

Activity of International Cooperation NGOs during the Great East Japan Earthquake and Challenges for the Future

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1. Activities of International Cooperation NGOs and the reason behind their quick initial response

For the history of International Cooperation NGOs in Japan, the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011 was a big milestone. In the past, the main places of activity for most of the International Cooperation NGOs were in developing countries such as Asia and Africa while in Japan their main functions were back office operations relating to planning/monitoring, fund raising, and recruiting to support activities in developing countries. Even with NGOs that had experience in disaster relief, they were done in Pakistan, the coast of Sumatra, and Haiti and only a handful of NGOs had experience in victim support during the Great Hanshin Earthquake or the Niigata-Chuetsu-Oki Earthquake.

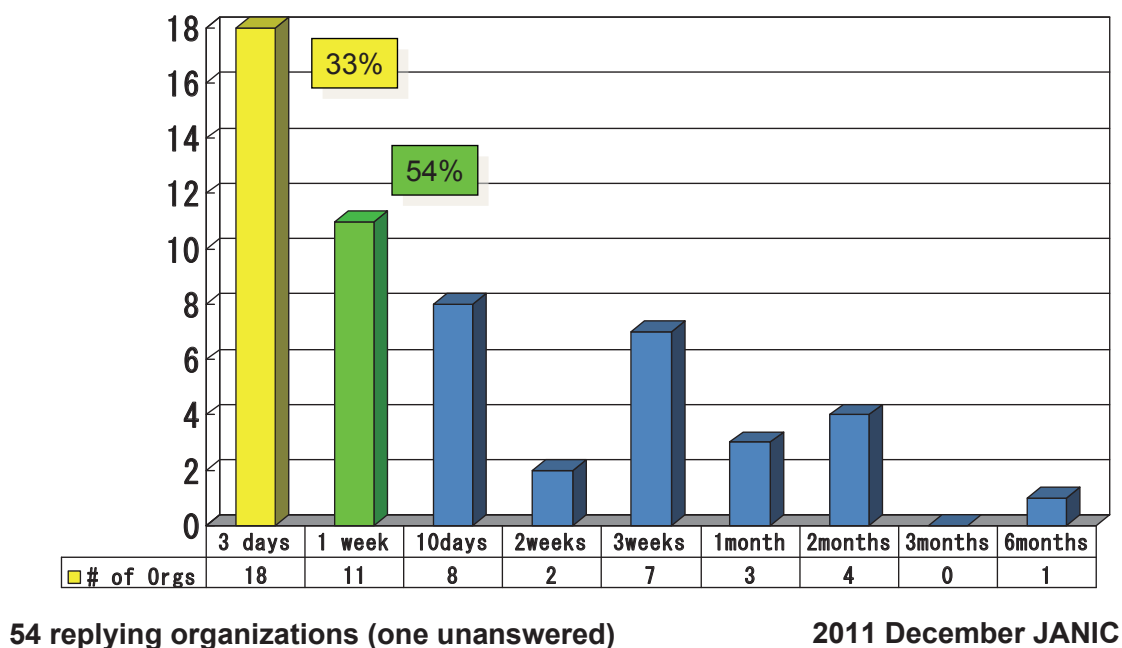


Fig.1 Start of Earthquake Disaster Relief for International Cooperation NGOs

*国際協力 NGO センター：Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC).

However, during the Great East Japan Earthquake, many NGOs truly came and responded right after the earthquake struck to provide relief support. JANIC's survey towards its member organization in December 2011 revealed that 54 organizations out of 97 (55%) gave actual on-site support at the disaster area, and 18 organizations (33%) responded within three days, and 29 organizations (54%) in a week to start relief operations.

The quick initial response is strikingly in contrast with non-International Cooperation NGOs. Below are the reasons why International Cooperation NGOs were able to act quickly:

- 1) Many organizations had experience in emergency relief support overseas (Sumatra, Haiti, etc.)
- 2) Regardless of experience in emergency relief support, had project management skills
- 3) Had enough funds for initial response

The third component of having funds for initial response is the most important. Even if they wanted to provide emergency relief operations, without any funds they could not act and it would be too late if they had to act after collecting donations. There were cases where some NGOs had their own emergency support funding, but the presence of Japan Platform (JPF) established for providing foreign emergency relief operations was significant. The decision by JPF to provide its member NGOs funds for initial response immediately after the disaster struck along with its smooth distribution of the funds collected in and out of the country totaling 7 billion yen was one of the reasons many NGOs were able to provide relief operations without any concerns on funds.

As you can see, many NGOs came to the rescue to Tohoku area, but some NGOs, due to lack of proper domestic support on disaster relief, were hesitant to act immediately or gave up providing any relief support.

2. Actual activity taken place

So, what specific type of activities did the International Cooperation NGOs conduct? The following diagram shows the actual relief operations the NGOs conducted three months after the earthquake:

The most common activity was “distribution of non-food item (NFI)”, second was “medical support, mental care”, third was “food supply and hot meal distribution”, followed by “shelter management”, “education”, and “volunteer coordination”. The first and third activity in distribution of supplies and food is the first thing that should be delivered to the victims who have almost nothing, and with the support from corporations and co-ops vast quantities were provided. The experience at refugee camps and disaster areas should have helped for this. For the second “medical support, mental care”, NGOs with specialists in medical treatment sent across doctors, nurses, and psychotherapists. Along with the fifth “education”, it can be said that the NGO's knowledge acquired through work experience overseas was put in use.

As seen in these examples, not only was past relief support experience useful, but more cases were

※Total no. of projects = 552

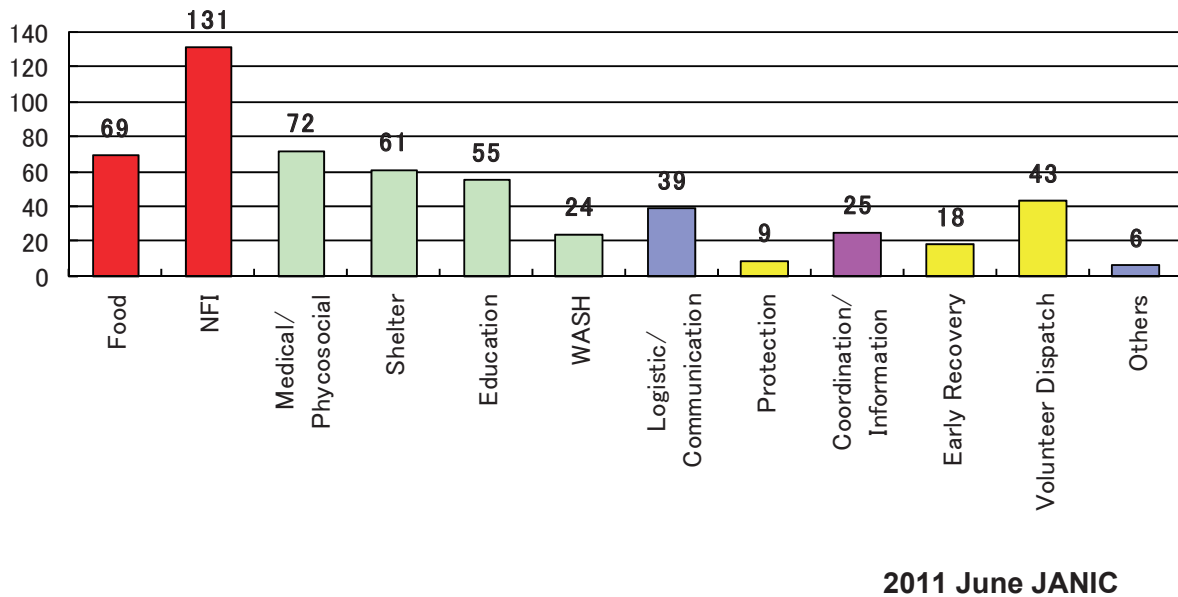


Fig.2 Field of Assistance by NGO

seen where the International Cooperation NGO's activity providing daily project development and staff experience in developed countries were utilized during victim support for the Great East Japan Earthquake.

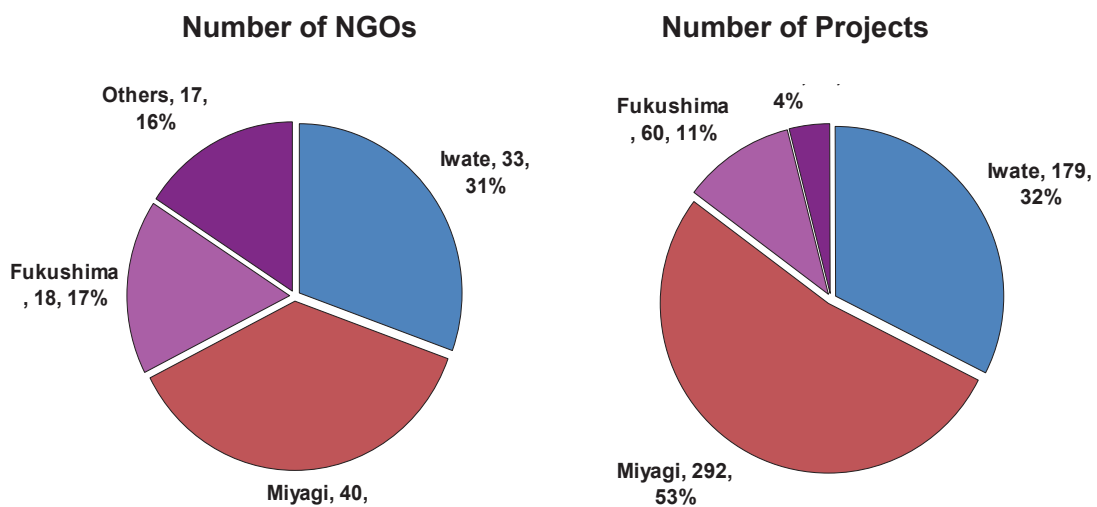
In one of the knowledge base is one called "cash for work". "Cash for work" is a method where projects are undertaken with the residents of developed countries. For example, reconstruction of roads and bridges that were destroyed by floods or afforestation of areas where crops and livestock have been destroyed through draught was conducted by paying small fees to the residents to support the project. For long term development projects, to avoid dependencies on support, input from outside is limited and voluntary work from local residence is emphasized. On one hand, if efficiency is stressed, heavy machinery and specialized contractors are hired to repair the roads and bridges. Compared to that, in "cash for work", the idea is to have victims who have lost all their money and household belongings in an emergency situation, be paid to participate in public projects and help them rebuild their lives as well as the region.

One organization that took this approach was IVY Yamagata whose headquarters is in Yamagata. Many NGO/NPOs provided cleaning and shoveling of mud from the houses victimized from the tsunami through outside volunteers. Even volunteers without any technical skills were able to provide such labor work and the volunteers themselves felt that the work was worthwhile. On the other hand, many victims lost their jobs feeling insecure and living their lives feeling empty every day. However, victims are not just pitiful and listless people but many people were eager to take the step forward and restore with their own hands. They just didn't have the opportunity. As such, IVY recruited from the victims and hired them as temporary workers and paid them each day for their own projects to clear the mud and clean up. Since there was a limit to their funds, not many people could participate in the

“cash for work” activities, but the people who were involved felt worthwhile themselves taking part of the restoration and earning a bit at the same time. “Cash for work” is a successful example where International Cooperation NGOs utilized their experience through overseas projects and applied it to the disaster in the Tohoku area.

Many other activities were conducted, such as calling out to victims at home where the administration could not reach out to and launching a door-to-door campaign and providing supplies, taking over the duty of hot meal distribution at the shelters from the Self Defense Force, and consulting and supporting foreign residents of Japan who are not fluent in Japanese with various administrative procedures. According to a study done by JANIC on November 2011, 552 projects were conducted by 74 organizations with the cost of 14.7 billion yen through donation in and out of the country along with subsidies.

However, these support projects were not done equally throughout the three prefectures, Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima Prefecture where the damage was most severe. Three months after the earthquake hit on June 2011, the number of refugees were 31,947 in Miyagi, 31,337 in Iwate, and 134,249 in Fukushima Prefecture the most severe, but the number of NGO projects carried out were 179 (32%) in Iwate, 292 (53%) in Miyagi, and an extremely small number of 60 (11%) in Fukushima Prefecture. Of course, the reason behind this is because of the nuclear accident, where many NGOs could not or chose not to enter Fukushima. Also, supporting victims directly affected by the tsunami varied but were more straightforward while NGOs themselves were probably uncertain how to support victims affected by radiation. At any rate, despite the existence of the international standard of “all



During the survey in 2011, 23 organizations out of 40 (58%) had permanent offices. 17 organizations had staff dispatched

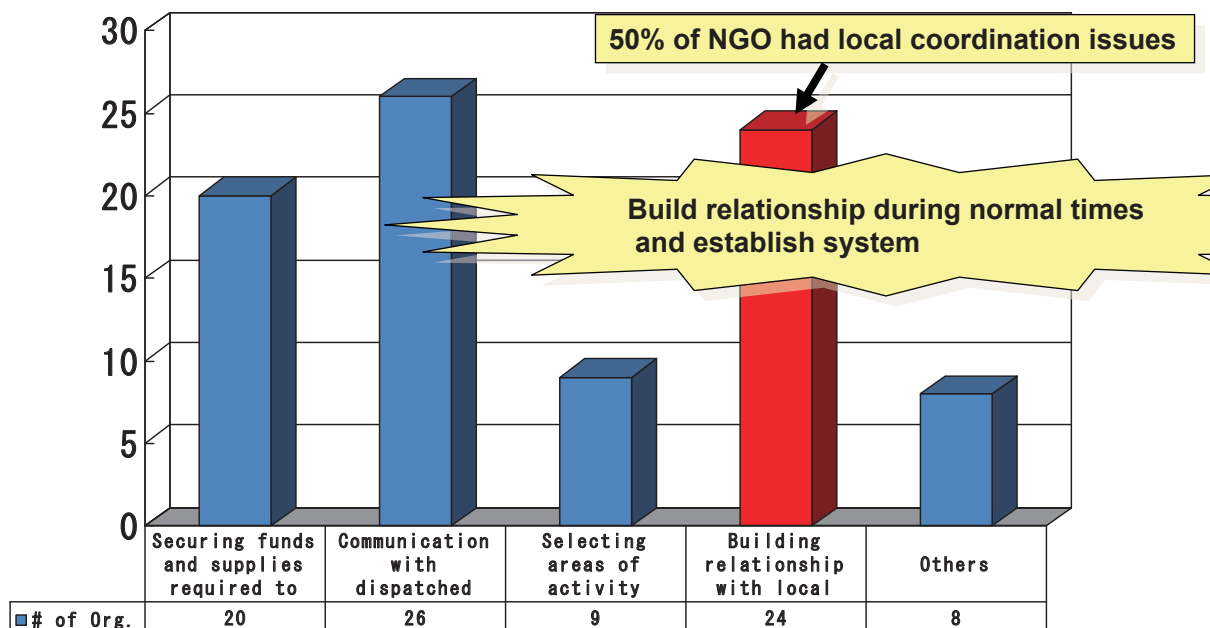
2011 June JANIC

Fig.3 International Cooperation NGO Distribution by Prefecture

people having equal rights to support”, it was quite visible that the people in Fukushima who have been affected by radiation had difficulties in receiving support throughout the disaster. As of September 2013, this situation still remains the same even after two and a half years where the nuclear accident has yet to be resolved and many people remain unable to return to their homes or rebuild their lives.

3. Issues that NGOs faced

Many International Cooperation NGOs without any experience in large scale domestic projects faced many issues during the relief operations during the Great East Japan Earthquake.



* 47 organizations replying, multiple choices

2011 November JANIC

Fig.4 Area where International Cooperation NGO had most issues during disaster support

The first issue was funds required to conduct projects. I mentioned earlier on fairly large NGOs that had their own initial response funds and the fact that Japan Platform acted swiftly in the initial stage to provide member organization with funds worked positively. However, the vastness of the disaster and growing need and size of relief operations was a cause of concern in funds quickly drying up. Nevertheless, various types of support came along to address this issue.

First of all there were the domestic donations from individuals and corporates. In Japan, it is often said that the donation culture is premature and that the donation amount per person is one digit less than that of western cultures. It is true that whether it is international cooperation, domestic educational support, environmental conservation, or welfare related, there are few individuals who make on-going donations. However, when people hear on the news that there is a large scale earthquake overseas or severe downpour domestically, large portions of donations are gathered. As you can see, it is properly in the culture of the Japanese to donate when in an emergency.

In fact, it is reported through the “2012 Donation White Paper” issued by the Japan Fundraising

Association that during the Great East Japan Earthquake, by the end of 2011, the amount of donations reached almost 600 billion yen where 500 billion yen of that was donated by individuals. This donation can be mainly categorized as “contributions” and “support funds”. “Contributions” are donations directly given as cash to victims through the Japan Red Cross or the Central Community Chest of Japan that passes it on to each regional government. However, in reality, the contributions took very long to reach the victims and could not support the victims right after the disaster struck when they needed it the most. On the other hand, “support funds” were donations made to NGO/NPOs organizations that provide relief operations where some were directly funded to the specific NGO/NPOs while others were passed on from middle support organizations such as the Central Community Chest of Japan or the Japan Platform which distributed the funds to the NGO/NPOs. This enabled the NGO/NPOs to provide the victims with warm meals, vital supplies, removal of debris or clearing of houses, mental care and many other various support and channel the goodwill of the donors. JANIC also initiated the raising of the “Great East Japan Earthquake All-in Fund” that allowed payment through credit cards on the day of the disaster. After two years of raising donations, a total of 101,360,525 yen was raised through 1,875 individuals and organizations, which was donated to 33 JANIC full member NGOs that actually provided local relief operations and provided victim support through these NGOs. JANIC asked for the submission of monthly activity reports from the organizations that they provided donations to and posted it on the Internet.

Japan Platform was an organization originally established by KEIDANREN (Japan Business Federation) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as an NGO to support overseas emergencies. In this case, since it was a domestic emergency relief, it could not rely on ODA support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but instead received many donations from the business world.

In addition to this domestic support, there was vast support of funds, supplies, and staff from abroad. On this, the detailed results are published through a research by International Development Center of Japan (IDCJ) that JANIC also took part in called, “A Review on foreign support results for the Great East Japan Earthquake”. According to the report, after a year from the earthquake, a total of 164 billion yen was raised from 174 countries and regions. Of those, 119 countries and regions were receiving ODA support from Japan indicating that Japan was receiving support from very poor countries. As a result, in 2011 Japan was the world’s largest beneficiary of support. Part of these support funds from overseas was passed through to the NGOs.

At a glance, the International Cooperation NGOs seemed to have been receiving ample funds from in and out of the country without any problems. However, in reality, the amount of funds received varied with organization especially with smaller NGOs that didn’t have enough funding for initial action. In contrast, foreign headquartered organizations starting as Japan branches of international NGOs such as World Vision, Save the Children, and Plan received immense amount of donations from international alliances and as so many funds were raised, some of the organizations had to ask on stopping their donation campaigns.

The second issue was talented resources. In order to conduct projects, staff with knowledge in emergency relief and project management was vital, but there were no NGOs with offices in Japan that had talented staff with such skill sets. As such, each NGO assigned regional staff who were in charge and had overseas project management experience to manage projects related to the Great East Japan Earthquake and further brought back staffs who were working on projects in developing countries to support the emergency relief operations. However, given the magnitude of the disaster and the vast amount of tasks at hand, each NGO set out to recruit staff from outside. Nonetheless, there was no easy way to find capable staff that could immediately join an NGO, and every NGO struggled to find talented personnel. Even if they could find recruits, they often sent them to the Tohoku area with hardly any time for proper orientation and understanding of the vision/mission of the organization. As such, some organizations saw a gap in the sense of awareness between the original staff stationed and the staff later sent for emergency operations.

JANIC, which is a network NGO formed to enhance the capability of NGOs and increase awareness regarding international cooperation to citizens, was not originally engaged directly in development cooperation and therefore there were hardly any people who could manage emergency support activities. As such, they decided on a course of action to recruit people from outside and through individual relationships of the chairman who had international hands on experience and the secretary general and established an earthquake disaster task force with ex-NGO men and women. At JANIC, nine members participated in the task force at its peak, but with an organization with only 16 staff, nine new members made a huge impact. For international NGOs with large scale activities, some doubled the number of staff from 40 to 80.

In terms of staff, along with the difficulty of securing talented staff, many NGOs pointed out the issue around communication between the staff sent to the Tohoku area and headquarters. As pointed out previously, there was an information gap or difference in opinion between the staff temporarily hired without proper understanding the values and culture of the organization and headquarters. Also, during initial action, there were cases where staff took an all-in effort day and night, and as a result they were physically and mentally up to their limits. As such, after half a year, the requirement of not only mental care for the victims, but also the need for mental care and labor management for support staff was discussed among the NGOs and seminars and dispatch of counselors for support staff actually took place.

The third issue was the relationship between the local administrations of the disaster stricken area. The northeastern coast of Japan where the Great East Japan Earthquake hit was mostly a conservative region without any NPOs in the area. To the administrative bodies of the cities and towns, you could say that an NGO actively involved in international cooperation was something foreign. Things on the ground were in panic where there were many areas where the people in charge of the local administration themselves were victims and were deceased or unaccounted for. In those circumstances, it is understandable that the administrations were perplexed by many foreign named NGOs coming

in saying that “they would offer help” and in figuring out what to assign them with or even trust them with any work. To begin with, in Japan’s disaster prevention measures, NGO/NPOs are not a part of it and when the administrations hold disaster contingency meetings, while the Self-Defense Force, Chamber of Commerce, or social welfare council is summoned there is no thought of inviting NGO/NPOs to the meetings.

Many NGOs faced the stereotyping of NGO/NPO equaling volunteers in peoples’ minds. Right after the disaster, many individual volunteers gathered to provide help, and the point of contact for each municipality was the social welfare council. Obviously, there is a big difference between individual volunteers and NGOs that have experience in emergency support and project management overseas with their own funding, however to the staff of the local administration the recognition of NGOs were beyond them and thus, were not worth spending time with when they were so busy. Even so, some administrations came to realize the existence of NGOs by looking at their achievements as the NGOs found their own unique area to participate and gather supplies on their own discretion. But that was still not recognition at an organizational level.

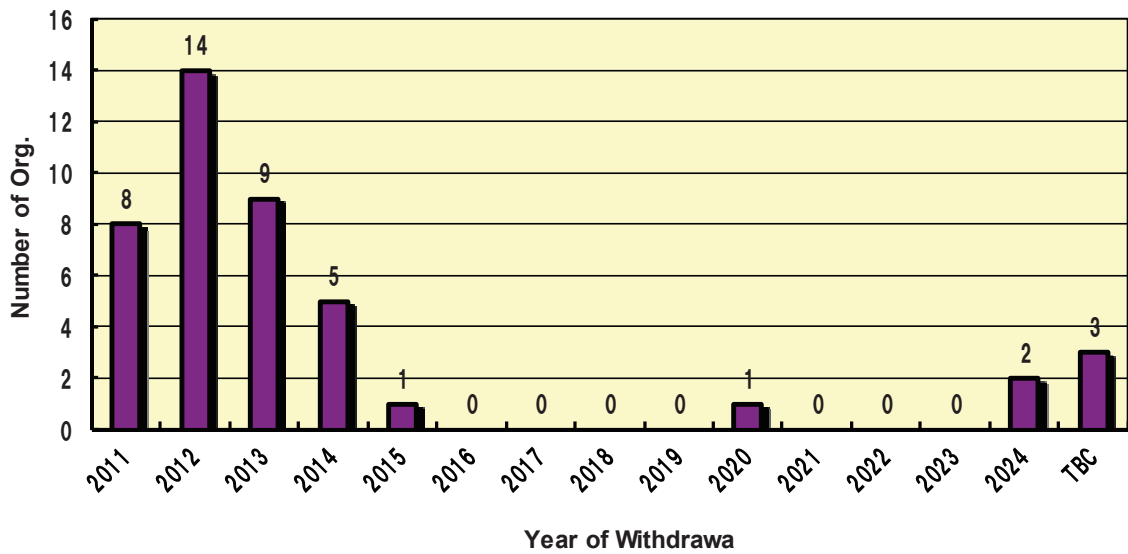
As such, although varying in degree from the very beginning, many NGOs were forced to spend extra time with the local administration and their ignorance and felt that this was an obstacle in providing efficient activities.

The fourth issue was how to conclude the support activities; the exit strategy. For international cooperation NGOs, their main job is first and foremost supporting developed countries, and even though it was a period with many victims during the Great East Japan Earthquake, starvation was occurring in Asia and Africa, people were dying from diseases that were preventable, and children are forced to work at home or in factories because of no school house to attend proper education.

For the Great East Japan Earthquake, many NGOs spared a major portion of their resources to come and support the people in the Tohoku area, but to continue their activities in Japan was difficult for many organizations and they knew from the beginning that at some point they would have to conclude their activities and go back to their original line of work.

So, how to end it and in what form? That was the biggest problem for most NGOs. According to the study conducted by JANIC in November 2011, “NGOs timing of withdrawal from the Great East Japan Earthquake”, 40 organizations out of 43 answered with a clear timing of withdrawal. Of those, eight answered within a year (20%), 14 within two years (35%), nine within three years (23%), bringing it the total answer of 78% organizations planning to withdraw in three years. If you include the five organizations answering within four years, the total becomes 90% that plan to withdraw in four years.

From there on, JANIC has not done any withdrawal surveys (planning one in the latter half of 2013), and as of September 2013, it is difficult to understand how many organizations have ended their activities as planned. But we get the impression that while some organizations have prolonged their timing of retreat, the numbers have not deviated much from the survey results.



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* Question asked: When all activities are planned to end related to the Great East Japan Earthquake (Replies: 43 organizations out of 72)

Fig.5 NGOs' expected timing of withdrawal from the Great East Japan Earthquake

Some NGOs that participated in support activities this time round, have gone as far as to declare to continue to do so for the next ten years. However, the involvement would be from originally sending staff to the region for large scale support activities shifting to a format whereby pulling out staff from the region and providing regular visits to support local residential organizations and NPOs.

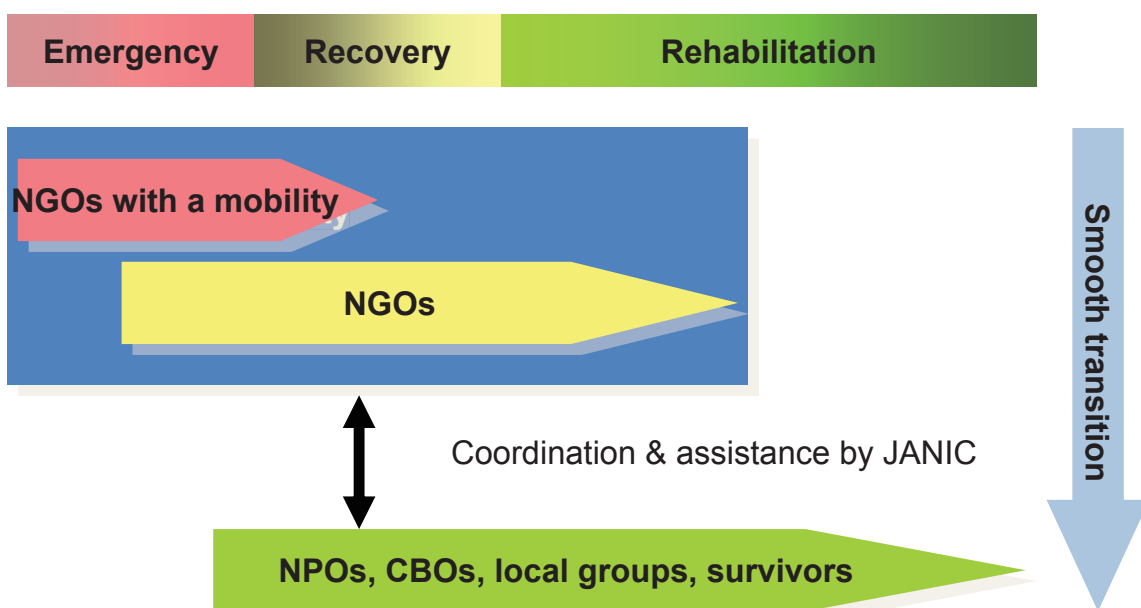


Fig.6 Current Change in Principal Actors

Normally, international cooperation NGOs include a withdrawal strategy within the planning of a mid to long term development project in a developing country. For example, issues in certain regions such as many children dying from diseases or farm life relying only on rainwater unable to escape from poverty; such issues are resolved by providing health education related to medical prevention care and increasing the vaccination rate, or improve the agricultural production rate by natural farming without using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The role of the NGO is to provide project proposals based on their expertise and work with the local residents to solve such issues. However, an NGO is only an outsider and the project should be run mainly by the local residents themselves while the NGO provides the residents with support on development of capabilities and organizational structuring. As such, when planning a project, it is necessary to analyze the current status and set proper goals with timelines and schedule a roadmap on how the process should take place. And in the end, the NGO should withdraw and hand over the project to the local residents and organization that will work together on the project. Thereinafter, there may be cases where they will move to an area in the same country, but staying too long may create dependencies from the local residents and should be avoided.

When starting support activities in the Tohoku area, many NGOs were considering ending their activities and handing it over to the local residents at a certain point. If it were pure emergency relief, once supplies required for the victims are provided or hot meal distribution at the shelter is completed or when people start moving into temporary housing, requirements are fulfilled for the time being and activities should end. NGOs changed their activities from emergency support to restoration/reconstruction; for example, periodic visits to shelters or temporary housing to listen to the victims and provide specialist advise or “mental care”, educational support for children, such NPO projects and the management that cannot be run short term should be handed over to NPOs that were originally working locally or to newly established NPO as a result of the earthquake once the local people responsible have an outlook to continue and develop the initiatives. To do so, when coordinating with the local residents, if the NPO does not have enough capabilities, it may provide support on strengthening the organization. It is important to consider handing things over gradually.

However, in reality, it is not easy to hand projects over to the local organizations. The Tohoku area, especially the Sanriku coast where the damage from the tsunami was most devastating, is basically a very conservative area where hardly any NPOs exist and the people believe strongly that public work should be done by the local administration, and on top of that many areas have a aging population rate being high without any young citizens to be responsible for NPOs resulting in many cases where they were unable to find any organization to hand things over to.

There is another issue in terms of closing activities. It is a fact that as days passes after the earthquake, the requirements in the disaster areas change and activities where the NGO specialized in begin to disappear.

The biggest issue for the many areas that were damaged by the tsunami, where fishery and food processing are the main industries, is the restoration of their local industry. For this to happen, there will be a need for the government and local governments to enhance the infrastructure, banks to

provide required loans, local corporations to rebuild factories, and companies from outside the Tohoku area to build a presence in the area and revitalize the economy in the area. Not only building large scale factories, but the restoration of agriculture, forestry, and fishery is vital. In this field, there is actually hardly anything an NGO can take part in. The least that it can do is to purchase the fish, shellfish, and agricultural products harvested at the disaster area or the handicraft created by the residents in temporary housing. The fact that there are fewer areas where international cooperation NGOs can utilize their expertise is one reason why NGOs are reducing and ending their activities in the Tohoku area and going back to their original purpose of support developing countries.

4. Cooperation with foreign NGOs

We explained that during the Great East Japan Earthquake, many countries and foreign regions provided funds, supplies, and people, but within that there were a number of NGOs headquartered outside of Japan that worked in Japan for the first time as a result of the earthquake. For example, CWS (Church World Service), AmeriCares, International Medical Corps (IMC), Direct Relief International (DRI), Mercy Corps, to mention a few. The image of the tsunami engulfing the Sanriku coast brought a shock to the world, and many people provided donations to the victims in Japan. With those funds coming to Japan were the organizations mentioned earlier.

On the other hand, there are NGOs originating from overseas and being active since the 1980's and expanding their organization from their branch in Japan. For example, in 1983 Plan Japan (previously Japan Foster Plan Association) and in 1987 World Vision Japan was established, and showing more than 20 years of active history as an NGO in Japan. During the Great East Japan Earthquake, these international NGOs, as mentioned before, flourished strongly with funding and personnel support through international alliances.

However, from here on, I would like to mention not about international NGOs that have established themselves in Japan, but about the NGOs that started their activity as a result of the earthquake.

As of 2013 September, three years after the earthquake, we interviewed four international NGOs who are new entrants to Japan.

First of all, choosing from the three options below, on what type of support they were initially considering.

- 1) Conduct a project on their own
- 2) Find an appropriate partner and provide support through them
- 3) Provide direct funding to victims and local residential organizations in the disaster area

The results show that all four organizations chose number 2 and one chose both 2 and 3. In addition to that, if including another organization that came to Japan to find a partner and established a relationship with JANIC as one of their support organizations, a total of five organizations all chose "Find an appropriate partner and provide support through them". With the small sample size it can only be a reference, but you can see that these NGO had no intention to send people to provide large scale relief operations similar to that of in developed countries but to find a good NGO/NPO partner within

Japan and provide aid to victims through them. A number of reasons for this can be pointed out; Japan as a country having basic infrastructure and supplies already in place, administrative organization well structured with basic public services are run by the local government, NGO with experience in emergency relief existed, a language barrier existed where it was difficult for foreigners who couldn't speak Japanese hard to operate, etc.

In reality, the activities they took part were supply support, mental care, capacity building for NPOs, and support for disabled people, varying depending on the organization and the requirements they faced on the ground. Also, the support content changed depending on period. While initially starting out right after the disaster to distribute supplies, after half a year to two years time during the restoration period, it changed to providing counseling activity and mental care through the temporary housings, and then to capacity building and advocacy activity for NPOs to look ahead for the future. One organization went as far as to register as an entity in Japan as a long term commitment to the cause, including sending out what was learned through the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Many NGO/NPOs in Japan mention that continuous support activity was possible with the help from these international NGOs. JANIC itself also received support from many international NGOs. For an organization like JANIC that provides activity that does not directly support the victims, such as coordination, advocacy, dispatch of information, and evaluation, the foreign NGOs well understood their problems and were encouraging partners.

On the other hand, the issues that these foreign NGOs faced were the difficulty of finding an appropriate partner, generating report documentation in English, and showing results quantitatively. Administrative management such as creating reports in English is an integral component that will be required as funding becomes more global for NGO/NPOs in Japan. In that regard, partnering with an international NGO was a big challenge for NGO/NPOs in Japan.

5. Dealing with the next large disaster

It was ground breaking that during the Great East Japan Earthquake, many international cooperation NGOs wanted to provide large scale emergency relief support operations domestically in Japan. As they were not used to operate in Japan they faced many issues and problems that we saw earlier, but were able to provide swift support action and the fact that they were able to provide support to many victims is worthy of a high praise.

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, there is more caution towards a large scale earthquake on the coast of Nankai Trough or a direct earthquake below the capital and voices are heard regarding more preparation. It is said that “the success of an emergency action is determined by 70% preparation and 30% implementation”, so it is important to see how what we learned from this Great East Japan Earthquake is utilized in the next expected disaster.

Below is the summary of my proposal referencing JANIC's published report in March 2012 titled “the Great East Japan Earthquake and international cooperation NGO: New possibilities and Issues in Japan, Proposal”:

- 1) What each NGO should be prepared with
 - 1-1) Secure funding for initial action on emergency relief
 - 1-2) Educate staff who can respond to emergency relief
 - 1-3) Create a emergency implementation plan

- 2) What the NGO community should do
 - 2-1) Create a registered roster with staff who have experience in emergency relief activities in and out of the country
 - 2-2) Provide training seminars to generate necessary skills for emergency relief activities in and out of the country
- 3) Encouragement towards sectors involved other than NGOs
 - 3-1) Create a structure for providing emergency relief funding in order to prepare for domestic large scale disasters
 - 3-2) Acknowledgement of NGO/NPOs as being responsible for emergency relief activities at the government and municipality level and equal recognition of NGO/NPOs as other sectors in relation to setting up disaster prevention networks and disaster measures headquarters

6. Conclusion

In this report, I mainly gave an account on the relief activities related to the disaster occurred by the tsunami and earthquake from the Great East Japan Earthquake. However, during the Great East Japan Earthquake, another serious catastrophe occurred at a different degree; a “nuclear disaster” happened and the threat continues even today.

Once a nuclear disaster occurs, the impact is much larger and incomparable in terms of space and time to a normal disaster and for an NGO that solves issues on a global scale, it is an issue that should be assessed squarely. Also, even without an accident, the fact that nuclear power plants will produce high density radioactive waste that will continue to emit radiation for millions of years is controversial to the concept of an NGO, whose mission is to create a sustainable world. In this report, I will not address the nuclear power issue any further, but moving forward, we need to continue informing the world regarding the status of Fukushima and the outcome of the nuclear accident.

Acknowledgment

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