

8. Promotion of Gender Equality in Disaster Prevention Field

■ Guidelines for Disaster Prevention and Reconstruction from a Gender Equality Perspective

During the Great East Japan Earthquake, there were shortages of sanitary and daily necessities; breast-feeding and changing facilities for women were not provided, and women were forced to carry out tasks of preparing meals and cleaning from stereotypical perceptions of traditional gender roles in evacuation sites.

In international society in recent years it has been emphasized that along with the concept of “reducing disaster risks” (before a disaster occurs, taking measures for the purpose of reducing vulnerabilities to disasters and disaster risks, or taking measures for the purpose of preventing or minimizing damage from the negative effects of natural phenomena), realization of a gender-equal society is essential for creating a society that is resistant to disasters.

In light of such things, the Cabinet Office created and made public “Guidelines for Disaster Prevention and Reconstruction from a Gender Equality Perspective” (hereinafter referred to as the “Guidelines”), which indicate fundamental matters that will serve as guidelines for undertakings by local public bodies for necessary measures and responses, from the perspective of gender equality, based on experiences of past disaster responses.

<Fundamental Concept>

The Guidelines indicated the following seven fundamental concepts.

1 Promotion of gender equality from daily business is a bedrock of measures on disaster prevention and reconstruction

In order to strive to improve regional disaster prevention by implementing disaster prevention measures that reflect the diverse perspectives of the people who live in the area and promote strong reconstruction, it is necessary to establish a disaster prevention and reconstruction system that incorporates the perspective of gender equality. Because social tasks of ordinary times become more noticeable when they appear in times of disaster, realization of a gender-equal society in ordinary times will serve as the bedrock for smoothly promoting disaster prevention and reconstruction.

2 Women should be considered an important resource

Many women were and still are active as the people responsible for things such as on-site rescue work, assistance, medical and fire-extinguishing activities, and restoration and reconstruction for disaster response to the Great East Japan Earthquake, but there is little participation by women in decision-making. It is important to be aware that women play a major role in disaster response, and to support promotion of women’s participation in decision-making and active

participation as leaders.

3 Gender differences in degree of impact by disaster should be considered

It is important to consider the fact that differences arise between men and women in the effects that disasters have on them. It is thought that the size of a disaster is determined by natural phenomena (natural causes) such as earthquakes, tsunami, and wind and flood damage, and the state of the society that is affected by the disaster (social causes). Because effects differ according to various social positions such as gender, as well as age and whether a person has a disability, undertakings that minimize disaster-time difficulties caused by social causes are important.

4 Safety and security should be ensured by respect for human rights of both men and women

Respect for human rights while living at evacuation sites is essential for both women and men, and it is important to protect the dignity and safety of each individual, regardless of the situation. In order to respect the human rights of both men and women and ensure safety and security for life at evacuation sites, undertakings to prevent violence against women and children and ingenuity such as divisions that make it possible to ensure privacy are important.

5 Gender equality should be promoted in collaboration between the private and public sectors

The government has a large responsibility for disaster response, but there are also limits to responses by the government, and the power of private-sector groups such as residents, local organizations, NPOs, NGOs, universities, companies, and experts is essential. Thus far, local public organizations and the private sector have been collaborating and cooperating to move forward with undertakings for promoting gender equality, but in times of disaster cooperation between the private sector and the government becomes even more important than in ordinary times. It is important to always have a close relationship, build a relationship of trust, and make it possible to respond quickly in times of disaster, including sharing information.

6 The tasks of gender equality centers and departments of gender equality should be clearly defined

It is thought that the roles of gender equality centers, women's centers, and departments in charge of gender equality are significant in smoothly promoting disaster response from the perspective of gender equality. It is important to clarify roles for both ordinary times and times of disaster, strive to collaborate with other departments such as those in charge of disaster prevention and reconstruction, and position those roles in things such as local disaster prevention plans, so that they can proactively participate in the planning and formulation of policies at each

stage of prevention, emergency, restoration, and reconstruction.

7 The response to the persons in need of protection in disaster should be noted

Currently, there are many women who conduct nursing care or childcare for elderly people, disabled people, or infants, etc. in their households, and there are also many women in specialized occupations related to medical treatment, health, welfare, and childcare. Incorporating such women's opinions will lead to reflection of the perspectives of people who require attention, and therefore it is important for women to participate in processes for determining measures and policies for operating evacuation centers and supporting disaster victims, etc.

<Actions To Be Taken At Each Stage>

The Guidelines summarized actions that are necessary at each stage such as prevention, emergency, restoration, and reconstruction.

1 Preparations and Prevention

- In disaster prevention departments, the gender ratio of the staff should, at a minimum, be close to that of the overall staff, and employment and promotion of female public officials, including promotion to managerial position, should be accelerated.
- The proportion of women on Regional Disaster Management Councils should be increased to take a gender equality perspective into account for disaster prevention measures.
- Participation in the policy decision-making by women should be promoted and gender equality perspective should be taken into account in the process of drawing up or revising Regional Disaster Management plans.
- A certain amount of daily necessities for women and infants should be stored in advance, and should be supplied and transported immediately after the occurrence of disasters, under the agreement with organizations or companies relating to storage, transport, convenience stores and supermarkets.
- Learning opportunities for residents, regardless of sex, age or other factors, should be provided for the consideration of the disaster response from a gender equality perspective, such as workshops and other forms of hands-on learning.
- Participation by women in volunteer disaster prevention organizations should be encouraged, and women leaders should be fostered to increase the number of women leaders in the organizations.

2 Urgent Response Post Disaster

- Expecting and nursing mothers and parents with infants often take a long time to evacuate and require protection. Therefore, there should be guidance and assistance for their evacuation to secure places in cooperation with the related

organizations, voluntary disaster prevention organizations, neighborhoods, and so on.

- Assistance with child rearing or nursing care should be provided soon after the occurrence of a disaster so that government officials and company employees, who are responsible for rearing or caring for their families, could immediately engage in rescue and relief, and medical and fire fighting activities.
- Temporary evacuation sites, especially those provided by commercial facilities or universities around railway stations under agreements, will be expected to take numerous people who are unable to go home. There should be gender segregated spaces, as well as common spaces, in those sites.

3 Evacuation Sites

- Facilities for women, such as breast feeding rooms and sexually segregated toilets, clothe drying spaces, changing rooms and rest facilities should be provided when setting up evacuating sites. Temporary toilets for women tend to be more crowded than the ones for men, so it is recommended to construct more temporary toilets for women.
- There should be both female and male administrator(s) in each evacuation site.
- Gender equality should be promoted in self-governing administrative organizations by evacuees, and the percentage of women managers, such as leaders or deputy leaders, should be 30 percent at least, as a target.
- Sanitary items, underwear, and other daily necessities for women should be distributed respectfully in privacy by female staff, and should be supplied in women's rest facilities, toilets, and so on.
- To prevent violence against women and children, safety and security should be ensured by patrolling sleeping rooms and women's rest facilities, by distributing personal alarms, and so on. In addition, measures to create an environment for intolerance of violence and appropriate response for victims should be conducted without exception.

4 Temporary Housing

- To prevent evacuees from being isolated, and to facilitate their communication, meeting facilities should be provided and the management of the facilities should be supported.
- In temporary housing complexes, establishment of residents' associations or other community organizations should be encouraged, and the percentage of women executives of the organizations, such as president and deputies, should be over 30 percent, as a target.
- Visiting consultations for evacuees, dwelling in temporary houses or similar facilities, should be made by health care workers and other specialists, and life

assistant workers consisting of both women and men. Through those activities, efforts should be made to find and solve the problems that evacuees are facing.

- Under different circumstances, women evacuated in the temporary houses often feel anxiety and suffer from stress. In addition, fear of violence against women, among other problems, is tantamount. Therefore, consultation services and instructions to prevent violence against women should be widely disseminated, in collaboration with centers for gender equality and private organizations.
- The mental isolation of men, who tend to avoid expressing their problems, may also arise as an issue. Therefore, consultation organizations should be set up and carefully disseminated.

5 Recovery and Reconstruction

- In the process of drawing up reconstruction plans, participation in the policy decision-making by women should be promoted and Gender Equality perspective should be adopted in the plans.
- The environment for concluding opinions of residents should be carefully considered. Holding meetings by women, for example, may enable residents to make proposals from their point of view as local residents.
- In the process of building public housing for evacuees, participation of women should be promoted during the planning and design stages, and their opinions should be taken into account in building houses. In addition, facilities for resident meetings and other events must be built to facilitate communication between evacuees.
- Employment opportunities for women should be provided, in implementing policies on creation of urgent temporary employment, and providing mid to long term permanent employment with providing capacity building of employees through vocational training to provide employment for disaster victims.
- Centers for Gender Equality will be expected to assist disaster victims, by means of providing information from gender equality perspectives, holding consultations, and acting as bases for activities by NGOs and other volunteer organizations concerning issues of gender equality. This is addition to their usual tasks, such as consultation, providing information, public relations, and enlightenment activities, in collaboration with departments of local governments and local people and organizations.

6 Others

- In case of the evacuation of victims suffering from massive disasters distant from their homes, women are expected to accompany their children. Therefore, studies to determine the needs of those women should be conducted and measures should be taken for them, if necessary.

- Information on the prevention of violence against women is necessary, and must be disseminated from a gender equal perspective to private organizations and volunteer groups, prior to the start of activities in disaster suffering area.
- To implement policies on the prevention of disaster and reconstruction from a gender equality perspective, it is important to know objectively the situation of women and men, from data collection. Therefore, it is recommended to collect gender-segregating data on disaster victims, and disaster responding personnel in case of disaster.

■ Projects for consultation about women's concerns and violence

After the disaster, local governments and private sectors worked together and gained the cooperation of expert consultants from throughout the country. They set up places in the disaster areas for consultations about women's concerns and violence, took phone call consultations, and provided direct consultation by consultants conducting interviews and visiting temporary housing. These activities provide a way for women in disaster areas to make consultations with peace of mind. Efforts are being made to concretely solve problems, by things such as getting close to women who have various worries due to the disaster and providing them with advice to eliminate their concerns, and introducing sources of support provided by local governments, etc.

The needs of women in disaster areas are also being ascertained through the consultations made at consultation centers set up in disaster areas, and this information is provided to local governments and them utilized in efforts to support disaster victims.

■ Formulation of New Disaster Prevention Measures that Utilize the Lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake

The Central Disaster Prevention Council, which consists of Japan's Prime Minister, the entire Cabinet, representatives from designated public organizations, and academic experts, revised the Basic Disaster Management Plan in December 2011 to reflect reconsideration of disaster prevention measures in light of fundamental strengthening of earthquake and tsunami measures based on the Great East Japan Earthquake and recent disasters, etc. The revised Basic Disaster Management Plan more specifically includes content promoting women's participation in the operation of evacuation centers, efforts for operating evacuation centers in consideration of the needs of women and households raising children, promotion of women's participation in emergency temporary housing, and consideration so that it is possible to reflect the opinions of women and other people living in disaster areas.

Revisions of the Basic Act on Disaster Control Measures in June 2012 called for the addition of people who form autonomous disaster prevention organizations or

people with academic backgrounds, in addition to people currently serving in positions of disaster prevention organizations, as members of local disaster prevention conferences, so that the opinions of diverse members can be reflected when formulating local disaster prevention plans, etc.

In addition, due to revision of the Basic Disaster Management Plan in September 2012, the perspective of gender equality was included in recovery and reconstruction of disaster areas by things such as a clear statement that “from the perspective of gender equality, women’s participation will be promoted in all places and organizations related to recovery and reconstruction.”

■ Resolutions at the International Conference

At the 56th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which was held at the United Nations headquarters in March 2012, a consensus was adopted on a draft resolution ("Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Natural Disasters"). This resolution aims to share Japan’s experiences and lessons with other countries and deepen international understanding one year after the Great East Japan Earthquake, as well as promote disaster efforts that take women into consideration. It is the first submission that Japan has ever made to CSW.

Specifically, it emphasizes the necessity of consideration for women, as well as vulnerable people such as children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, and the importance of creating an inclusive society by having such people participate. It seeks the following from individual countries, international organizations, etc.:

- Consideration of the perspectives and needs of women and households raising children, and formulation and implementation of recovery projects that take gender into consideration
- Special consideration of violence against women, prevention of exploitation that includes trafficking in persons, protection of victims of violence, and provision of legal and other services
- Preparation of data according to gender and age, recording disaster relief from the perspective of gender, sharing good examples, and utilizing such things in disaster prevention plans, etc.
- Awareness and encouragement of the importance of the role of female volunteers in order to consider women’s needs, etc.