

Are You Continuing to Improve Your Assistance?

It is vital to apply the knowledge you have gained from your experiences, both successes and failures, to improve your assistance activities. Always reflect on your activities and try to improve them so that you do not just do things and leave them unchecked. Ending your aid activity is always an option. It is necessary to check and see whether you overdoing things may be hindering disaster survivors' resilience.

To this end, it is important to listen to the voices of disaster survivors as well as other organizations with whom you are working.

Newspaper headlines read "Seven months since the Kumamoto Earthquake," "Total 4,303 temporary housing units in the prefecture completed," and "Accessible units provided in Mashiki Town." The difficulties of living in regular temporary housing units have been pointed out, because these units typically have many steps and some wheelchair users had given up on living there. Kumamoto Prefecture has listened to the opinions of organizations for persons with disabilities, improved the temporary housing plans to suit who the residents will be, and accepted the residents' requests even after they moved in. [Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun, November 15, 2016]



Typical Example of How the Quality of Assistance Worsens

Just doing things and leaving them unchecked



With the passage of time, an aid activity that was once effective may no longer have the desired effect after a certain point. You should always question yourself whether the same assistance will be sufficient the next time and listen to the opinions of the disaster survivors to make appropriate improvements.

Check List

- ✔ Are the responders regularly reviewing and improving ongoing aid activities?
- ✔ Are the responders learning from the experiences in their past responses and applying the learnings to their current and future aid activities?

Best Practice Cases

Kumamoto Earthquake

Shelter as a Residence and Evacuees as a Large Family

Emergency Phase

NPO Mashiki Daisuki Project Kimamani



Space for socializing in the shelter © Kimamani

At an evacuation shelter converted from an elementary school gymnasium, the shelter was regarded as a place of residence, hence a home. Living quarters and spaces for talking were set aside, and the rules for meals and cleaning were improved through discussions among the residents, making the shelter a family-like operation.

For example, when children expressed their desire for a space to study after lights out, such space was set up in the shelter where they could concentrate on their studies.

Also, "Good morning," "Welcome back home," and other greetings were exchanged among the residents in the shelter, which naturally encouraged people to look after each other and helped with crime prevention, too.

Responders' Wisdom

- They prevented people from being overburdened by the division of roles and designation of tasks through asking them to do what they were good at, and this allowed them to continue to help each other quite naturally. They held up the slogan "Dekiru hito ga, dekiru koto o, dekiru shiko*" which means "Those who can, do what they can, within their means." (*Dekiru shiko means "as much as one can do, within one's means" in Kumamoto dialect.)

Kumamoto Earthquake

A Fun Idea to Watch Over Men Who Tend to Be Isolated

Reconstruction Phase

Reconstruction Project Ozu Kasesuru Kumamoto



Social event in temporary housing where men can also enjoy ©Kasesuru Kumamoto

When aid organizations host social events, the intent is not only to build connections among the participants but also to identify those who are in need of help and support. Many participants of these events tend to be women, and not many men in their 50s and 60s attend, even though this demographic is said to be at high risk of kodokushi (solitary deaths) and needs to be looked after.

As a result of the event hosts reflecting on their events and making continuous improvements, they came up with hosting the choinomi izakaya, a pub-like atmosphere for quick drinks, to make it easier for men to participate. This also had the effect of preventing these men from drinking too much alcohol, as they would say, "I had enough to drink here so no more for me today."

Responders' Wisdom

- Instead of banning alcohol, they made drinking moderate amounts into an opportunity for everyone to have a good time.
- They made it easier for people to come join their event by decorating it in the style of an izakaya pub and creating a fun atmosphere.