Lessons and Recommendations from Japanese Civil Society for the Post 2015 DRR Framework

— Based on the experience from the Great East Japan Earthquake —

Current Situation

Deceased and /or missing	18,559 (Source: National Police Agency, May 2013)
Buildings partially /completely destroyed	400,436 structures (Source: National Police Agency, May 2013)
Peak number of evacuees (Approx. May 2011)	470, 000 (Source: National Police Agency)
Current number of evacuees	309,000 (Source: Reconstruction Agency, April 2013)

It was by far the worst disaster Japan has faced since World War II, and there are many lessons learnt that relate to preparedness, response, and consequences of the nuclear disaster which Japanese civil society can communicate to the world.

Our recommendations cover the following 12 topics:

- Inclusion of nuclear power risks to definition of 'vulnerability'
- Considering diversity within vulnerable groups
- Gap between policy and implementation
- Nuclear power risks and human rights, information disclosure
- Accountability and capacity building
- Complaint handling mechanisms
- Coordination mechanisms and officially-recognized roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Consensus building
- Volunteers
- Re-assess disaster risk reduction education and traditional knowledge
- Local initiatives

On March 11, 2011, a devastating 9.0-magnitude earthquake struck the north-eastern coast of Japan, triggering a massive tsunami that washed away several coastal cities, destroyed critical infrastructure, crippled thousands of businesses and caused the death of thousands of people. Almost 16,000 people have been confirmed dead, almost 6,000 injured, and 2,700 are either still missing or are unaccounted for (source: National Police Agency). Around 470,000 were made homeless by the disaster, and among them 160,000 are from Fukushima prefecture alone. There are still more than 309,000 people evacuated from their original homes due to this disaster, with around 20-30% of total debris disposed of (the remaining debris waits in temporary storage sites). The earthquake and tsunami also destabilized the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power station, causing reactors to overheat and leak radiation, which turned out to be one of the most serious nuclear accidents the world has ever faced. As a result of the disaster, the Japanese government began reviewing its energy policy and the role of nuclear power in Japan.

Despite the challenges that arose from the unprecedented scale and nature of this triple disaster (9.0 earthquake, tsunami, and accident at the nuclear power plant), civil society in Japan has evolved and adapted to one of the most challenging humanitarian responses yet faced in its history. The lessons it learnt through its struggle are summarized in line with the recommendations given from the Global Network of CSOs for Disaster Reduction (GNDR) while substantiating some of the recommendation points with specific experiences and lessons learnt from Japan. On May 9th 2013, major organizations from Japanese civil society gathered in Tokyo to summarize these recommendations, particularly aiming to disseminate them at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Geneva, Switzerland.

Sharing these lessons learnt is an initiative by Japanese Civil Society with the hope that similar disasters will not occur in the future, and that the world is equipped with disaster risk reduction knowledge, experience, and lessons learnt from the past, to help achieve the global goal of building more resilient communities.

Formulation and Endorsement Group

AmeriCares
Association for Aid and Relief, Japan
CARE International Japan
ChildFund Japan
CHURCH WORLD SERVICE JAPAN /ASIA PACIFIC
Citizens towards Overseas Disaster Emergency
Dynax Urban Environment Research Inst.,Inc.
Global Community Interaction
Human Rights Now
International Medical Corps Japan
Japan Conservation Engineers & Co., Ltd

Japan International Volunteer Center
Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation
Kansai NGO Council
Peace Boat Disaster Relief Volunteer Center
Sakura Net
Save the Children Japan
SEEDS Asia
Shanti Volunteer Association
ShaplaNeer = Citizens' Committee in Japan for Overseas Support
Women's Network for East Japan Disaster (Rise Together)
World Vision Japan

Host Organizations

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE JAPAN /ASIA PACIFIC
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http://www.janic.org/en/earthquake/
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Peace Boat Disaster Relief Volunteer Center [PBV]
3-13-1 B1 Takadanobaba, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo
http://peaceboat.jp/relief
relief@pbv.or.jp

CWS JAPAN
actalliance

JANIC

PEACE BOAT

Recommendations from Japanese Civil Society at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR)

GNDR Recommendation 2
Prioritize the most at-risk, poorest and marginalized people

Lessons	Recommendations
■ Inclusion of nuclear power-related risks to the definition of 'vulnerability' Recognition has emerged that people under threat of nuclear power-related accidents are among the most 'at-risk communities'.	Re-define vulnerable communities in times of disaster (e.g., infants, the elderly, people with disabilities, the sick, expecting mothers and foreign nationals) to include people living under the threat of nuclear power plant accidents.
■ Considering diversity within vulnerable groups Vulnerable communities can be excluded and marginalized for a variety of reasons, but in addition to them being assisted and protected, there were cases where these individuals played a crucial role in mitigating their own disaster risks.	Multiple indicators (e.g., age, gender, people with disabilities, family composition, regional characteristics, characteristics of disaster impact, secondary impact at nuclear accident sites) need to be set in order to address various causes of vulnerability and provide specific solutions for each.
■ Gap between policy and implementation Although the guidelines for emergency assistance for people with special needs was prepared in advance, there was: 1. a lack of participation by communities themselves, 2. a lack of clarity of the role of civil society, and 3. a lack of an action plan and contingency plan, all of which created a gap between policy and actual implementation.	Clearly define and widely disseminate how vulnerable groups can participate within the guidelines and systems of emergency preparedness (including disaster risk reduction policy and decision-making), as well as response and recovery, so that such participation reflects and influences the actual content of emergency assistance.

GNDR Recommendation 4
Mobilize political commitment by focusing on rights, responsibilities and accountabilities

Lessons	Recommendations
■ Nuclear power risks and human rights, information disclosure 'Safety dogma' of nuclear power plants prevented the establishment of a system and a mechanism to respond to victims of the nuclear power plant accident. This resulted in division and confusion among affected communities due to lack of information provision and unequal compensation availability. Applying the Personal Information Protection Law to the emergency situation prevented effective assistance provision.	Determine and consider risks while building and operating nuclear power plants. Additionally, set the standard for protection and prompt information access for those communities at risk from such nuclear power plants.
■ Accountability and capacity building Participation of communities in policy formulation has only been a formality and inclusion of vulnerable groups such as children and people with disabilities has not been sufficient.	Both public and private entities need to ensure provision of a budget, a system, and the building of the necessary capacity for the government, local governing bodies, corporations, civil society organizations and volunteers to conduct transparent monitoring with a rights-based approach as a core, along with international human rights standards, Sphere standards, and HAP principles and indicators in order to ensure accountability of implementation of policy during preparedness, relief, and recovery phases.
■ Complaint handling mechanisms Limited telephone-based counseling and assistance towards victims of domestic violence and child abuse in the post-disaster phase was institutionalized for the first time. However, it is worth noting that awareness among the disaster victims of their right to submit claims was not at the optimal level, which resulted in the apologetic attitude from disaster victims to those who supported them. Thus an environment conducive to raising complaints was not effectively created.	With a rights-based approach, a system for gathering and addressing complaints and mechanisms for disaster victims to evaluate emergency assistance performance need to be introduced.

GNDR Recommendation 5
Promote partnerships and public participation

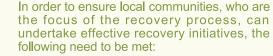| Lessons	Recommendations
■ Coordination mechanisms and officially-recognized roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders As coordination mechanisms and information gathering/sharing between stakeholders had not been prepared and agreed upon before the disaster, valuable time was lost due to the lack of a clear and defined role for civil society groups and institutional support for them during the immediate response phase. The application of the Personal Information Protection Law that is intended for non-disaster times became a hindrance to effective aid delivery. Insufficient sharing of basic information among stakeholders resulted in numerous duplications of field assessments, further exhausting community members.	Starting in the pre-disaster phase, establish a multi-stakeholder preparedness framework that ensures the participation of the government, local governing bodies, civil society organizations, and private corporations to define their respective roles and responsibilities. Civil society organizations also need to coordinate in order to avoid duplication of needs assessments in the field.
■ Corporate Social Responsibility In addition to financial support from the private sector, corporations utilized their core strength in provision of goods and technology, as well as dispatching their staff as volunteers. It was critical that corporations who have nation-wide logistic networks collaborated with civil society organizations. Without such financial, human, and technological assistance, it would have been difficult to conduct recovery and initiate disaster risk reduction activities.	
■ Consensus building Prioritizing speed and scale during the decision-making process, only involving representatives of governments and local governing bodies, led to many cases where community members were unaccounted for even though the decisions would impact these people's lives directly. (In one specific case where the building of a sea wall was being considered for tsunami protection, there wasn't enough discussion between the government and local level stakeholders). Even in the cases when they were involved, communities themselves were not familiar with such consensus-building processes and being too occupied with the recovery of their own lives, participation was less than desirable and their opinions were not given.	It is essential for each sector of the community to reach consensus at every phase of DRR, including preparedness planning, emergency response, and recovery. Flexible and resilient communities are built on the strong exchange and coordination of information regarding diverse needs between relevant groups. Furthermore, it is a prerequisite to assure their basic standards of living so that the community members can be involved in this consensus-building process.
■ Volunteers Although the overall system and mechanisms used to accommodate volunteers and civil society organizations functioned relatively well, predetermined agencies which were supposed to accommodate volunteers were hit by the disaster in many areas, rendering them non-operational. In Kobe, they are now working on a 'how to receive assistance plan'.	Strengthen 'receiving assistance capacity' of external assistance at the time of a disaster (including volunteers). Additionally, in the pre-disaster phase, it is important to invest in civil society organizations to increase their capacity to coordinate volunteers in the event of a disaster.
■ Re-assess disaster risk reduction education and traditional knowledge Due to school and community disaster education and traditional local disaster knowledge, there were many smooth evacuations. However, some people did not evacuate quickly enough because they miscalculated the severity of the threat, as recent earthquakes had been on a much smaller scale. Some community festivals promoted disaster risk reduction education as seen in the Noto-Peninsular Earthquake and the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.	Consider re-assessing the importance of inheriting traditional/indigenous knowledge on disaster risk reduction in addition to strengthening disaster risk reduction education at schools.
■ Local initiatives Having learnt from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, there were cases where some communities already had a rehabilitation plan prior to the disaster, which resulted in preventing confusion and helped to obtain a smooth consensus among community members towards a lengthy recovery process. External assistance was particularly helpful where local initiatives proved not to be effective, such as when community members were dispersed after the disaster and assistance was provided to re-establish and support new communities at evacuation sites.	In order to ensure local communities, who are the focus of the recovery process, can undertake effective recovery initiatives, the following need to be met: 1. continuous awareness raising and establishment of plans need to be implemented by community members from the pre-disaster phase, 2. establishing schemes to accommodate for external assistance and budget provisions, and 3. conducting training from the pre-disaster phase.