

Elderly for Elderly: The Role of Community Volunteer, a Case Study from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in Kesennuma, Japan

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Abstract : The United Nation World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction was held in Sendai, Japan, in 2015 and priorities for actions until 2030 were adopted for the next 15 years. Although one of these priorities is to 'build back better', there is neither a consensus definition of better recovery, nor indicators to measure better recovery. However, the community is considered as a key driver of recovery nowadays, and participation is a key word for effective recovery. In order to understand more about participatory community recovery, the author investigated recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami (GEJET) in Kesennuma, a severely affected city. The research sought to: 1) Identify the elements that contribute to better recovery at the community level, and 2) analyze the role of community volunteers for disaster risk reduction for better recovery. A Participatory Community Recovery Index (PCRI) was created as a tool to measure community recovery. The index adopts seven primary indicators and 20 tertiary indicators, including: socio-economic aspect, housing, health, environment, self-organization, transformation, and institution. The index was applied to nine districts in Kesennuma city. Secondary and primary data by questionnaire surveys with local residents' organization leaders and interviews with crisis management department officials in city government were also obtained. The indicator results were transformed into scores among 1 to 5, and the results were shown for each district. Based on the result of PCRI, it was found that the s Local Social Welfare Council played an important role in facilitating better recovery, enhancing community volunteer involvement to allow elderly residents to initiate local volunteer work for more affected single-living elderly people. Volunteers for the elderly by the elderly played a crucial role to strengthen community bonding in Kesennuma. In this research, the potential of community volunteers and inter-linkage with DRR activities are discussed.

Keywords : recovery, participation, the great East Japan earthquake and tsunami, community volunteers

Conference Title : ICDEM 2016 : International Conference on Disaster and Emergency Management

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : March 17-18, 2016