

Does the Assistance Draw Out the Local Community's Strengths?

While promoting post-disaster reconstruction, it is very important for the disaster survivors themselves to make decisions about their post-disaster lives and communities. Responders from outside of the community should not decide anything on their behalf or impose ideas. Instead, they should be involved in a way that places the local people at the center and supports them in using their own strength.

Newspaper headline reads "Building on post-disaster reconstruction precedence: Workshop begins in Kumamoto City." With sufficient understanding of the features of the disaster as well as the local characteristics and resources, the strengths of the disaster survivors were drawn out. [Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun, June 27, 2017]



Typical Example of How the Quality of Assistance Worsens

It's our own community but it doesn't feel like it

It's so sudden, we can't just come up with opinions on a whim, it's so hard...

Resident workshop

You should do this! Keep your opinions coming!

Most of this doesn't apply to us, so this information isn't helpful in our case...

We've never been in a disaster, so we don't know what to say.

Thoroughly understand what kind of information the disaster survivors are requesting to overcome difficulties. Then, provide a plan that can lead to a concrete solution.

Check List

- ✓ Are the responders providing assistance that not only meets current needs among the disaster survivors but also strengthens their preparedness for future disasters?
- ✓ Are the responders, especially those from outside of the affected community, involved in a way that supports recovery and disaster preparedness efforts led by local governments and local organizations?
- ✓ Are the responders taking sufficient care to ensure that their involvement will not cause additional problems onto the lives of disaster survivors?

Best Practice Cases

Kumamoto Earthquake

Learning from Past Disasters About the Path to Recovery

Reconstruction Phase

Japan Platform (JPF)



Lecture-style training

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Japan Platform (JPF) hosted lecture-style training to share experiences and knowledge necessary in solving issues in post-disaster reconstruction. The instructors were leaders in post-disaster reconstruction efforts from the Great Hanshin-Awaji, Chuetsu, Great East Japan, and other past major earthquakes in Japan, and the training aimed to have NPOs, neighborhood associations, and others organizations engaged in reconstruction in Kumamoto Prefecture as well as local government officials be informed about the reconstruction process.

JPF also provided financial grants as part of an effort to improve management and project implementation capabilities and to develop human resources responsible for long-term reconstruction efforts. These grants were used to support observational visits to previously disaster-hit areas and for post-visit activities. The program helped develop human resources capable of dealing with possible future challenges and supported an uninterrupted transition from external assistance to local-led reconstruction.

Responders' Wisdom

- Lectures covered challenges to be anticipated during reconstruction, making it easier for the local leaders to plan their activities moving forward.
- Individualized consultation was provided for drafting project plans, places to visit for observations, and completing final report documents. Each organization received help on problem solving and was offered advice on other issues relevant to their activities.

Kumamoto Earthquake

Making Sure that Local People Can Decide the Community's Future

Reconstruction Phase

Peace Winds Japan (PWJ)



Liaison meeting with local governments, CSWs, and aid organizations

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Peace Winds Japan (PWJ) proposed holding liaison meetings for all the temporary housing resident association presidents in a particular town, where they could share the problems faced by their residents and issues encountered in rebuilding livelihoods. In addition to serving as a forum for information sharing, having a single point of contact made it easier to communicate and coordinate, including being able to consolidate the community's requests to the local government.

To prepare for the rebuilding of livelihoods, PWJ also supported observational visits to past disaster areas, planning of trainings by specialists in areas like psychological support, and other events that the residents proactively planned and implemented to kickstart community building efforts.

Responders' Wisdom

- To make events reflect the opinions of the people living in temporary housing, resident association presidents were asked to lead in the planning.
- By having the entire resident association create an annual schedule, the events ended up adequately addressing the community's challenges.