The Rise of NGOs/NPOs in Emergency Relief in the Great East Japan Earthquake

Mayumi SAKAMOTO

ABSTRACT
The Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) contributed remarkably to emergency relief activities during the Great East Japan Earthquake. The NGOs/NPOs were successful in coordinating with the government, private companies, the Council of Social Welfare and other NGOs/NPOs to provide substantial assistance to disaster survivors. The rise of the NGOs/NPOs in providing emergency relief assistance was a new phenomenon in Japan. This article attempts to analyze the reason behind such a rise.

KEYWORDS: The Great East Japan Earthquake, NGOs, NPOs, Emergency relief, New public commons.

JEL CLASSIFICATION: I18, I39, O21

1 INTRODUCTION
The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, which hit Kobe City and its surrounding areas on January 17, 1995, left widespread damages in its wake: 6,434 people died, more than 43,792 people were injured, and 639,686 buildings collapsed. The disaster created a surge in volunteerism in Japan, and approximately 1,380,000 volunteers joined emergency relief and recovery services (Follow-Up Committee of Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, 2009). For the first time in the history of Japan, the country witnessed such a high volume of volunteerism that 1995 often came to be referred to as “a new era of volunteering.”

Many lessons were learned from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. The first of these lessons was the significance of the volunteer coordinating system. During the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, uncoordinated and massive inflow of volunteers caused major confusion. In order to avoid such confusion, a coordination system by the “disaster volunteer center” was created (Atsumi, 2010). “Shakai Fukushi Kyougikai” (The Council of Social Welfare), which worked closely with the community, was expected to manage the center.

The second lesson learned was that there was a need for a legal foundation to facilitate organized volunteer group activity. Within the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), there were also organizations that worked for the public interest without yielding any profit for their members Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs). The experience of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake provided an impetus for the movement to authorize the legal status of NPOs (Suga, 2009, Atsumi, 2010). As a result, the “Law to Promote Specified Nonprofit Activities” (herein referred to as the “NPO Law”) was promulgated in 1998 (Cabinet Office 2008). As of July 2011, there were 43,116 organizations approved as NPOs, including 232 “certified NPOs” that benefit from tax deductions.

Mayumi Sakamoto is a Chief Research Scientist at the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution, Kobe, Japan. Her major research areas are the social impact of disaster assistance, emergency relief coordination, support for people with disabilities during disaster, and disaster culture/education.

1 Japan’s Cabinet Office website <https://www.npo-homepage.go.jp/data/pref.html>
The year 2011 could be referred to as “an era of NGOs/NPOs.” The Great East Japan Earthquake that occurred on March 11 caused widespread damage in Eastern Japan, and left over more than 20,000 people dead or missing. It was difficult to set up disaster volunteer centers in several municipalities owing to the physical damage and human loss. In such a situation, the NGOs/NPOs began providing assistance to the survivors. The liaison from NGOs/NPOs took a seat in the on-site Government Disaster Management Local Headquarters established in Miyagi Prefecture (here in after referred as “government on-site headquarters”) and coordinated with the government, private companies, the Council of Social Welfare and other NGOs/NPOs to provide better support to survivors. This collaborative effort between the NGOs/NPOs and the government was referred to as the “New Public Commons” in the Reconstruction Design Council’s report to Prime Minister in response to the Great East Japan Earthquake.

This article focuses on the first three months after the Great East Japan Earthquake and attempts to analyze the reason behind the rise of NGOs/NPOs in providing emergency assistance. First, the article reviews volunteer and NGO/NPO mobilization to identify the limitations and improvements of the current system. Second, the article focuses on the collaborative efforts of the NGOs/NPOs and the government. Finally, based on this discussion, the article analyzes the reason for their rise and proposes the role of NGOs/NPOs in case of future disasters.

2 VOLUNTEERS AND NGO/NPOs IN THE GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE

2.1 Volunteer Mobilization

The mobilization of volunteers was slow during the Great East Japan Earthquake. Immediately after the earthquake, no detailed information on the disaster-affected areas was available. The lack of information, public transportation, lodging place, and fuel for vehicles obstructed volunteer mobilization. It was commonly said that volunteers should be “self-contained,” that is, they should work without seeking any support. Those with enough skill to engage in emergency relief activities and logistic capacity were considered for the role of volunteers, which made it difficult to engage individuals those from other regions who had never worked in disaster relief.

One of the main lessons learned during the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake was the importance of a system to coordinate volunteer activities (Atsumi, 2010). After the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, a new disaster volunteer coordination system was created. The municipal government makes an agreement with the Council of Social Welfare that, in the case of a disaster, the Council of Social Welfare would set up a volunteer center and the municipal government would support it. There they accept volunteers, coordinate and supply the required number of volunteers for disaster related activities, prepare materials and provide support through volunteer insurance, information on transportation, place for lodging, etc. The municipal government and the Council of Social Welfare were encouraged to prepare a disaster volunteer center management manual with information on the possible sites to set up a volunteer center, staff recruitment, material to be prepared, and so on.

Table 1 shows the opening days of disaster volunteer centers in disaster-affected municipalities, in the Miyagi Prefecture. In Kesennuma City, the volunteer center was opened on March 28, at the Kesennuma Health Support Center “Sukoyaka.” The Council of Social Welfare lost its office in the disaster. According to the agreement with municipal government, four sites were proposed at which volunteer centers could be established: the “Sukoyaka,” the Kesennuma municipal government’s “One-Ten” building, the municipal sports center, and the welfare center. Of these four sites, some were damaged by the tsunami, while others were used as evacuation shelters, and only “Sukoyaka”

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\[^2\text{The disaster volunteers and disaster volunteer center data were provided by the Social Welfare Council of Miyagi prefecture and Miyagi Prefectural government.}\]
remained available. Before the disaster, the Tagajo City municipal government had decided that the Mother and Child Health Care Center would be used as a volunteer center. However, after the disaster, the municipal government suddenly decided to use the center for the storage of relief goods and therefore, they had to find a new building to set up the volunteer center.

Municipal governments also suffered severely losses. In Ishinomaki City and Minami Sanriku Town, the municipal governments had lost their office buildings and human resources and they did not have enough capacity to provide the necessary support for volunteer centers to be set up. The experience demonstrated the physical damage in the area and the human loss experienced by both municipal government and the Social Welfare Council made it difficult for them to set up volunteer centers. In the end of March, volunteer centers started to open, thanks to the support from the Councils of Social Welfare of other areas and volunteers.

Table 1. Volunteer Center Opening Day

| Municipality (District)          | VC Opening Day |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| Sendai City                      |                |
| (Aoba-ku)                        | March 20th     |
| (Miyagino-ku)                    | March 15th     |
| (Wakabayashi-ku)                 | March 16th     |
| (Taihaku-ku)                     | March 19th     |
| (Izumi-ku)                       | March 27th     |
| Ishinomaki City                  | March 16th     |
| Shiogama City                    | March 14th     |
| Natori City                      | March 28th     |
| Tagajo City                      | March 18th     |
| Iwanuma City                     | March 13th     |
| Higashi-Matsushima City          | March 19th     |
| Wataru Town                      | March 19th     |
| Yamamoto Town                    | April 12th     |
| Matsushima Town                  | March 16th     |
| Shichigahama Town                | March 15th     |
| Onagawa Town                     | April 17th     |
| Minami-Sanriku Town              | March 26th     |

Source: Based on the data provided from the Council of Social Welfare, Miyagi Prefecture.

The delay in establishing the volunteer centers affected the mobilization of individual volunteers at the beginning of the emergency relief. In March, the volunteer centers did not have sufficient number of volunteers to assess the local needs for volunteer activity nor prepare equipments for such activities. Some volunteer centers had restricted volunteer activity only local volunteers who knew the area well. By the end of March, the centers started to recruit volunteers from other regions, and the number of volunteers gradually increased. The number of volunteers registered at disaster volunteer centers in the Miyagi Prefecture was 26,588 in March, 89,959 in April, and 91,459 in May. The numbers increased during the weekends and on national holidays, when people who were

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3 Based on the interview with Mr. Toshihiro Shimizu, the secretariat general of disaster volunteer center Kesennuma City.
4 Based on the interview with an official of Tagajo City municipal government.
5 Based on the interview with Miyagi Prefectural government officials and Mr. Kenichi Takahashi, the chief coordinator of disaster volunteer center of Miyagi Prefecture.
6 Based on the data provided from the Social Welfare Council of Miyagi Prefecture.
otherwise engaged, could also participate in volunteer activities. The number of volunteers reached its highest from April 29–May 5 as this was the “Golden Week” a week with national holidays, in total, 38,075 volunteers registered at disaster volunteer centers during this period.

2.2 Emergency Relief Response by NGO/NPO

In compared to the relief response of individual volunteers, relief response by NGOs/NPOs was quick. Table 2 shows the starting dates of relief activities by the participating NPOs of the “Japan Platform (JPF).” The JPF is an NPO, established as an intermediate coordination organization, in 2000 by NGOs, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and “Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation)” to support humanitarian relief through NGOs, primary for developing countries. JPF raises special funds during disasters, through a budget from the Japan’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) supported by MOFA, donations from the private sector through the Japan Business Federation and non-affiliated individuals. Representatives of MOFA, the Japan Business Federation and private sector are members of JPF’s standing committee. JPF provides the funds they raise to its participating NPOs. There are 33 participating NPOs with prior experience in emergency relief.

| NPO       | Project Period From          | Until        | Activity                          |
|-----------|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| JEN       | 2011/3/12                   | 2011/3/19    | Assessment, Relief Items          |
| NICCO     | 2011/3/12                   | 2011/3/20    | Assessment, Relief Items          |
| PWJ       | 2011/3/12                   | 2011/3/25    | Assessment, Relief Items          |
| CF        | 2011/3/12                   | 2011/3/14    | Assessment                        |
| AAR       | 2011/3/13                   | 2011/3/26    | Assessment, Relief Items          |
| HuMA      | 2011/3/17                   | 2011/3/21    | Assessment, Medical Service        |
| JRA       | 2011/3/15                   | 2011/3/24    | Search and Rescue                 |
| ICA       | 2011/3/18                   | 2011/3/31    | Assessment, Relief Items          |
| JAFS      | 2011/3/20                   | 2011/3/28    | Assessment, Hot meal distribution  |
| JAR       | 2011/3/19                   | 2011/3/21    | Assessment, Relief Items          |
| BHN       | 2011/3/22                   | 2011/8/21    | Telecom Service at Evacuation Shelter |
| CCP       | 2011/3/21                   | 2011/4/11    | Assessment, Relief Items          |
| NICCO     | 2011/3/21                   | 2011/4/25    | Assessment for Children Support   |
| KnK       | 2011/3/25                   | 2011/4/12    | Assessment, Relief Items          |
| PB        | 2011/3/24                   | 2011/4/24    | Assessment                        |
| PARCIC    | 2011/3/29                   | 2011/5/31    | Assessment                        |
| JPF       | 2011/3/11                   | 2011/6/11    | Management of Relief Support       |

Source: Based on the data provided from JPF Tohoku Office.
Notes: NICCO: Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development, PWJ: Peace Winds Japan, CF: Civic Force, AAR Japan; Association for Aid and Relief Japan, HuMA: Humanitarian Medical Assistance, JRA: Japan Rescue Association, ICA: The Institute of Cultural Affairs Japan Global Partnership Center, JAFS: Japan Asian Association and Asian Friendship Society, JAR: Japan Association for Refugees, BHN: Basic Human Needs Association, CCP: The Campaign for the Children of Palestine, KnK: Kokkyo Naki Kodomotachi (Children without Borders), PB: Peace Builders, PARCIC: The Pacific Asia Resource Center Inter-peoples Cooperation, JPF: Japan Platform

The Great East Japan Earthquake was the first disaster that JPF had concentrated its relief response to Japan. Although no funds were provided by MOFA, JPF was certain to receive donations from the private sector. JPF decided to join the relief response immediately after the first tremors were felt.
They received the 6,315 million Japanese yen grants from individuals, corporations and associations. They also received relief supplies from 136 private corporations. Although it was the biggest operation in which they had ever participated, they were prompt to distribute the donations to match local needs. As a result, 4,285 million Japanese yen (68%) were disbursed for relief support within the first three months.

Not only JPF but also many NGOs/NPOs started relief response activities immediately after the earthquake. In order to facilitate information exchange within NGOs/NPOs, it was necessary to have a nation-wide NGOs/NPOs network, and the Japan Civil Network (JCN) was created on March 30. It was the first time that NGOs/NPOs were officially networked on such a large scale. The network enabled NGOs/NPOs to share information about their activities, the local environment, and the difficulties they have faced. Additionally, the network enabled NGOs/NPOs to promote collaboration among different organizations. JCN, which started with 141 member organizations, became a large organization with more than 700 members as of December 6, 2011. JCN was a useful network to exchange information, but as each organization’s mission, experience, and characteristics differed, it was difficult to make decisions on specific issues through such networking.

2.3 Creation of a New NGO/NPO Coordination System

The participation of experienced and skilled NGOs/NPOs with budgets in emergency relief activities affected existing volunteer coordination systems through the disaster volunteer center, which focused mainly on individual volunteers. NGOs/NPOs suggested relief activities different from those suggested by individual volunteers, in the sense of quality and quantity. Some had enough capacity to provide hundreds of meals for several months, and others could provide school amenities to all children who had suffered during the disaster, in accordance with the local government. As a result, in some cities, the volunteer centers expanded their functions and integrated NGOs/NPOs into their existing system. In others, they created a completely new system. An interesting example here would be the volunteer coordination system in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture.

Ishinomaki City was severely affected by the tsunami. Ishinomaki municipal government and the “Ishinomaki Shakai Fukushi Kyogikai” (Social Welfare Council) which expected to open their volunteer center lost their office building and had to evacuate them. The volunteer center began its activities on the Senshu University campus on March 16, in collaboration with the “Peace Boat”, an NPO experienced in emergency relief. Many groups of volunteers, coordinated by NGOs/NPOs came to the city by bus. Several NGOs/NPOs with specialized skills in medical support, psychological care, vector control, etc., also participated. People in Ishinomaki City, together with the local Young Person’s Association and NGOs/NPOs, started to discuss effective way to utilize their volunteers and skills provided by NGOs/NPOs. There they decided to establish a new NPO, “Ishinomaki Fukkou Shien Kyogikai” (Ishinomaki Disaster Recovery Assistant Council; hereafter referred to as “IDRAC”) for NGOs/NPOs coordination.

Although individual volunteers were accepted and coordinated through the volunteer center, NGOs/NPOs’ activities began to coordinate through the newly established IDRAC. Daily meetings were organized to enable effective coordination. IDRAC’s representative participated in the liaison meeting with the municipality. The coordination efforts by IDRAC affected changes within NGOs/NPOs coordination system, which had relied solely upon the Social Welfare Council. NGO/NPO activities were different from those of individual volunteers in terms of their mobilizing

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7 Based on the internal document provided from JPF Tohoku Office.
8 Based on the internal document provided from JPF Tohoku Office.
9 Japan Civil Network (JCN) website <http://www.jpn-civil.net/>.
10 Based on interviews with representatives of Social Welfare Council of Ishinomaki City, Mr. Takahashi of IDRAC and Mr. Shiratori of Peace Boat.
capacity and specialty in relief activities. Their coordinating system was issue oriented and on a large scale. As for debris removal in the urban areas of Ishinomaki City, IDRAC coordinated NGOs/NPOs and decided which NGOs/NPOs to work on where. Each NGO/NPO recruited volunteers, prepared equipment and cleared debris using human powers, which hastened the recovery of the area.

**Figure 1. Ishinomaki Disaster Recovery Assistance Council and Volunteer Center**

Another important contribution by NGOs/NPOs was the creation of a logistic support system. In Tono City, Iwate Prefecture, which is located 40 km (a one hour drive) from the disaster affected Pacific coast cities, the NGOs/NPOs new network, “Tono Magokoro Network” (Tono City Disaster Relief Network), was created. When Tono citizens went to the disaster affected Rikuzentakata City and Otsuchi City to provide support to the survivors, they realized the necessity of volunteer manpower. However, they found that there were neither facilities nor human resources to coordinate volunteers. Subsequently, they discussed how citizens of Tono could provide support to the survivors. Finally, Tono citizens decided to establish a volunteer backup base; Tono Magokoro Network.

The Tono Magokoro Network opened its office at the Tono Council of Social Welfare on March 27. The gymnasium next to its office was turned into a facility to accommodate volunteers. Shuttle buses that transported volunteers from Tono City to disaster-affected cities were operated every day. The network started its work in collaboration with seven NPOs/NGOs; however, eventually this number increased to 54 (Tono Magokoro Network, 2011). More than 40,000 volunteers joined volunteer activity through this network. Its logistic support systems not only provided support to those

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Based on the interview with Mr. Kazuhiko Tada, the President of Tono Magokoro Network.
engaged in emergency relief activities but also eased the logistic burden of disaster affected areas, such as demands-supply control of volunteer activity, and providing accommodations or equipment to volunteers.

3 COORDINATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE NGOs/NPOs

The national government established its National Disaster Management Headquarters in Tokyo and its on-site government headquarters at the Miyagi Prefectural government office on March 12. With the establishment of on-site headquarters, a representative from NGOs/NPOs began participating in their regular meeting as a liaison. The first liaison was from the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Japan. Before the Great East Japan Earthquake, the ADRA had been involved with the National Comprehensive Drill for Disaster Management for the anticipated Tokai earthquake organized by the national government, which took place from August 31 to September 1, 2010, in Shizuoka Prefecture. As a result, the ADRA had experience working in collaboration with the government. In April, the task of representing NGOs/NPOs was handed over to the JPF because of its ability to coordinate NGOs/NPOs. Mr. Hideo Watanabe of ADRA, who was the liaison at the on-site headquarters, explained the reason for this handed over as follows: “We wanted to concentrate more on field activity to support disaster survivors. JPF is experienced to coordinate NGOs/NPOs, thus the entire coordination might work well using their capacity.”

By the end of March, although almost three weeks had passed since the earthquake, there were still more than 73,000 persons living in evacuation shelters such as school buildings, gymnasiums, public halls, and so on. These people had not eaten a hot meal since the disaster occurred. Only two “Onigiris” (rice balls) twice per day were distributed to them. The Japan Self-Defense Force tried to provide food, water, and showers to these evacuees; however, they did not have enough resources to provide hot meals to all evacuees every day. In some evacuation shelters, residents did not want to receive hot meals unless there was sufficient food for everyone. On the other hand, several NGOs/NPOs wanted to provide hot meals; however, they did not know which evacuation shelters to provide. Thus, it became evident that if all institutions coordinated among one another, better support could be provided.

This led to the initiation of the “Hisaisha Shien Yonsha Renraku Kaigi” (four-party meetings in support of disaster survivors—hereafter referred to as “four-party meetings”). Four-party refers to the government on-site headquarters, Self-Defense Force, Miyagi Prefectural government, and the NGOs/NPOs representative. The four-party meeting was established as a result of a strong initiative by the government’s on-site headquarters. There had never been such collaboration before; however, the strong will to support the survivors made the meeting a reality.

In order to make the coordination practical at the local level, “three-party meeting” was organized in Ishinomaki City, Kesennuma City and Onagawa Town, which Self-Defense Forces, the municipal government and NGOs/NPOs’ representative attended, as a result of a strong initiative by the national government on-site headquarters. The national government on-site headquarters decided to organize group visits to disaster-affected municipalities with the members who attended the four-party meetings for better coordination at municipal level. In April, the group visited Ishinomaki City continuously. As a result, the three-party meeting was set up in Ishinomaki City, which motivated establishment of a three-party meeting in other cities like Kesennuma City and Onagawa Town. With respect to hot meal distribution, the meeting set a common objective, “To provide a hot meal at least once a day to all survivors living in evacuation shelters.” They prepared a list to share information about who was working where, and based on this list, they allocated NGOs/NPOs appropriately based on their capacity to provide hot meals.

During the four-party meetings, representatives discussed topics that were relevant at that moment.
and then set common objectives. By the end of April, survivors began to move to newly constructed temporary housing. Once the survivors moved into temporary housing, they could no longer receive the daily commodity support. Some people were then worried about moving to temporary housing because all the daily commodities they lost during disaster needed to be procured; however, they did not have the means to generate the required income for such commodities. Several private companies and NGOs/NPOs were eager to provide support to the survivors. Since some emergency storage facilities of the local government still contained relief goods, it was thought prudent to prepare small commodity packages; “Starter Packages,” that would be an initial support to those in temporary housing. The contents of the packages were decided based on the discussion by the local government and NGOs/NPOs that considered the demands of residents. First, they prepared a list of which items were to be packaged, then, based on the list, the NGOs/NPOs coordinated with suppliers such as private companies or governments to make the packages. In the Miyagi Prefecture, “futon” (a set of bed quilts), a dining table, kitchen utensils, and daily commodities were provided in the Starter Packages. In Fukushima Prefecture, home electronic appliances and daily commodities were provided.

JPF, as the liaison for the NGOs/NPOs, decided to assume responsibility for the coordination, which meant organizing the NGOs/NPOs to prepare and distribute packages where they were needed. Table 3 shows the result of this coordination. JPF coordinated the distribution of all packages in the Iwate Prefecture, Miyagi Prefecture and Fukushima Prefecture. Components of each package were differed in each municipality. Some wanted to utilize the remaining relief goods that were kept in storages and others wanted to collaborate with local industries.

### Table 3. NGOs/NPOs Coordination for “Starter Package” Preparation in Miyagi Prefecture

| City         | NGO in charge | No. of Temporary Houses | Coordination among company, NGO and government | No. of packages provided |
|--------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Sendai       | PSC           | 2500                    | Company+ NGO 233                               | 2267                    |
|              |               |                         | Company+ Gov 1300                              | 3000                    |
| Yamamoto     | ADRA          | 1300                    |                                              |                         |
| Kesennuma    | WVJ           | 3000                    | Company+ NGO 284                               | 2716                    |
| Minamisanriku| WVJ           | 3300                    | Company+ Gov 109                               | 3191                    |
| Ishinomaki   | JEN           | 10000                   | Company+ NGO 342                               | 9658                    |
| Onagawa      | PBT           | 2000                    |                                              | 1943                    |
| Higashimatsushima | ADRA     | 2200                    | Company+ NGO 431                               | 1769                    |
| Shiogama     | PLAN          | 500                     |                                              |                         |
| Shichigahama | PLAN          | 500                     | Company+ NGO 500                               |                         |
| Tagajo       | PLAN          | 500                     | Company+ NGO 500                               |                         |
| Natori       |               | 885                     | Company+ NGO 885                               |                         |
| Iwanuma      |               | 380                     | Company+ NGO 380                               |                         |
| Watari       | ADRA          | 1500                    | Company+ NGO 116                               | 1384                    |
| Total        |               | 28565                   |                                              | 24228                   |

Source: Based on the data provided from JPF Tohoku Office.
Notes: PSC: Personal Support Center; ADRA: Adventist Development and Relief Agency; WVJ: World Vision Japan, PBT: Peace Boat; PLAN: Plan Japan.

Instances, such as the four-party meetings or starter package distribution, showed that the coordinating capacity the government required of the NGOs/NPOs was different from that they required of individual volunteers. NGOs/NPOs should have the capacity to collect and allocate resources to support survivors, along with the objective sets developed in the four-party meetings.
However, this was not a new task for NGOs/NPOs. NGOs/NPOs, which engaged in international emergency assistance, they used to coordinate with government and other institutions through the cluster approach. The cluster approach is a coordinating mechanism for emergency assistance, developed by the United Nations after the 2005 Pakistan earthquake (United Nations, 2006). In the event of disasters, the cluster meeting is organized through initiatives of the United Nations and local governments in order to discuss and coordinate assistance among different institutions. In the Great East Japan Earthquake, there was no cluster meeting at the beginning; however, the four-party meeting functioned as a cluster meeting. There they set common objectives among different institutions and then coordinated who would work where. The three-party meeting was an area-focused cluster meeting. After having four-party or three-party meetings, the NGOs/NPOs attempted to organize sector meetings with the relevant sections of the Miyagi Prefectural government, such as an education or disability sector. It was obvious that international coordinating expertise was introduced to Japan through internationally experienced NGOs/NPOs.

4 CONCLUSION

The Great East Japan Earthquake highlighted the limitations of the current volunteer center system. The damages sustained by local government and the Social Welfare Council, responsible for setting up disaster volunteer centers, had an adverse effect on the mobilization of volunteers immediately after the disaster.

On the other hand, the disaster also highlighted the remarkable relief response made by the NGOs/NPOs. Activities undertaken by NGOs/NPOs that specialized in emergency relief differed from those undertaken by individuals in terms of speed, quality, and magnitude. The experience also led to the creation of new NGO/NPO coordination systems, such as the IDRAC, and logistic support systems, such as the Tono Magokoro Network. Why were NGOs/NPOs so active in this disaster? This rise of NGOs/NPOs in emergency relief activity can be explained as follows:

First, the number of NGOs/NPOs increased after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. The NPO Law promulgation in 1998 and its subsequent amendment became the basis for NPO development. Currently, there are 43,116 NPOs, and 2,736 (2.6%) specializes in disaster management - an area recognized as non-profit activity (Cabinet Office, 2011). During the Great East Japan Earthquake, as we had seen in the case of the JPF, which received 6,315 million Japanese yen grants from individuals, corporations and associations. There were people who expected the NGOs/NPOs to respond to the emergency and as a result, donated money. The number of NGOs/NPOs that engaged in disaster management increased; however, there is still no system to coordinate their activity.

Second, with the establishment of the JPF in 2000, the system to support NGOs/NPOs for emergency relief in developing countries was created and developed. The JPF functioned as an intermediate system to raise funds from the ODA and the private sector and then distribute them among their participating NGOs/NPOs. This system enabled the enrollment of financially weak NGOs/NPOs in emergency relief, and through operations in other countries, they developed their capacity to provide assistance to disaster survivors. Additionally they had contributed to the introduction of international disaster management system such as the cluster approach as seen in Japan. The four-party meetings and the three-party meetings functioned as a kind of cluster meeting. NGOs/NPOs also attempted to organize sector meetings with relevant sections in the Miyagi Prefectural government.

Finally, there was a strong initiative by the national government on-site headquarters to set up opportunities and meetings to discuss disaster-relief activities together with NGOs/NPOs. In Japan, it is the government that manages the emergency response operations. Although the government decides which policies and laws are enacted to better respond to disasters, it does not have enough resources to attend to local needs. On the other hand, NGOs/NPOs work closely with the
community; therefore, the collaboration between the government and the NGOs/NPOs may work well. In addition, NGOs/NPOs had the capacity to collect and allocate resources in order to provide support to survivors along with the objectives established through four-party meetings. As a result, the NGOs/NPOs became a new part of the government’s collaborative body now known as “New Public Commons.” This novel development was observed during the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The number of disaster related NGOs/NPOs increased after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and in the Great East Japan Earthquake, the NGOs/NPOs demonstrated their ability to coordinate resources along with government to provide better support for disaster survivors. However, there is still no coordinating system for NGOs/NPOs. The disaster volunteer center, which was created after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, focused on coordinating individual volunteers but not NGOs/NPOs. JCN was the first attempt to create a nationwide NGO/NPO network; nevertheless, the network was broad and had more than 700 participating organizations. JCN was useful in exchanging information, yet it was not as useful in coordinating joint effort activities for disaster relief with governments as each organization had different missions and financial backgrounds. Now is the time to discuss the establishment of a new platform for emergency relief; a system that can effectively coordinate and allocate/distribute resources within NGOs/NPOs and one that has the capacity to negotiate with the government.

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