote** comprehensive **methylmercury research**, including development of objective testing methods

Major compensation and relief for Minamata disease to date

1970-: Certification under the Pollution-related Health Damage Compensation Law

Approx. 3,000 people

[Certification criteria] (Judgment conditions in 1977)
Symptoms including sensory disturbance in the distal portions of the extremities, ataxia, disorder of equilibrium, and narrowing of visual field

(Reference) At the end of April 2022: 375 people

1995: Political settlement

Approx. 12,400 people (including approx. 1,200 people who received medical expenses only)

Peripheral limb dominant sensory disturbance, etc.

(Reference) At the end of April 2022: 4,543 people

2009: Act on Special Measures Concerning Relief for Victims of Minamata Disease and Solution to the Problem of Minamata Disease

Approx. 38,000 people (including approx. 6,000 people who received medical expenses only)

Including systemic and dissociated sensory disturbances

(Reference) At the end of April 2022: 29,127 people

Major initiatives for medical treatment and welfare in the areas affected by Minamata disease

In order to realize a society in which all of the diverse people living in the community can live with peace of mind, **health and welfare** initiatives have been implemented to address the decline in abilities of patients and their caregivers to perform daily activities and carry out nursing care, due to the aging of them.

○ Livelihood support for patients with fetal Minamata disease, etc.

➤ Provision of day care service, etc.

- Support such as day care service, home assistance and outing support has been provided so that fetal and pediatric patients facing the aging of themselves and their caregivers can live their daily lives with peace of mind in their communities.

(Status of support)

In FY 2020, seven organizations provided support.

Budget: 30 million yen



Day care service project

○ Care prevention projects on remote islands, etc.

- Rehabilitation and other measures to alleviate neurological symptoms and improve or avoid aggravation of movement disorders have been implemented so that Minamata disease victims and others can maintain their independent lives as long as possible.

(Status of initiatives)

In FY 2020, rehabilitation and day care services using health-care equipment, etc. were implemented in three locations in Kumamoto prefecture and six locations in Kagoshima prefecture.

Budget: 47 million yen



Care prevention project

Major initiatives for regeneration and reconciliation of the areas affected by Minamata disease

In order to realize a society in which all of the diverse people living in the community can live with peace of mind, initiatives have been implemented to restore the community bonds that were lost due to prejudice and discrimination related to Minamata disease.

○ Projects related to Moyai Naoshi

Moyai Naoshi: It represents the initiative to face the issue of Minamata disease and collaborate through dialogs to regenerate the community.

➤ Support for Memorial Ceremony for Minamata Disease Victims

- Held annually on May 1 (derived from the official confirmation date of Minamata disease)

(Status of initiative)

FY 2018: Held on May 1.

FY 2019: Held on Oct. 19.

FY 2020 and FY 2021: (Cancelled due to COVID-19)

FY 2022: Held on May 1.

➤ Support for Fire Festival

- An event made by the citizens to pray for all the lives of Minamata disease victims, while at the same time placing their wishes for the revitalization of the community in the flames.

(Status of initiative)

FY 2018: Held on Sept. 22 with approx. 300 participants.

FY 2019: Held on Sept. 21 with approx. 300 participants.

FY 2020: (Cancelled due to COVID-19)

FY 2021: Held on Sept. 18 with approx. 60 participants.

○ Dissemination of information on Minamata disease, environmental learning, etc.

- Lectures by storytellers and others have been conducted to eliminate prejudice against Minamata disease.
- Lectures, etc. to learn environmental and other issues have been conducted to create a social environment in the community that supports Minamata disease victims.

(Status of initiative)

FY 2019: Lecture on "Minamata Disease on Utasebune Boat" (with 37 participants), Niigata Minamata Disease Public Lecture (1 time), school visit project (42 schools), awareness-raising project for school teachers and staff (11 locations), awareness-raising project for guardians (11 locations), environmental learning support project (25 schools), training for companies (2 times), setting up booths at international conferences and conducting lectures by storytellers, awareness-raising activities for foreign residents and students, multilingualization of exhibits at the Minamata Disease Municipal Museum, data collection, storage and management project, etc.

Budget: 43 million yen

FY 2020: Niigata Minamata Disease Public Lecture (1 time), environmental learning support project (11 schools), supporter project for Niigata Learning Center for Humans & the Environment (10 times), one-day director and summer vacation research project (with 16 participants), awareness-raising project for junior high school students (10 schools), high school visit project (11 schools), awareness-raising project for school teachers and staff (7 times), awareness-raising project for guardians (2 locations), multilingualization of rental DVDs of storytellers and the support for the adaptation of these DVDs to handicapped people, and multilingualization of permanent exhibits, etc.

Budget: 43 million yen



Memorial Ceremony for Minamata Disease Victims



Fire Festival



Awareness-raising project on Minamata disease

Major initiatives for development and revitalization of the areas affected by Minamata disease

In order to promote regional development and secure employment in the areas affected by Minamata disease, “a new approach to regional development that enables economic development while reducing environmental burdens,” utilizing the accumulation of many years of environmental and “Moyai Naoshi” efforts.

○ Strengthening of industrial infrastructure, etc., utilizing local environmental resources

- Support for projects to strengthen the local economy and industrial infrastructure and initiatives (human resources development, research, etc.) that contribute to sustainable regional development that enables compatibility between the environment and economy (opening of Minamata Environmental Academia, etc.)

(Status of support)

FY 2019: Promotion of activities and holding of a symposium (1 time) at the Minamata Environmental Academia, holding of technical courses and seminars for farmers (24 times) as a project to promote environmentally friendly agriculture, etc.

Budget: 40 million yen

FY 2020: Online workshop with Minamata High School and Vietnam Japan University (1 time), etc.

Budget: 40 million yen



Minamata Environmental Academia

○ Promotion of low-carbon tourism

- Support for initiatives to promote low-carbon tourism using public transportation to revitalize the areas affected by Minamata disease (e.g., development of community buses).

(Status of support)

FY 2019: Holding of individual consultation meetings and participation in exhibitions of products as a project to develop sales channels for local specialty products, holding of sea creature observation events as a project to promote the attractiveness of the revitalized sea of Minamata (7 times), implementation of a tourism promotion project for the Minamata and Ashikita area, etc.

Budget: 12 million yen

FY 2020: Holding of individual consultation meetings and participation in exhibitions of projects as a project to develop sales channels for local specialty products, holding of sea creature observation events as a project to promote the attractiveness of the revitalized sea of Minamata (4 times), implementation of an attractiveness promotion project for the Minamata and Ashikita area, etc.

Budget: 12 million yen



Community bus