

DESA Forum (March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015, 10:00 a.m-5:00 p.m., Tohoku University, Sendai, Miyagi)

Outline: “Four Years after the Great East Japan Earthquake: Proposal for the future ”

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■ Disaster Exposing Social Vulnerability

Disaster strikes every deficiency existing in society, and its vulnerability becomes evident. Socially vulnerable people, such as people with disabilities and the elderly, are particularly hurt. Disabled people bear both physical and mental burdens in all phases of disaster: event of disaster, evacuation, sheltering, and reconstruction of living. The death rate of the persons with disabilities for the Great East Japan Earthquake was double the number of non-disabled persons.

■ Issues on Disaster Risk Reduction and Disability recognized in the Great East Japan Earthquake

Raised death rate of the disabled people would be ascribed to two grounding causes. One is the lack of disaster perspective in the preceding measures for disaster risk reduction. It is true that the 311 tsunami was far beyond expectation, yet it is not the sole reason of the tragedy- disaster planning has failed to include disabled people and their perspective.

The second is the situation of the ordinary or non-emergency period support to the disabled people and social resources. They are interrelated to the disaster and post-disaster assistance to the disaster-stricken disabled people: if the ordinary support system is weak, disabled people face severe damage in the event of disaster, and insufficient assistance in the phase of reconstruction.

Information resource center for hearing disabilities was yet to be established in Miyagi and Fukushima Prefectures when the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred. As a result of petition submitted to the regional administrators by respective local deaf associations, along with Central Headquarters for Disaster Relief for Deaf People in the Great East Japan Earthquake (CH-DRDP), such resource centers were launched in 2013 in Fukushima, and 2015 in Miyagi.

■ Contribution of DPO Network to the Relief Actions

The Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995 brought an essential lesson: disabled people's organizations (DPOs) had to establish networks for mutual support at all times. Two decades ago, individual organizations, such as local administrators, social welfare organizations, medical assistance teams, DPOs, and their alliances, took respective immediate relief and support

actions for the disaster-stricken disabled people.

At the wake of the Great East Japan Earthquake, Japan Disability Forum (JDF) promptly launched JDF Headquarters for Comprehensive Support of Persons with Disabilities affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake, composed of major DPOs, and made a significant contribution to the support to the disaster victims with disabilities.

Japanese Federation of the Deaf, member organization of JDF, has also started CH-DRDP. They visited every shelter with advocates to learn individual needs of the disabled victims and took supporting actions.

Due to the wide areas of damage ranging in three prefectures in northeastern region, supporting base is located in the central eastern regional block. They collected relief items and over 70 million yen donation, and distributed them to the victims.

The challenge was the uncooperative teamwork with the local administrators in safety inquiry of disabled individuals and the very first step of the relief actions. This resulted in the stagger in the initial phase actions. Personal Information Protection Law hindered to release the list of residents with disabilities to the supporting organizations. The support emergency system has failed to be planned.

People with hearing disabilities seriously need supports in information and communication. After the negotiation with Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW), the central government sent a request to the regional governments to send their sign language interpreters, notetakers, and deaf interveners to the disaster-affected areas. Upon the commission from the MHLW, CH-DRDP coordinated sign language interpreters and deaf interveners dispatch for two months. In addition, they conducted medical and mental support by sending social workers who use sign language. In these projects, consensus and understanding of these participating personnels' regular workplaces was needed, and the expenses for the dispatch became a challenge.

Due to the serious damage of nuclear power plant failure, decontamination of the deaf schools was conducted with a part of the donation. Counseling on radiation exposure and health issues of the deaf people will be increasingly demanded. An ongoing project to conduct questionnaires aims to assess the current situation of disaster-stricken areas, to review a variety of aids including mental supports.

At the same time, deaf people need disaster risk management education in everyday life, to reduce the risk in case of emergency. JDF requests its member organizations to establish their local headquarters for disaster relief to establish their local network for disaster risk prevention. CH-DRDP sends instructors to disaster risk reduction workshops hosted by local headquarters.

#### ■ Application of Disaster Experience and Knowledge of the Disabled People to Social

## Development

Disabled people in Japan have gone through two devastating disasters in two decades, and people-friendly social development is seriously demanded. Grounded on the rationale of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disability inclusive disaster risk prevention is needed.

1. Include disabled persons in visible way in every measure and planning related to disaster risk reduction. In order to integrate disability perspective into such plans, ensure the participation of disabled persons and their stakeholders.
2. Construct network of local administrators, social welfare organizations, medical assistance teams, DPOs, and supporting organization at all times.
3. Build shelters, temporary housings and disaster reconstruction residences through the perspective of universal design.
4. Provide information access and establish communication system in different stages of disaster: event of disaster, evacuation, sheltering, and reconstruction of living
5. Conduct disaster risk reduction education and awareness workshops to the disabled people, co-organized by local administrators, DPOs, and supporting organizations.

Disaster exposes the reality of society, so that ordinary measures and plans sharply affect the event of disaster. Inclusive disaster risk prevention, which also eliminates discrimination and gap, will lead to emergency relief and people-friendly social development.