

GENDER ISSUES IN DISASTER PREVENTION, DISASTER RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION PROCESSES IN JAPAN¹

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I . Limited Review of International Trends

Of the references I enumerated, works by Keiko Ikeda (Faculty of Education, Shizuoka University), who is specialized in social geography and South Asia studies are of prime importance. She has conducted fieldwork (1996, 2009, etc.) in

Bangladeshi farming villages. To examine gender and development, disaster response of farming village residents and women's participation in community disaster prevention. Her dedicated research in this area is ongoing (Ikeda 2011a, b, c).

II . Disaster Prevention and Gender issues in Japan

In 1990, before the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, *Nihon Bosai Hyakunenshi* (100-year Record of Disaster Prevention in Japan) was published by Kokkai Shiryo Hensankai. This publication includes a chronological table covering the period from the first year of Meiji (1868) through to the end of the Showa period (1989), but there is only one mention of special considerations for the elderly and none at all of gender issues.

1. The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, January 17, 1995

(1) Overcoming the difficulty of gaining access

to statistics on earthquake-caused deaths (by age, gender)

Since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, local/national governments have begun to release gender/age-disaggregated data on the number of dead saying it is extremely difficult to ascertain correct figures and a heavy load to calculate (Table 1). Overall, the number of women who died was greater than the number of men, and the number of deaths of elderly women was particularly high because there are more elderly women than elderly men.

Ideally a cross-tabulation showing socio-economic factors like whether the casualties were

on social welfare or whether they paid high taxes, should be made available (even though it might be technically quite difficult). It is often mentioned that there was more damage among the poor because they live in disaster-prone areas without firm ground that have lower property values. The relationship between gender and class is another issue to be investigated.²

(2) Activities by women

Among reasons this theme “disaster prevention and gender issues” has been getting so much attention is the activities of “Women’s Net Kobe.” This NGO was originally involved in activities in the Kobe area aiming to increase the number of women members of the Kobe City Council and the Hyogo Prefectural legislature. This NGO had been active even before the Hanshin Awaji Earthquake on January 17, 1995. One of its early activities was to set up a “Women’s House” which was to function as an information exchange hub. This house was lost in the earthquake, but because the group was already set up and running, it was able to provide extensive as well as systematic support to earthquake survivors. Establishing a support hotline for domestic violence survivors after the earthquake deserves special mention.

In due course, Women’s Net Kobe compiled records and published a book (Women’s Net Kobe ed. 1996), but it was not until nearly a decade after the earthquake that it became well-known within and outside Japan (Masai, Kuzunishi, and Kondo 1998). In line with the group’s original intentions, their representative, Reiko Masai, stood for the Kobe Council elections in 1995, but was not elected.

Women’s Net Kobe’s original objective was brought to some kind of reality when the Act Concerning Support for Reconstructing Livelihoods of Disaster Victims (May 1998) was passed due to the efforts of Tomoko Nakagawa,

Table 1 Number of Deaths at the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake by Age and Gender

age at the time of death	Men	Women	Total	%
0 ~ 4	67	55	122	1.91
5 ~ 9	64	66	130	2.03
10 ~ 14	66	79	145	2.26
15 ~ 19	70	102	172	2.69
20 ~ 24	151	148	299	4.67
25 ~ 29	81	92	173	2.70
30 ~ 34	60	85	145	2.26
35 ~ 39	62	57	119	1.86
40 ~ 44	97	109	206	3.22
45 ~ 49	118	162	280	4.37
50 ~ 54	173	236	409	6.39
55 ~ 59	212	249	461	7.20
60 ~ 64	261	299	560	8.75
65 ~ 69	272	385	657	10.26
70 ~ 74	266	411	677	10.57
75 ~ 79	222	369	591	9.23
80 ~ 84	264	413	677	10.57
85 ~ 89	155	242	397	6.20
90 ~ 94	39	100	139	2.17
95 ~ 99	9	19	28	0.44
100 ~	4	2	6	0.09
age at the time of death/gender unknown			9	0.14
Total	2,713	3,680	6,402	100.00

Source: Hyogo Prefecture (2008) “Hanshin Awaji Daishinsai no shisha ni kakaru chosa nitsuite” (Regarding a survey on deaths at the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake) (news released on December 22, 2005) (http://web.pref.hyogo.jp/pa20/pa20_000000016.html)

a member of the lower house of the national Diet who was from Takarazuka, Hyogo Prefecture (Mayor from April 20, 2009, now serving her second term which ends in 2013).

2. Action taken by the Council for Gender Equality, Cabinet Office

Regarding the Council for Gender Equality, Cabinet Office, in 2002, seven years after the Great-Hanshin Awaji Earthquake, Kaoru Honoki,

a professor at Kobe University (as of 2002) and Reiko Masai, leader of Women's Net Kobe, reported the situation of women victims at the Earthquake at a meeting of the Cabinet Office's Impact Survey Case Study Research Team (henceforth ISCRT, Mari Osawa, the secretary general of the Human Security and Gender Committee of the Science Council of Japan, was also a member). This report had such an impact on committee members and government officials that disaster issues were included in the second and third Basic Plans on Gender Equality.

We saw some progress in the government's response to the Chuetsu Earthquake in October 2004 and then the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami in December 2004. Partly because of, a lasting influence of the ISCRT of 2002, when the Chuetsu Earthquake occurred, a female officer from the Cabinet Office Gender Equality Bureau was dispatched to the support and countermeasure office of the affected area in order to make sure that women's points of view were reflected in the support activities. This was the first time that government responses had included the gender issue. When the Indian Ocean Earthquake and Tsunami occurred in December 2004, Japan immediately made a donation of 1 million dollars through the United Nations agency UNIFEM. The Japanese government's response to the disasters in Indian Ocean is mentioned in the *White Paper on Disaster Management FY2006* (2006, Vol. 1, Chapter 4-1, 1-3).

Following this, from 2004 through 2005, the Council for Gender Equality and the expert committee on the Basic Plan on Gender Equality, began to debate disaster prevention policies from a gender perspective. In the Second Basic Plan on Gender Equality we find a new field, "Priority field 12: Promoting gender equality in fields requiring new initiatives." This includes disaster prevention in addition to other fields such as

science and technology, community development, town planning, tourism and environment.

The Third Basic Plan on Gender Equality (approved by Cabinet on December 17, 2010) includes the disaster prevention field from the point of view of gender equality, as a part of Priority field 14. Specifically, in the contents of this plan, Priority field 14 is "Promoting gender equality in the area of regional development, disaster prevention, environment and others."

3. Event at Japan Women's Conference, Hiroshima (October 19-20, 2007)

In the private sector, each year the Japan Women's Conference is held in a different city across Japan, usually a prefectural capital. There are many people involved in organizing the conference, including city office employees, women and men from NPOs/NGOs. At the Women's Conference held in Hiroshima in 2007, a session titled "Including women's views into disaster prevention measures" was held (Organizing Committee of Japan Women's Conference, 2007, Hiroshima (ed.) 2007).

4. "Disaster and women's empowerment" at the FY2005 International Forum on Women's Learning, National Women's Education Center

A session on "Disaster and women's empowerment" was held at the FY2005 International Forum on Women's Learning in the National Women's Education Center and lively discussion from a wide range of perspectives took place, speakers from abroad also contributing (NWEC 2005).

5. “Conference on disaster prevention for women” and the “Anamizu Declaration”

On March 25, 2008, at Anamizu Town in Ishikawa Prefecture, a conference on disaster prevention for women was held and the “Anamizu Declaration” was proclaimed.³ Members of an NGO set up by disaster survivors in the Kobe region to help recovery efforts came to support Anamizu residents immediately after an earthquake occurred there in 2007, and this created the momentum for the Conference event. It seems that the experience of Kobe meant a lot to the people of Anamizu, as “the people from Kobe didn’t just come and give moral support, they were a great help when it came to concrete detailed responses.”

6. Special Committee on Gender Equality, National Governors’ Association (chaired by Akiko Domoto, Governor of Chiba)

The Special Committee on Gender Equality under the National Governors’ Association (NGA)⁴ deemed disaster and gender and disaster prevention and gender as important issues nationally and conducted a survey on them (Special Committee on Gender Equality, National Governors’ Association 2008). When Akiko Domoto became the Governor of Chiba Prefecture in 2001, there were four female Governors participating in the NGA and they were joined by several other Governors in the Special Committee to develop the project. Surveys titled “Disaster prevention measures from the point of view of women and local residents” were sent to all prefectures and municipalities in Japan. Responses were received from all prefectures and 1,746 municipalities (96.6%), the survey also being carried out in municipalities within the prefectures. In response to recommendations

from the Prefectural Governors, many Prefectures created a base to build a framework for integrating the local government’s policies on women’s participation in disaster prevention into actions from the planning stages at township and village levels⁵.

7. Review of *White Paper on Disaster Management*

I reviewed *White Papers* on Disaster Management from 2001 through 2010 to analyze descriptions on women and gender. First, women have been participating in the volunteer fire corps’ national conferences etc. under the name of “Women’s Fire Prevention Club.” Originally it was the fire corps’ “wives of officers” group, but I feel that they are gradually becoming more involved in system-building in the community.

In the FY2006 issue, there are a number of places that deserve attention. On December 26, 2004, the Indonesian earthquake occurred and in January 2005, a special ASEAN leaders’ meeting was held in Jakarta. Japanese Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Koizumi stated that as Japan was part of Asia, it would be supporting relief efforts as much as possible in the three areas of monetary, technical and personnel contributions.⁶

8. Final Declaration of the Asia and Pacific NGO Forum on Beijing + 15

In 1995 the 4th World Conference on Women was convened by the UN in Beijing and government leaders participating in the Conference adopted the Beijing Platform for Action identifying 12 comprehensive critical areas of concern to be addressed globally. Following this, every year in the spring at the UN Headquarters in New York, the Commission on the Status of Women is held over two weeks, discussing mainly set themes. The

2010 session marked 15 years since the Beijing Conference and to commemorate this, in each of the UN's five regions, large-scale inter-government meetings and NGO forums were held. The Asia-Pacific regional NGO forum was held in October 2009 in Quezon City, a part of the Greater Manila. In the declaration that was adopted,⁷ especially concerning disaster and women, mention is made of what kind of problems may occur (sexual abuse, factors caused by cultural situation, others). As well, cases where women are extremely disadvantaged when it comes to recovery efforts are also mentioned.

9. UN World Conference on Disaster Reduction (WCDR) and the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction

Regarding the UN, as part of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, the World Disaster Reduction Conference was held in Yokohama in 1994, adopting the "Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World." There was no specific mention of gender or women in this "Strategy." However, in the "Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015" which was adopted at the UN Disaster Reduction Conference

held in Kobe about ten years later, reference is made to an outcome document of the 23rd Special Session of the UN General Assembly "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the 21st Century" and this framework mentions paying attention to gender-sensitive disaster countermeasures.

Within Asia, the ADRC—Asian Disaster Reduction Center was established in Kobe in 1998 and since 2002 the Asian Disaster Reduction Conference has been held once almost every year. It has been held in Japan in 2003, 2009 and 2010, at Kobe. In the conference summary of the 2010 Kobe Conference it says: "In line with the ASEAN Charter, the AADMER (ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response) work program 2010-2015 will also promote a more people-centered disaster risk reduction, by including issues related to vulnerable groups such as children, elderly and people with disabilities as well as gender perspectives" (ADRC 2010). This surely bodes well for the conference's host country, Japan—for the progress of both domestic and international practice, except the fact that Japan's Basic Act on Disaster Control Measures, last revised on August 31, 2011, has no mention of gender and women's issues.

III. Conclusion

Measures for disaster prevention and disaster response in Japan, at the national, prefectural and municipal level must include not just men but women, the elderly and persons with disabilities from the stage of policy-making. Especially in some communities in Japan, mature-age men are out at work, leaving only elderly and family members with disabilities in the home. It is necessary for these people to have a say in how to handle these types of cases and it is mainly

municipal units that must respond to these needs. For this to happen, prefectural governors and local mayors must have strong awareness of the issues, including disaster prevention, immediate response to disasters, management of evacuation centers, temporary housing design, medical and health services, individuals and public opinion and reopening and rebuilding of businesses. Moreover, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities and children should also be a part of decision-

making team regarding the contents of measures and making individual proposals for the recovery process.

It has also been confirmed that the disaster prevention perspective has been included in the amended Basic Act for Persons with Disabilities. On July 29, 2011, this amended law, designed to overcome cases of miscommunication of information to people with disabilities during the Great Tohoku Earthquake, was passed in the upper house of the Diet, making it compulsory for the national and local governments to set disaster prevention and crime prevention measures that take into account the situation of people with disabilities (NHK News, broadcast at 16:44, on July 30, 2011).

It is also necessary to implement gender perspectives of diverse actors into the area of international cooperation. This issue is being addressed by Kishie Shigekawa, a member of the “Human Security and Gender Committee” of the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) (Professor at Graduate School of Environment and Disaster Research, Fuji Tokoha University) as well as Keiko Ikeda (Shizuoka University), as mentioned previously. There are a few scholars undertaking this type of research, but their number is small and must be increased.

Finally, it is necessary to publish and promote books such as *The book of how to protect your children from earthquakes* (Nobue Kunizaki 2001) and *50 ways to protect children from crime* (Nobue Kunizaki 2005) which are useful for people in everyday life.⁸

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especially at the township and village levels failed to place emphasis on gender perspectives at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11, 2011.

- 6 On June 14, 2011, after this presentation was made, the *White Paper on Disaster Management* for 2011 (which sets out the overall measures related to disaster prevention and the plan for disaster prevention in FY2011) was approved by Cabinet and presented to parliament. In this white paper, the death toll in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures due to the Great Tohoku Earthquake (up until April 11, 2011) was broken down by age and compared with the age composition of the local population (as of September 1, 2010) (p.12). However, there is no breakdown by gender. There is only one table showing the number of deaths by age and gender in the reference data (p. 100). It is hoped that in future there will be a deepening and progression of awareness regarding the necessity of responding to diverse communities (gender, age, disabilities, language—level of understanding of Japanese) in disasters.
- 7 "Final Declaration of the Asia and Pacific NGO Forum on Beijing +15" available at http://www.un-ngls.org/IMG/doc_Final_Declaration_of_the_Asia_and_Pacific_NGO_Forum_on_Beijing.doc
- 8 I would also like to recommend, from the point of view of learning from Japan's past experiences, *Sanriku kaigan ootsunami* (The Sanriku coast giant tsunami) (Yoshimura 2004a) and *Kanto daishinsai* (The Great Kanto Earthquake) (Yoshimura 2004b).

Notes

On June 11, 2011, I received a copy of *Never Forget—Women's Reconstruction from Earthquake* which was published by the association to promote reconstruction by women and recovery after the Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake. This publication is a record of a symposium, held in October 2009 to commemorate the 5th anniversary of the Great Chuetsu Earthquake on October 23, 2004. It also includes writings on experiences and thoughts immediately after the earthquake occurred. I would like to express my respect for the women of Niigata, as well as the women of Kobe, for their involvement and for publishing this information.

- 1 This paper is mainly based on the author's oral presentation made at the Committee on Human Security and Gender in the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) on November 30, 2010 and a few comments were added in July, 2011.
- 2 As an addition to this report, I would like to point out that poorer classes of people were not the only ones to suffer the damage by the liquefaction of reclaimed land along the coast in Chiba, caused by the Tohoku Earthquake on March 11, 2011.
- 3 The *White Paper on Disaster Management FY2009* (p. 21) also refers to the "Conference on disaster prevention for women" and the "Anamizu Declaration": "Through the spread of such activities, disaster prevention measures that reflect women's needs will be fostered; it is also hoped that more women will participate in community disaster prevention."
- 4 <http://www.nga.gr.jp/english/roughly/rougtop.html>
- 5 Despite this base, it seems that many municipalities