

Paper:

Logic of and Systems for Volunteer Disaster Relief Activities in Japan: Current Situations and Challenges 15 Years After the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake

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“Disaster relief volunteer centers” have been established in areas hit by great disasters since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, the year referred to as Volunteer Year One, and a number of citizens have participated as volunteers in various rescue, restoration, and reconstruction support activities for extended periods. This study reviews how the disaster relief volunteer activities were established and developed, and what functions they have performed in the 15 years since Volunteers Year One, viewed from the aspects of the logic of individual activities and activity systems in which a number of citizens participate.

Keywords: disaster relief volunteer, disaster relief volunteer center, organizing spontaneous activities, reciprocal relationships

1. Introduction: Review of Disaster Relief Volunteers

Japan has often been hit by great disasters, and, when great disasters occur, people who live near each other or are blood relatives have been helping each other for a long time. These activities have been referred to as “volunteer activities” since the 1980s, and have developed on a large scale in each disaster since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. As the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake occurred in 1995, 1995 is referred to as “Volunteer Year One.”

Volunteers make up for limited measures provided by governments and communities in disaster areas, finding problems overlooked by the aid networks and solving them. “Volunteer activities” have been attracting attention as new methods for solving the problems through spontaneous cooperation by individuals. These activities have greatly changed the concept of “volunteer” in Japan.

The massive phenomena of “disaster relief volunteers” has been observed on a daily basis, both in disaster areas and outside, where people learn about the actual disaster situations through television broadcasts. Movements

of volunteers to disaster areas attract attention as social phenomena. The word “volunteer” carried rather negative images of self-sacrifice before 1995, and volunteer activities tended to be seen as rare activities provided by few people. The disaster provided fields in which a number of people supported or received the benefits of volunteer activities, making them familiar. The negative images of difficult activities based on self-sacrifice have been changed to the positive images associated with activities in which anybody can participate easily and gain a sense of fulfillment by being appreciated by the disaster victims. The social phenomena of disaster relief volunteers are considered to have given the word “volunteer” positive connotations (Yamashita and Suga, 2002).

The changed social meaning of “volunteer” can be considered to have heightened the public’s attitude toward providing social support to spontaneous citizen activities, promoting the enactment of the Nonprofit Activities Promotion Law, and establishing intermediaries. At the same time, the changed meaning has provided the bases for further development of volunteer activities.

This study reviews anew what is meant by disaster relief volunteer activities at the milestone of 15th year since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Japan has been hit by several large-scale disasters since the earthquake, and a number of citizens have rushed to the afflicted areas in each disaster to provide rescue and restoration activities, as well as reconstruction support activities, for extended periods. Responding to disasters can be considered as having been established as one sector of citizen activities.

What is it, then, that makes many citizens participate repeatedly in volunteer activities? How do these activities differ from the mutual cooperation activities that have been provided for a long time in many areas?

The first half of this study reviews, based on discussions made by researchers and volunteers, the logic behind establishing disaster relief volunteer activities in which individuals spontaneously participate. At the same time, it is necessary to socially establish systems for moving volunteers into afflicted areas for sustained, large-scale disaster relief activities. The second half of this study reviews how these systems have been established and developed.

1. This paper is based on “Disasters and Volunteers,” which the author contributed to “Shakaifukushi Kenkyu” No.108, although it has been changed significantly.



2. Logic of Disaster Relief Volunteer Activities

2.1. Establishment of the Logic Viewed from the Results of Research Studies on Disaster Relief Volunteer Activities

Many have discussed the disaster relief volunteer activities provided to the areas hit by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, those activities provided immediately after the disaster in particular, for which many volunteers rushed to the afflicted areas all at once. However, only a few studies have tried to explain why these activities are established and developed. Nevertheless, some studies which review anew the definition and concept of the volunteer activities provide clues for the explanations for the above issues.

Yamashita, who has extensively studied disaster relief volunteer activities provided in the six afflicted wards of Kobe, points out that the conventional definition of disaster relief volunteer activities (spontaneous, free of charge, public activities) has limitations as the logic behind disaster relief volunteer activities (2002). Yatuzuka et al., who have studied the phenomena of disaster relief volunteer activities based on many discourses, point out that all those who provided support free of charge in the afflicted areas beyond their ordinary duties are regarded as volunteers (1997). Government staff members, employees of private enterprises, etc. provided support beyond their normal roles in the afflicted areas. In other words, anyone could participate in the relief activities once he became a volunteer. It is considered that different people establish relationships with each other to establish cooperative routes once they become volunteers. We now propose to find the essence of the logic of disaster relief volunteer activities while noting social relationships established among volunteers.

A volunteer activity needs a plurality of persons who establish relationships. Conversely, no volunteer activity can be carried out in the absence of one or more other people. Harada, who discusses volunteer activities from the viewpoint of human relationships and based on his own disaster relief volunteer activities, notes that the relationships between volunteers may provide a clue for breaking the implicit premises of modern societies, namely, that one should not foster a relationship with a stranger unless there is a compelling reason, and "strangers start to establish relationships with each other through volunteer activities (2000)."

It can be little expected that a stranger coming from another area would suddenly enter another man's house to start disaster relief activities while involving other people. However, a volunteer must provide a cooperative effort with victims or other volunteers whom he meets for the first time to solve urgent problems. In actuality, the disaster-hit city of Kobe needed many kinds of outside support because many local community members were hit by the disaster and cooperative works were difficult, as they characteristically are in urban areas.

Yamashita notes that "volunteer" works were a device

for cooperation among members of the general public under difficult situations in the afflicted areas (2002). The relationships of mutual cooperation in times of disaster are considered different from the conventional ones based on blood relationships. Mutual cooperation is originally based on bilateral relationships between specific persons and may not be realized between a large number of unspecified volunteers who unilaterally provide support and victims who receive the support. On the other hand, victims who have received the support will have heightened feelings of empathy, and thus, realize the need to repay the debt to society. A typical way of repaying the debt would be by providing support to future victims. The utilization of experience gained while providing and receiving support in future disasters is referred to as "responsibility of an afflicted area," and it also represents one way of returning obligations. Such relationships between one afflicted area and future afflicted areas is defined here as "reciprocity."

The mutual cooperation provided by disaster relief volunteers will be expanded both temporarily and spatially in the form of repaying social debt. In fact, it has been observed that victims who have received support work in turn as volunteers in subsequent disasters. The development of such phenomena in various areas has created conditions for repeated disaster relief activities. A series of studies focusing on relationships related to support and "mutuality" are considered to provide one direction for understanding disaster relief volunteer activities in Japan.

2.2. Establishment of the Logic Based on Practice

Grasping the essence of volunteer activities based on the relationships described above has also been discussed in the afflicted areas in which activities in support of reconstruction have continued to solve problems on a long-term basis after the temporary activities have ended. For example, Nishiyama is studying the logic of supporting victims left behind and the logic of continuing the volunteer activities (2005). On the other hand, the logic of establishing and sustaining the volunteer activities during the restoration period has been developed in the "fields" in which practical issues are discussed by the people concerned with civil activities².

First, the people concerned with civil activities convened "International Forum for Disaster Prevention by Citizens and NGOs" in the form of a executive committee in December, 1995. The participants shared the experiences they had in the afflicted areas, discussed social frameworks viewed from practical perspectives, and issued the "Kobe Declaration." The "Verification Conferences" were held at the milestones of the 5th and 10th anniversaries of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake to review past activity practices, verify the significance and results of the activities, and to develop discussions on future prospectives while bringing out issues and lessons (2001 Quake Restoration Conference, and 2005 Verifica-

2. A number of studies have participated in discussions on the "field."

tion Conference on the 10th anniversary of the great earthquake).

Thus, the civic movement activists themselves have created the logic of disaster relief volunteer activities, a channel for holding the fields of discussions to share common issues, working to solve the issues, and announcing anew the lessons learned. These movements can also be regarded as being for the establishment of new relationships for the development of relief activities. It should be pointed out that, behind these movements is a shared concept of “importance of lives,” the concept having evolved through the hardships of life experienced after the earthquake and mutual cooperation involving providing/receiving support (Executive Committee of the International Forum for Disaster Prevention by Citizens and NGOs, 1998). In many areas hit by disaster after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, the citizens recognized the importance of practice for better societies in which they individually made remarks about their living arrangements and communities in the course of emergency restoration (Nationwide Networks Connected via Disasters, 2010).

Moreover, attempts have been made to secure auxiliary incomes by civic businesses (community businesses) and reconstruct social relationships in each afflicted area as concrete measures toward putting people’s lives back in order. Attempts have been also made to share practical know-how among the afflicted areas. It has been pointed out that these civic businesses also help to solve local problems the areas faced before the disasters (depopulation and hollowed-out inner societies (Suga and Yamaguchi, 2009). The logic behind civic businesses solving local issues by utilizing local resources can be also regarded as the establishment of new relationships for support activities. It can be expected that these businesses are also applicable to the solving of issues other than those related to disasters.

In January, 2010, on the 15th anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, Kwansei Gakuin University hosted an intercommunion meeting in the earthquake-hit city; a total of about 30 victims and volunteers who had participated in emergency restoration activities gathered from all over the country as the representatives of the areas hit by earthquakes, including the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, The Western Tottori Prefecture Earthquake, which occurred in the 10th year after the earthquake, and others which occurred in the 3rd, 5th, and 10th years after the Earthquake, Eruption, or Flood. They made remarks about their experiences, about issues they faced then, and about their anxieties going forward. It is likely that the images of the future held by the representatives affected by the earthquake in the 3rd year after the Kobe disaster might overlap those of the representatives hit by the earthquake in the 5th year after the Kobe disaster. Those hit by the earthquake in 10th year might relive their memories on hearing the remarks made by those hit by the earthquake in the 2nd year. Those involved in the restoration activities were empowered by the strong links that had evolved among them.

The author has discussed how the logic of a series of volunteer activities has been established, sustained, and developed in the social and cultural contexts in Japan. During the initial stage of a disaster in particular, physical systems are needed in addition to the logic for a number of volunteers to be received and moved about. The systems for sustaining volunteer activities are outlined in the next section, which discusses how the systems have been established to have what functions during the initial stage of a great earthquake, situations of the afflicted areas in the 10th year after the serious earthquake, when these systems were substantially completed, and new issues and measures against earthquakes.

3. Establishment and Development of Social Systems to Support Volunteer Disaster Relief Activities

3.1. Social Systems Derived from the “Emergency Social Systems” Established in the Areas Hit by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and Coordination of the Volunteers in the Disaster Areas and Volunteer Centers

Areas hit by great disasters naturally need support and restoration work. Recognition of “emergency situations” is shared among citizens in afflicted areas, and priority is given to the lifesaving activities (firefighting, rescue/first-aid, and evacuation activities) and activities to prevent the spread of damage and to restore destroyed social systems over normal administrative and economic activities. “Disaster sociology” refers to the agreement/model of giving priority to “rescue and restoration activities” as an “emergency model” (Hirose et al., 1981). Disaster survivors, when they are able to regain control of their lives, have a feeling of brotherhood among themselves and help each other to start public rescue activities, driven by outpourings of altruistic feelings and behaviors (A. H. Burton, 1969), in a period of so-called “disaster Utopia.”

Various types of rescue/restoration activities different from ordinary activities are provided in the above period to form temporary mutual cooperation systems, referred to as “emergency social systems,” in the midst of the confusion (Yamamoto, 1981 and Noda, 1997). The volunteer activities will be developed within the “emergency social system” frameworks while establishing relationships with other organizations coping with various disasters.

In times of disaster in particular, there arise a number of situations in which many people are needed from outside because there are typically various issues which no organization has ever dealt with. The disaster relief volunteers encounter many new issues and potential issues that need to be dealt with. In the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, after the public organizations failed to gather volunteers, the spontaneous volunteers themselves established unique systems that they managed on their own to sustain the activities after the people involved changed (Hayase, 1996, and Yamashita and Suga, 2002). The unique systems, dis-

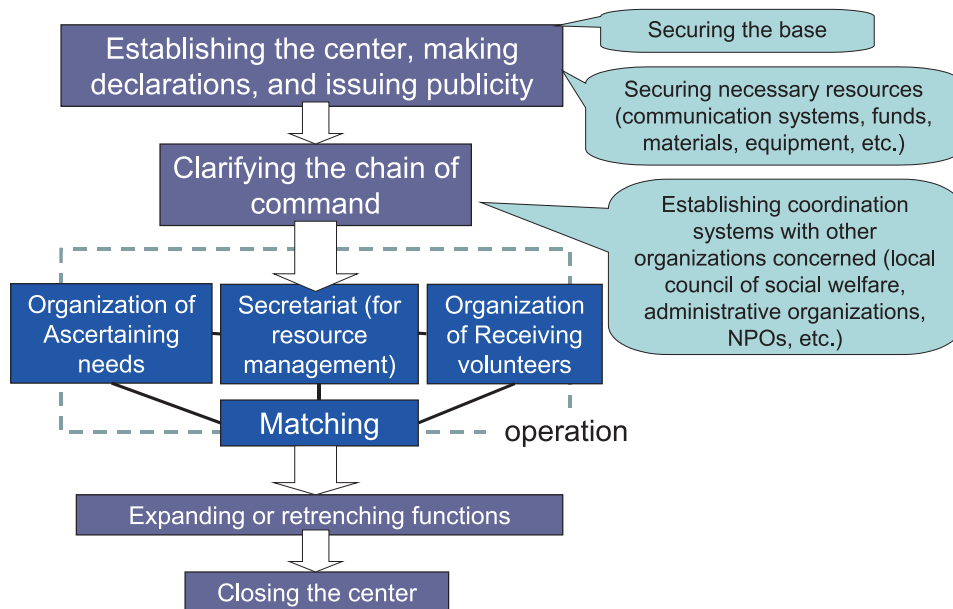


Fig. 1. Organization and functions of disaster relief volunteer center.

aster relief volunteer centers with volunteer coordination as a major function, were sustained for disaster relief following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. The volunteer systems with flexible networks created new services that no other organizations provided, and, at the same time, changed their courses as required.

It is apparent that afflicted areas need much manpower. It can be said that the social systems established to move many persons to the afflicted areas allow people who are unrelated to the afflicted areas to become involved in issues in these areas (Yamashita and Suga, 2002).

3.2. Systems and Functions of Disaster Relief Volunteer Centers, and Social Systems for Organizing Spontaneous Volunteers

How disaster relief volunteer centers should be managed and how activities were provided for about 10 years after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake can be explained. However, the issues related to center management have changed with each ensuing disaster.

At the time of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, the top priority issue to be dealt with was how the number of volunteers rushing to the afflicted areas should be coordinated with the vast resources needed by the victims. It was the volunteer coordination system for disaster relief, described above, that solved the issues. The system allowed the volunteers to spontaneously select their working area for the fastest possible response to the needs of the victims, needs which were likely to vary (Hayase, 1996). However, the establishment of bases for center activities has become a more important issue (the procurement of necessary resources) than the know-how of the center.

The volunteer coordination system bases have been established mainly from two aspects, the establishment of

systems for allocating volunteers, and the procurement of resources necessary for relief activities (Fig. 1).

The former aspect establishes the systems for allocating volunteers, by establishing the organization for managing the center and adopting rules. More specifically, (1) the disaster relief center is established based on trust from and in accord with local organizations concerned, and the center is made well known to those concerned, (2) the managers and administrative staff members are designated to clarify the chain of command of the organization (the organization normally has three major groups responsible for gathering needs, for receiving volunteers, and for general affairs, such as collecting information and managing resources, and (3) the cooperative relations are established with local governments concerned, organizations concerned (council of social welfare, NPOs, etc.) to establish systems for sharing common perceptions and other information.

The latter aspect of procuring resources necessary for relief activities is promoted in parallel with the former. More specifically, (1) the facilities and space for the base are secured based on cooperation with local organizations concerned, (2) facilities for a number of volunteers are established, and (3) equipment necessary for the activities are secured (e.g., shovels and buckets in the case of flood). It is necessary to manage the resources organically for the first and second aspects.

Sufficient activities cannot be provided unless the two activity bases are established, even when able coordinators are secured. First, the victims would not make requests (needs) if the centers failed to win the trust of the victims. In such a case, the center would not be able to assign volunteers to the activity sites. On the other hand, it will be difficult for a number of volunteers to work unless they are provided with physical resources, even when

the center wins the trust of the victims. Therefore, these two activity bases are essential. Centers with these activity bases will ask coordinators to do their jobs while taking into consideration needs that come up day to day, the number of volunteers secured, the state of activities, and restored conditions of the afflicted areas and victims. It is also necessary to take into consideration the needs of the victims after the center is closed.

In other words, the disaster relief volunteer center is required to manage a series of processes for the establishment of the activity bases and coordinate the activities with other organizations until the center is closed, in addition to keeping the functions of matching needs with volunteers. It has been manifested through a variety of disasters that the management of know-how varies with the disaster and the characteristics of the afflicted areas, although there are features common to the overall management of emergency organizations. What experiences and lessons, therefore, were accumulated while the center functions were developed? This study reviews the developments of activities that took place in the ten years after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

3.3. Developments in Relief Activities Carried out by Disaster Relief Volunteers

3.3.1. Developments Made in the 10 Years After the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake; Various Types of Disasters and Sharing Common Experiences Through Networks

In January, 1997, there was a large heavy oil spill in the Sea of Japan (NAKHODKA incident). And the volunteers who participated in the relief activities in the areas hit by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake gathered in the afflicted areas. The persons concerned shared the common recognition that it was necessary to establish social systems for the sharing of a series of lessons learned by experience to be able to utilize them in future disasters. The "Nationwide Networks Connected via Disasters" was established in the same year as a nationwide network for disaster relief volunteers. The lessons shared through the networks were utilized in the areas hit by a series of floods occurring in 1998 and 1999.

Moreover, various types of disasters, including volcanic eruptions, large-scale floods in urban areas, and earthquakes in mountainous areas, occurred in 2000 and 2001. Each of the central and local governments, NPOs, and council of social welfare collected problems observed in these disasters, and certain lessons and problem recognition were shared among these organizations for the verification of damages and measures against future disasters.

On the other hand, new problems have been recognized as a result of anticipated damages by potential earthquakes in the Tokai, To-Nankai, and Nankai areas since 2000. Originally, disaster relief volunteer activities were implicitly regarded as those by volunteers moving into afflicted areas and being managed by disaster relief volunteer centers established and managed after disasters occur. However, the anticipated disasters left in the wake of the

above-mentioned earthquakes, if they actually do occur, suggest that the volunteers may not reach the afflicted areas.

Moreover, concepts have been gaining momentum among NPOs concerning the suppression or reduction of damage in advance through ordinary regional activities as opposed to dealing with damage ex-post facto. These concepts are recognized in the "August 17 Symposium" held by the nationwide networks of the disaster relief volunteers (Cabinet Office, 2003). The successful activities by the disaster relief NPOs to prevent furniture from falling while day-to-day activities were being performed were introduced at the symposium (Kurita, 2004). The new direction of activities toward damage reduction is widely shared among the volunteers concerned.

3.3.2. Achievements of Disaster Relief Volunteer Centers

In 2004, the 10th year after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, Japan was hit a number of disasters. Floods caused by developed rain fronts and 10 typhoons struck many areas, and there was an earthquake centered off the shore of Fukuoka Pref. in March, followed by an earthquake in the Chuetsu district in Niigata Pref. A total of as many as 87 disaster relief volunteer centers were established in the same year to promote the nationwide activities, indicating the development of volunteer activity bases.

Disaster relief volunteer centers have been established steadily and relatively smoothly. The establishment of the centers was previously difficult in some cases unless they were promoted from outside. However, many afflicted areas spontaneously established and managed centers in 2004; one reason for their establishment was that the floods hit areas where activities and management procedures are standardized. Information about actual damages to afflicted areas, what relief organizations to start, and what types of activities are shared among the organizations concerned is transmitted within hours after a disaster occurs through mailing lists or similar, and then it is further spread through websites, etc. The situations in disaster areas become known in a fair amount of detail even in faraway areas.

The routes for the securing the resources necessary for establishing disaster relief volunteer center systems have greatly expanded since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Council of social welfare in one prefecture, which frequently serve as parent organizations for managing the centers, have concluded mutual cooperation agreements region by region to draw support from other prefectures, in addition to securing volunteers within the prefecture. Moreover, community chests have established and developed various systems, such as "reserves for disasters," for the purpose of promoting the volunteer centers inside the afflicted areas and organizations coming from outside. Funding from administrative and enterprise sectors has also been promoted to establish cooperative systems for funding as systems for disaster relief volunteer activities by NGOs have developed.

It has been confirmed, based on the nationwide movements observed in the 10th year after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, that the disaster relief volunteer centers have meaningfully functioned as private activity bases and have been well established as the social systems. At the same time, however, problems which the center management and volunteer center frameworks cannot satisfactorily cope with have become apparent. This paper reviews, in the next section, the activities developed after the 10th anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake as attempts to solve the confirmed problems.

3.4. New Activities Developed After the 10th Anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake

3.4.1. New Problems

The Niigata Chuetsu-oki Earthquake is the largest earthquake that has struck since the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in October, 2004.

The disaster relief should have been carried out carefully in consideration of the risks of repeated aftershocks. Difficulties in adjustments to cope with changed and diversified requirements resulting from being evacuees for a prolonged period of time have become apparent. Other problems surfacing involve how to support afflicted settlements scattered across mountainous areas. These settlements are far away from disaster relief volunteer centers, and their farmlands and local industries, their sources of income, have been destroyed. Therefore, how to restore their livelihoods and settlements is a big problem to be dealt with immediately after disasters, in addition to the problem of how to sustain their lives as evacuees.

Under these situations, outside volunteers belonging to some organizations and determined to sustain their activities for prolonged periods have established bases in the afflicted areas directly, or independently from the disaster relief volunteer centers, to support restoration activities by the victims themselves. It has been confirmed anew that the essence of the roles which volunteers are required to play is not to efficiently manage the disaster relief volunteer centers but to provide, after contacting individual victims, the types of support they actually need and to flexibly change supporting procedures and systems in accordance with specific victims and areas.

The achievements of the volunteer center in the 10 years following the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and new problems that have surfaced have created new movements in disaster relief volunteer activities. One of the movements has been the improvement of activity environments and resources by utilizing existing social resources within the frameworks of the disaster relief volunteer centers. Another movement has been the expansion of the activities while keeping in contact with victims beyond the frameworks of the centers. These movements are reviewed in order hereinafter.

3.4.2. Coordination and Round Tables Between Government and Volunteers (Conference on Disaster Relief Volunteer Activity)

The cooperation between the government and private organizations was strengthened in the 10 years after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. One of the movements for improving the environments and resources for the activities was the organization of “conference on disaster relief volunteer activity” in March, 2005, with the Cabinet Office as the forum for dialogue between the government and private sectors. Improvements in the environments of activities in times of disaster have been discussed in the forums held two or three times a year by well-experienced volunteers and NPO personnel, as well as through the mailing lists. The results of discussion and review have been published on the Cabinet Office website. The relationships of trust have been established among the Cabinet Office as the forum host organization, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, administrative organizations (e.g., the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare), and private welfare-related organizations (e.g., the Local/National Council of Social Welfare, the Japanese Red Cross Society and the Central Community Chest of Japan). The results of these movements are considered to compare favorably with those achieved before. The relationships of trust established have genuinely promoted cooperation that will enable these organizations to cope with future disasters.

3.4.3. Cooperation Between Enterprises and Private Welfare-Related Organizations (Project Meeting in Support of Disaster Relief Volunteer Activities)

In response to the movements by the government, there have been new movements toward the establishment of systems for the provision of more direct and specific support. One example of these movements would be the establishment of the project meeting with the Secretariat in January, 2005 in the Central Community Chest of Japan. The purpose of the project meeting is to support disaster relief volunteer activities and to discuss effective institutions for setting up relief and support systems by managing funds, resources, manpower (coordinators), and disaster relief volunteer centers that receive volunteers. The project meeting is organized by Japan Federation of Economic Organizations (the 1% Club) as a new member in addition to the private welfare-related organizations (e.g., the Central Community Chest of Japan and the Japanese Red Cross Society) and disaster-related NPOs that have been supporting the establishment of disaster relief volunteer centers. The Central Community Chest of Japan has started, based on the results of the discussions, to cultivate volunteers who have systematic disaster-related know-how (disaster relief volunteer coordinator training). The Central Community Chest of Japan, on the other hand, has started to establish structures, in cooperation with the Japan Federation of Economic Organizations, to use contributions from private enterprises to secure support the

afflicted areas need (including funds for sending volunteers to the afflicted areas as well as material resources). These institutions started support activities for the areas hit by two earthquakes in 2007, and the institutions have now been developed for the effective utilization of private resources.

3.4.4. Activities for Providing Support While Keeping in Contact with Victims and the Establishment of Footbaths by Students

Activities beyond the center framework have also been started. The center both initiates and terminates activities at the request of victims. It must work efficiently because of the necessity of prompt action on the part of a number of volunteers. Therefore, the center may not always be able to cope with specific regional characteristics of afflicted areas and specific victim situations sufficiently. As attempts to overcome these limitations, activities have been evolving to provide victims with footbaths (Fujimori, 2008). These support activities were provided in the areas hit by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and reopened for the areas hit by the Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake. Later, "footbath" networks were set up by students to provide support not only to disaster-hit areas but also to other areas, e.g., sparsely populated areas and aging societies. Victims getting their arms massaged with their feet immersed in hot water begin to talk about their families, communities, and memories, and from these the geological and historical backgrounds of afflicted areas and human relations between residents become known. The students participating in the activities have written down the things they have been told to share them and to discuss among themselves how to better provide support after considering the problems of the victims and the future of the regions. Considering what is in the hearts of the victims and understanding what is necessary to support them are important things for disaster relief volunteers to do. This recognition has been widely shared. It is expected that volunteers engaged in these activities and those working under disaster relief volunteer centers share information and work together to open new possibilities by finding latent needs, matching their support to that of higher expertise, and developing support programs with a view to restoration.

4. Conclusions: Establishment and Expansion of Relief Structures

This study reviews how disaster relief volunteer activities have been established, repeated, and adjusted in Japanese society in the 15 years after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake.

The first half of this study reviews the logic for establishing disaster relief volunteer activities. It first points out that the becoming a volunteer provides a person with an opportunity to participate in activities to help victims, and it allows the volunteers involved to solve the prob-

lems of victims or to work in afflicted areas during the initial phase of relief activities. It also points out that relief activities by volunteers potentially have developments of "reciprocal relationships" in the larger context, in which those who have received support will pay their indebtedness back to victims of future disasters. This study further points out that the open "fields" for discussion have led to the establishment of the activity logic of sharing problems, finding measures for solving these problems, and communicating shared lessons to society.

The second half of this study reviews how systems for realizing effective disaster relief activities have been established and developed; it outlines the establishment of "disaster relief volunteer centers," which organically managed techniques for effectively matching the volunteer activities to the needs of the areas hit by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake without impairing spontaneous motivations of the volunteers, and it confirms the functions and meanings of the centers. This study also points out that the center systems can potentially impair spontaneous motivation as the essence of volunteers and possibly make the center activities excessively standardized.

Thus, this study reviews how the activity logic has been established in the social and cultural contexts in Japan while reconstructing the conventional relationships of "mutual cooperation," and how the social systems have been developed to support actual relief activities.

The disaster relief volunteers first try to find problems and then start to solve them. These activities can lead to the establishment of reflexive cycles in which the volunteers call for other organizations concerned to create new systems for solving the problems when the problems cannot be effectively dealt with by the existing systems, and to utilize the new lessons for the future activities. These activities are for empowering the activists who once received support to be able to return the favor to future victims³; they are also for compensating for limitations to the established activities⁴. The volunteers review activities now being provided, including those they themselves are providing, to find new problems unrecognized before. It is this "Externally-driven capabilities" (Atsumi, 2001) that is needed for afflicted areas. Volunteers change the systems which they themselves establish always in accordance with actual conditions. In some cases, they abandon the existing systems for new ones. Such flexibility is an inherent characteristic of the centers, flexibility not usually observed in other organizations concerned.

The volunteers, although they are not interested parties, consider things from the standpoint of the victims while keeping as closely in contact with them as possible. They

3. Refer to the discussion by Suzuki and Abe (Study Group for Revitalization Design, 2007) for a description of these relief activities.

4. The established activities are those provided by the "disaster relief volunteer centers." On the other hand, the United States as a country advanced in NPO activities has a private organization with experts, known as the National Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster (NVOAD), which coordinates organizations and is responsible for training individual volunteers. It is significantly different from the disaster volunteer center in Japan, which trains volunteers who gather in an afflicted area in the center established there. It is necessary to compare the system in Japan with those of other countries when studying problems involved in the Japanese system and improvements (Suga, 2006b).

accompany victims toward the targets of restoration while trying to share hardships with them. In times of disaster, providing and receiving support is a massive undertaking, and problems involved in “providing support to victims” clearly make themselves known. At the same time, the volunteers are pressed by society to provide support as fast as possible, rather than to carefully keep in contact with victims under pressing conditions with limited resources. However, it should be kept in mind that the pursuit of efficiency and systematization to excessive extents may congeal the volunteer activities while reducing the feeling of individuality and flexibility. The organization of self-motivation itself involves inconsistencies. It can be said that one of the largest challenges in the future is how to overcome the problems resulting from these inconsistencies.

Once a system is established for volunteer activities, efficiency and organization of the system tend to be pursued. Therefore, it will be necessary to prepare environments in which individuality is kept to some extent in the management of centers. The staff of a welfare-related organization that provided support to victims of the Noto Peninsula Earthquake in 2007 and later concentrated on preparing manuals and training coordinators for the volunteer centers, has reservations about measures which emphasize development of the systems. The staff has more recently considered what activities are best for carefully keeping in contact with victims while reviewing past activity records. It is essential to create environments in which the essence of the support activities is always questioned in each afflicted area for spontaneous, self-motivated activities by citizens.

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Selected Publications:
● “Introduction of Disaster Volunteer,” written and edited by Mashiho Suga, Yusuke Yamashita, Tomohide Atsumi, Kobundo, 2008.
● Yusuke Yamashita, Mashiho Suga, “Sociology of Disaster Volunteer after Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake,” 2002.

Academic Societies & Scientific Organizations:
● The Japan Sociological Society
● Japan Association of Regional and Community Studies
● Japan Society for Urbanology
● Japan Society for Disaster Recovery and Revitalization
● Japan Society for Disaster Information Studies