

Community Restoration and Support at Stricken Area – From the View of Social Work

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One year has passed since the unprecedented Tohoku Earthquake and the nuclear plant accidents. What we should prioritize is to reconstruct the life of the victims and reach to immediate conclusion of the nuclear plant accidents. Japan is now facing three different crises on social structure. The first one is the population structure characterized with super aged society and declined birthrate, which mainly seen in developed countries. The second one is the crisis on economy, finance, and social security due to deflation-led recession, strong yen, and low stock prices. The third one is the crisis on social systems and family/community sustainability portrayed with elderly care, isolation, domestic violence, suicide, crimes, and social stresses. The Tohoku Earthquake and the nuclear accidents stroke while we were facing these issue. In this paper, I mainly consider community restoration and support for the people in the stricken area emphasizing on “Residential welfare resources”, “Community welfare planning”, and “Social work practices” from the view of social work.

1. Restoration and Residential Welfare at the Stricken Area

The world economic crisis due to Lehman shock has attacked Japanese community and the people and result in the damage on residential welfare resources. There are three new main aspects on residential welfare. First, consider the perspectives of resources in the economic society, and grasp the whole view of the study of residential welfare. Then, learn from thoughts and theories of the leading figures in each discipline. Second, the idea of residential welfare is to see that not only there is “a house” but also includes human rights with supporting relationship with each other. Thus, the true concept of the study of residential welfare is the linkage of resources(stock) in community and benefit in kind(flow) in social security which does not only focus on the study of residence, social security, and social welfare service. The third is to verify the values and meanings of residential welfare within the practice while attempting case study for residential welfare resources.

The restoration and development for the stricken area should be human revival and development of the people. To do that, the basic condition is to continue living in the land where the people are born and raised. The scale and acuteness of the damage for the earthquake exceeded far imagination. I came across uncountable shocking sights when I went to the stricken area and stood in the suffering field a few months after the earthquake. I also took my breath by the damage of Hanshin Awaji earthquake and Noto Peninsula

earthquake. It is true that there is still scars of these earthquake like elderly dying alone (there were 233 people died in the temporary housing without seen by anyone in 5 years after the Hanshin Awaji earthquake). Furthermore, stricken areas have been influenced by the world synchronized recession flocks. It means that the people are suffered by the earthquake and the economic crisis. It is concerned that economic regional differences and poverty may be accelerated by the earthquake disaster. In this stand point, at the time of disaster, problems appear evidently. We are challenged to restore and revive the county applying the past experience of restoration and development.

Welfare community consists of social attitudes and values that distinguished with people who are being excluded or eliminated from community. It is not only a region or shared commonality. For instance, there are discrimination, exclusion, and multi-culture issues in the society. In other words, issues like residential rights for foreigners in Japan, deprivation for handicapped people, and homelessness ask community and people to face with the problems of social exclusion as well as social inclusion. Moreover, there are issues for victims of earthquake and residential rights for the areas of the nuclear plant. It is said that elderly feel increasing sense of isolation as the season gets cold or hot in the stricken areas. Creating a warm place to gather for the people in the stricken area has continued for those who cannot find one's place to stay.

The current policy objectives for the disaster revival are to reconstruct lives of those who have been suffering. The first focus is to secure housing. Specifically, ①reconstructing the social system which will be sustainable in this population decline society, and maintaining high quality housing environment. ②alternating private property into public property to enrich social capital. ③providing private lease housing as temporary housing under the Disaster Relief Act. ④providing public housing for the victims. ⑤searching for second houses, empty houses, hot-spring resorts, hotels where victims can stay for a period of time.

For the housing policy, it is urgent to prepare housing for people who stay in shelters. From the Hanshin Awaji earthquake, we have learned to build a temporary housing without breaking community. Yet, it is not easy to apply in the Tohoku case. Because housings for Tohoku areas need to be able to tolerate extreme cold weather and snow, the cost of one house is double the price of the regular temporary housing. The housing relief policy needs to be reconsidered. It will be more practical to replace the funds for the temporary housings to permanent housings for victims with collaborating among community, government, and manufactures.

The second focus is to plan town and community resistible for disasters. ①constructing a system that supports elderly, children, and people with handicap. ②maintaining empty houses, forests, and fields. ③securing social security including taxation system in the stricken area to protect elderly.

The third focus is to maintain medical care, welfare, and long-term care. Many people have started to have health problems due to the long stay at shelters or housing without supports. ①securing supply for medicine and medical materials at general hospitals. ② gathering demands to the central government from each prefecture. ③ preventing

infectious disease or hypothermia at shelters. ④dispatching disaster support nurses who have trained for this kind of emergency as well as disaster social workers and care workers. ⑤acting toward isolation of elderly who lives alone in a house or temporary housing. We need to increase housing supports including day-care services and visiting services for elderly and people with handicap. It is important to grasp the needs of those who need supports for living.

The fourth point is to create employment and local industry. The sum of the lost stock at Hanshin Awaji earthquake(buildings and transportation) in 1995 was approximately 9,600 billion yen, but the sum of the lost stock at Tohoku earthquake is approximately 20 trillion yen. In order to restore housings, factories, roads, railroads, bridges, harbors, investment will increase great demand and expand employment through Keynes type public work spending policy. Due to the effect on growth rate of the flow, the child care allowance has canceled, and a part of public employees' salary has put aside in the 2011 budget. With the employment policy, expand fields for medicine, welfare, and long-term care and improve expense of these workers to provide better quality of care.

2. Regeneration of the Stricken Area and Community Welfare Planning

In the structure of social security, there is social insurance, and social welfare below the social insurance, and then public assistance as minimum security. The regeneration of the stricken area (community welfare) or victims' supports (social work) is placed at the second part of the structure. The areas of social security system (social insurance, social work, public assistance) need to be handled by the collaboration between local government and central government to develop secure safety net. The contents of the safety net include social insurance (forced participation insurance for disease, old-age, and unemployment), social welfare (supports for handicapped person or single parent household), public assistance (secure minimum living expense and support independence for poor). These safety nets have to function as a cushion or a trampoline which helps to jump back to where he/she was before. This part is missing in Japan. Once he/she slips down, it is extremely difficult to coming back and keeps sliding to the bottom. The rip of the social security system characterized with slipping down type exists before 3.11 and falls into a malfunction after the earthquake. Japan was in an unstable state in economy, society, and environment even before the great earthquake and the nuclear plant accidents and cannot get up now. Everybody including victim and non-victim feels that one day will be victim of disaster. We will lose everything in a moment with a disaster. The hardest time comes afterwards which everyone leaves the place and those who are left there feel (Sara Ono). The Tohoku district was suffering from decreasing in population and aging population even before the earthquake. It is not possible to achieve in emergency when cannot achieve in peace. What needs to be done will be proved from now, "after the disaster".

Each area has been challenging to develop community revival focused on hard aspects after the disaster, yet not much on soft aspects including community welfare planning.

According to the victim questionnaire asking about rebuilding life and revival plan on March, 2011 (Iwate daily report: which do you support if you were a mayor), 34.5% of people support for rebuilding lives of victims, 65.5% of people support for reviving plan with collaboration of prefecture and central government. The condition of the local government was severe before the earthquake. Success or failure of the revival plan depends on solution of the structure in local government and issues within the areas. It is urgent to develop revival plan on central government, prefecture, and local government.

The slogan will be “safe, secure, and comfortable community building”. The present focus is to ①construct welfare community (mixture of safe and secured town with tradition and building a caring town for elderly and people with handicap. Place an active center for interaction with residents)、② development of total community care system and neighborhood supports (total community care system with medicine, welfare, long-term care, prevention, housing, disaster supports in each middle school district), ③ improvement of health welfare (development of community, that supports quality of life of elderly), ④reconstruction of trusts and bonds of family and community (encourage participation of people, strengthen psychological bonds, decrease crimes, and increase quality of life in the community), ⑤growth of community business in public (maximize community resource and advocate employment placement and economy in the area).

Here are the three effects of the life reconstruction, local reproduction, and revival plan for victims. First, intervention of social work professionals to deal with individual problems due to change in family structures and community, and strengthen decreasing intimate sphere including family and community based supports through social capital and community resource (stock) in each area. Second, development of wealthy public due to local governance(social farms or community business consisting with government, residents, and agencies). Third, in order to minimize socioeconomic differences in the stricken areas, establish the life security for people in community through rebuilding safety net systems (social insurance, social welfare, and public assistance) in each area.

3. Disaster and Social Work

A difference in supports for victims and stricken areas starts to appear. It could be a result of local fragility that illustrates unsolved problems of medicine and welfare dealing with declining birthrate, depopulation, and super aging society. It is urgent to construct systems which support life and living of elderly and children in community. Process of revival from the Tohoku Earthquake depends on each area and also timing differs, it will progress by the step as follow. Hit by earthquake → shelter (welfare shelter) → restoration (life rebuilding) → revival (rebuilding new community). A process of supports by social workers needs to follow the steps. Working in shelters at the time of the hit, grasping physical and psychological problems in temporary housings and regular housings → analyzing living environment of victims → development of support systems in each stage → introducing DMAT for welfare → constructing community comprehensive

support system → reviving plan and community welfare planning based on interview from victims and analyzing case study in a timeline with professionals and supporters.

When disaster happens, victims start from life in shelters (welfare shelter for nursing care elderly and people with handicap), temporary housing, and then rebuilding and community improvement of permanent housing. In the beginning of disaster, medicine will cope patients with immediate and acute medical care needs. In this area, DMAT(Disaster Medical Assistance Team) considerably functioned well in Japan. DMAT consists of one doctor, two nurses, one assistant become a team and deals with super immediate period or immediate period patients within 48 hours (72 hours in the Tohoku earthquake). It provides triage, emergency operation, transportation, supports for hospitals in stricken areas, and aviation transportation. Iwate social worker society started “Welfare DMAT” in July, 2011 collaborating with social welfare professional association system. There are 448 JMAT organized by Japan Doctors Association in April 12th and preparing 117 new teams.

Since the great earthquake, each association including professional association, NPO, welfare universities, and association social welfare society has been participating in support for restoration and revival. However, these activities remain in individual levels. What need to be done is to share information and methods held by each group with collaboration for restoration and revival. The area of social work and community social work are expected to contribute in rebuilding life of victims and revival in the stricken areas. In this sense, social work is expected to grow in the area of study.

