

Honeywell Ibasho House: Japan



In 2011, over 18,000 people were killed and more than 65,000 people were displaced when a massive earthquake and tsunami hit northern Japan. Entire communities were devastated, but among the survivors, both older and young spoke of elders who saved younger people's lives by guiding them to higher ground and teaching them how to survive with extremely limited resources. In turn, older people expressed a great deal of gratitude for the aid they received. Many people of all ages wanted to give back and be useful to others but did not know how.

Recognizing the vulnerabilities and strengths of the elders in these communities, teams from the non-profit organizations Ibasho and Operation USA visited the affected area to conduct interviews with elderly survivors in temporary community housing. They heard tales of extraordinary courage and hardship, and also of a strong desire to contribute to the rebuilding of their communities. Honeywell Ibasho House was inspired and created by this spirit, as a partnership among the community of Ofunato, Japan, Ibasho, Operation USA, and Honeywell.

*"I lost everything on that day,
but we still have each other."
(87-year-old Survivor)*

Challenging Social Perceptions of "Aging"

The Ibasho house challenges perceptions of the role of the elderly in disaster recovery by transforming them from people to be cared for to advocates who help others. At Ibasho, we believe that elders can and should be regarded as valuable resources to our communities. In modern society, older people often become marginalized and lose the ability to contribute to society, while young people lose the wisdom and talents that elders can offer. The Honeywell Ibasho House will benefit not only the elderly survivors of this disaster, but to the respect and dignity of elders in our society as the world faces a global aging phenomenon.

Local elders played an integral role in the design of Honeywell Ibasho House, contributing their wisdom and experience to project and the overall reconstruction process. Even the building itself symbolizes the beauty and resilience of aging: it is an old farmhouse donated by the Ozawa family that was disassembled, moved, and reconstructed as Honeywell Ibasho House by local craftsmen (mostly elders), many of whom suffered their own losses in the tsunami.



Ibasho House Interior: The Ozawa family traditional farmhouse was transformed into a comfortable gathering place where eastern and western styles mesh for attracting both young and older

Community Ownership

In Ofunato, the Ibasho principles inspired a new sense of community after the tsunami, bringing together people of all ages to make it a reality. Honeywell Ibasho House was built by and for the community in Ofunato. Community members of all ages are engaged in the project, directing it according to their cultural needs and traditions. And this is not a fleeting interest. To ensure long-term sustainability, local elders formed the Ibasho Sozo Project, a not for profit organization that manages the operation of the Honeywell Ibasho House.

Global cooperation with local results

The Honeywell Ibasho House project was initiated in February 2012 with the generous support of Honeywell Hometown Solutions, Operation USA, and Tenjinkai. Many volunteer experts from around the world worked tirelessly with community elders to bring this project to reality in June 2013. The result: a place where the entire community can gather and work together toward recovery. But an Ibasho house is much more than a building. It is a place where elders take a leadership role and serve their entire community, strengthening bonds and building resilience.

At Ibasho, our goal is to create a shared future in which aging is not something to fear.

The Ibasho Approach

'Ibasho' means a place where all people feel they belong and are accepted.

In Ofunato, Ibasho house is an informal place for neighborhood people of all ages to gather and be together.

The Honeywell Ibasho House was built on the Ibasho principles described below. Here, older people will not passively sit and be served. Instead, they actively join in the planning, management and operation of the organization. It is a place where having elders around, participating in discussions and working is a normal part of everyday life. The Ibasho Sozo project also encourages people living with physical disabilities or cognitive illnesses such as dementia are encouraged to participate to their fullest ability. At the Ibasho house, elders are recognized as community assets and a source of history and wisdom to guide younger generations.

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Ibasho Café Principles

1. Older people are a valuable asset to the community (elder wisdom):

In modern society, the elderly are often considered to be a burden and as people who need care and looked after. However, the elders' wealth of wisdom is something to be valued and treasured. Ibasho believes in a society where the elderly can contribute with confidence and are leaned on and valued.

2. Creating informal gathering places (normalcy):

Living in institutions: lives with strict rules and schedules are confining and limiting. Ibasho believes in places of normalcy where elders can pop in at any time at their leisure.

3. Community members drive development and implementation (community ownership):

Ibasho believes in each member of the community sharing a sense of ownership and pride of place. Each place, whether a café or home, it is not something that is created for them but it is created with them.

4. All generations are involved in the community (multi-generational):

Connecting within one's own generation is easy and comfortable but why stop there? Ibasho believes in a place where the young learn from the richly lived lives of the elderly and the elderly learn from the young's ability to pick up new things quickly.

5. All residents participate in normal community life (de-marginalization):

A cross section of a community includes the young, elderly, disabled, family rearing, care taking and even the socially disconnected. Ibasho is a place to not to worry about what one "can not" do but rather what one "can" do.

6. Local culture and traditions are respected (culturally appropriate):

Each community has its own history and culture. Perhaps it is not something you can easily put your finger on. Ibasho is where one can discover and reflect on the treasures of the community.

7. Communities are environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable (resilience):

Ibasho is a place where we strive for the environment, economy and people to be in harmony. Ibasho will protect the nature that brings bounty to life, be economically self sufficient, and cherish the connections between each individual. How special it will be if those connections forge beyond the boundary of the community or even beyond its own country.

8. Growth of the community is organic and embraces imperfection gracefully (embracing imperfection):

Ibasho does not strive for immediate perfection. It is adaptive and flexible in working with life, as life is forever changing. Each community has its own path to balance and perfection. Ibasho believes in the possibility of change. With time, with people, Ibasho will gently embrace imperfection.



Shared Future



English book reading event: Children and their parents and grandparents were able to learn English from the native English speakers. Children's English book library is filled with donated books from overseas.

At Ibasho, our goal is to create a shared future in which aging is not something to fear. Aging is a reality, and everyone should enjoy it as a respected and valued member of his or her own community, no matter where that is.

We work to promote the value of integrating elders into their communities and demonstrate the value of these multi-generational approaches to traditional, developing and modern societies. In order to make the widest impact possible, a core aspect of our work is careful analysis and evaluation of our results to facilitate shared learning, and to replicate pathways that work across and between developed and developing countries.

**We believe this is not just an investment in people and places that are far away.
This is an investment in our own future.**

With your support, the Ibasho principles can become a reality.

Want to know more? Can you help?



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Ibasho is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that strives to create socially integrated and sustainable community that values elders. All contributions are tax-deductible in accordance with IRS regulations.