

Sharing experience by residents of past disaster sites: Earthquake and tsunami in Japan

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Abstract

Ten years have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Disaster in Japan that happened in March 2011. Sharing past disaster experience among the community is an important method of disaster risk reduction (DRR), but research on this issue is still limited. I would like to introduce the results from two of our studies on the sharing of disaster experience among the public. We have focused on the involvement of ordinarily people in sharing their experience rather than professionals of DRR information sharing such as media, government organizations, and research institutes.

The first study investigated the intention to share disaster experiences of the residents of the Sanriku region where the 2011 tsunami caused large human life and monetary losses and their intention was compared with the intention of Tokyo residents to learn from them. This is a joint research with Prof. Aiko Endo of Michigan State University. The information that Sanriku residents wanted to share and that which Tokyo residents wanted to learn was similar in terms of pre-event preparation, evacuation, and logistical issues. However, views on the effects of disasters on vulnerable populations and leadership issues were different between the regions.

The second study compared disaster experience sharing between the tsunami affected areas of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 and Kobe city that was severely damaged by the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in January 1995. This study distinguishes three groups of residents in disaster-affected areas: the direct experience group, the same generation group that has overlapping ages with the first group but does not have direct experience of the local disaster, and the next generation group. Compared to the other groups, the direct experience group had better knowledge of the disaster and a stronger sense of responsibility to pass down disaster experience themselves. Those who had lived outside of the disaster area reported greater knowledge levels than the others both within the direct experience and the same generation groups. A lifecycle model of disaster experience sharing by the three groups is proposed to facilitate policy support for disseminating disaster experience.