

**The Second Expert Group Meeting
on the Great East Japan Earthquake
~ Learning from the Mega-Tsunami Disaster ~**

Thematic Session Report

Session: No.3
Session Title: Organizing Response and Recovery
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1. Outline

The session was aimed at (i) learning and reflecting on the real situation of disaster affected areas of the Great East Japan Earthquake, particularly *how response was organized*, (ii) sharing of *concerns/opinions* on the current situation based on respective experience and expertise of participants, and (iii) suggesting *aspects of reconstruction/recovery to focus* in the future. Outcome of the session is a set of learning and key recommendations for organizing response and recovery.

2. Key messages, outcomes, recommendations

a. Organizing Response

STRENGTHEN COORDINATION MECHANISMS

at international context

- ✓ utilize humanitarian tools and services, information dissemination (e.g. UNDAC & OCHA)
- ✓ clarify rules and procedures for emergency and other humanitarian assistance (military force?)

at domestic context

- ✓ stabilize situation in first 72 hours (e.g. “maximum of maximum” planning)
- ✓ adopt common needs assessment methodology;
- ✓ streamline/simplify assistance, standardize meetings with NGOs, equip responders with reliable telecommunication systems, facilitate real-time evaluation
- ✓ bring all appropriate players to the table for better coordination and decision
- ✓ apply appropriate lessons from previous disasters (e.g. self-help, mutual-help, public-help)

PREPARE FOR DISASTER RESPONSE

(i) engage community, (ii) utilize GIS, (iii) develop smart phone applications for DRR, (iv) use social media as means for disseminating information, (v) conduct drills/exercises (vi) awareness-raising

PROMOTE PARTNERSHIPS/SYNERGY

study appropriate utilization of support/resources from international/regional organizations, private companies, NGOs, volunteer groups, and civil society organizations

CONSIDER CONTEXTUAL FACTORS IN RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

culture, demography, language, politics, climate, etc.

b. Organizing Recovery

Facilitate smooth transition from humanitarian to recovery phase

address issues such as dependency and relapse as well as gap between response & recovery; recovery to start from day 1

Promote the Establishment of Post-Disaster Recovery Organization

it can function as the sole government agency in-charge for recovery (e.g. Agency for Reconstruction)

Ensure Proper Assessments of Recovery Needs of People

participatory process helps understand the real situation, and jumpstarts post-disaster recovery planning; apply lessons from Post Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) e.g. Haiti

Promote Pre- and Post-Disaster Recovery Planning

strengthen capacity of local governments in recovery planning; in the context of Tohoku disaster, consider critical issues such as land use, local recovery projects, stakeholders' participatory planning process, and support of regional alliance of local governments (e.g. Kansai Alliance)

Government's Role on Recovery and Leadership

decentralization versus strong leadership; revisit existing national policies, rules, and systems for response and recovery operations; institutional, policy, and recovery frameworks

Recovery Support Functions and Partnerships

study support functions of concerned agencies and private sectors

c. Discussions

- Study the governance set-up of the "agency for reconstruction" (government-led? Collaborative? Tripartite?)
- Weigh legal/constitutional guidelines vs. other guidelines (UN, NGOs)
- Approaches for integrating recovery into development process

- ❑ Rethink the role of national government of Japan in recovery, as it is currently local government-led
- ❑ Re-evaluate of role of NGOs in Japan in the context of response and recovery
- ❑ Initiate changes/new approaches through the frameworks (e.g. recovery frameworks) and policy reforms
- ❑ Understand and balance “internal” and “external” response systems
- ❑ Consider OCHA’s offer in facilitating consultations to develop a draft handbook for disaster managers within Asia and the pacific which guides the interaction between national, regional and international humanitarian responders
- ❑ Base the plans on scenarios and assessments
- ❑ Consider local issues, community preferences, in developing guidelines
- ❑ Monitor recovery activities (mechanisms to measure impact of recovery)

3. Conclusions

The disaster caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011 was unprecedented, offering realizations and lessons in organizing response and recovery. While gaps in response and recovery are revealed after large-scale disasters, there are tools/mechanisms that can help bridge those gaps (e.g. OCHA). There are also emerging principles and practices in response and recovery that are useful in current and future disasters. These include promoting partnerships, engaging community in the planning process, exercising government leadership, and preparing recovery plans proactively.