



Women's Perspective for Strengthening Disaster Response Capabilities

Guidelines for disaster prevention and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality

These guidelines were formulated based on Japan's experience with large-scale disasters, including the Great East Japan Earthquake. We hope that they can serve as a reference for other countries as they evolve their own Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) policies.



**Gender
Equality
Bureau**
Cabinet Office

Government of Japan

Introduction

Large-scale disasters threaten the livelihood of all people, but women, children, and vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected. Women's difficulties in times of disasters are based on the stereotypical perception of gender roles, indicating that gender issues during normal times become more apparent during disasters. For instance, care responsibilities such as housework, childcare, and nursing care are often concentrated on women, and violence against women and children, including DV (domestic violence) and sexual violence, tends to be more serious during disasters. Therefore, it is essential to incorporate the perspective of gender equality into all policies related to disaster management, not only during times of disaster but also during normal times.

Japan has strived to incorporate a gender perspective in its disaster management policies. The 5th Basic Plan for Gender Equality under the Basic Act for Gender Equal

Society specifies disaster management as one of the priority areas. The latest Basic Disaster Management Plan under the Basic Act on Disaster Management also clarifies the need to promote a gender perspective in all phases of disaster response, from prevention to recovery and reconstruction.

In 2020, the government formulated the "Guidelines for disaster prevention and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality." These guidelines provide basic policies and points for local governments taking charge of disaster response to tackle each stage of disaster preparedness, initial response, life in a shelter, and recovery and reconstruction from the perspective of gender equality.

This document is an overview of the guidelines. We hope that this document is beneficial to other countries facing similar disaster response challenges.

Part 1 Basic policies

1	Promoting gender equality during normal times is the foundation of disaster management	Since existing gender issues become more pronounced in times of disaster, creating a gender-equal society during normal times serves as a foundation for the smooth implementation of disaster response efforts.
2	Assigning women to leadership roles	In order to reflect a gender perspective in disaster response, it is necessary to promote women's participation in decision-making processes and on-site activities.
3	Realizing how men and women are affected differently by disasters	It is important to understand that women and men are affected by disasters differently, and to give due consideration to the different needs of women and men in disaster response. The participation of women is also important in the operation of shelters, for example in providing support to affected people.
4	Respecting the human rights of men and women and ensuring their safety and security	Evacuees must have access to safe, secure facilities. These shelters are required to have partitions to ensure adequate privacy, maintain security measures to prevent violence against women and children (such as domestic and sexual violence), and ensure that women survivors feel safe to seek help.
5	Establishing a necessary cooperation system with the private sector that incorporates a gender perspective	In times of disaster, cooperation between the private and public sectors is even more important than in normal times. Establishing a relationship of mutual trust and concluding necessary agreements during normal times will enable rapid disaster responses including information sharing.
6	Clarifying the roles of Gender Equality Departments and Gender Equality Promotion Centers*	The gender equality departments of local governments and Gender Equality Promotion Centers play a major role in promoting disaster response activities from a gender perspective. As required by the national Basic Disaster Management Plan, local governments need to clarify what roles gender equality departments and centers should play and how they should cooperate in their disaster management plans and shelter management manuals.
7	Considering women's needs when addressing persons requiring special care	Persons requiring special care, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, babies and infants, pregnant women and nursing mothers, and foreigners, and include both women and men. In addition, experts in helping persons requiring special care become able to participate in decision-making during normal times.

* Gender Equality Promotion Centers are comprehensive facilities for gender equality and women that conduct activities including awareness raising, lectures and consultation services, as well as information collection and provision. Each prefecture or municipality sets up such a center on a voluntary basis. They also play a major role in facilitating disaster response from a gender perspective. For this reason, the government is encouraging the establishment of a mutual support network among these centers so that they can become a base for promoting disaster management from the perspective of gender equality in communities.

1 Preparations during normal times

For disaster response from a gender perspective, it is important that women participate in the decision-making process and on-site activities during normal times.

1. More women should be appointed to disaster management departments of local governments, and to local disaster management councils that formulate local disaster management plans.
2. The role of gender equality departments of local governments and Gender Equality Promotion Centers should be positioned in local disaster management plans and shelter management manuals.
3. When stockpiling supplies, necessary and sufficient supplies should be selected, taking into account the needs of pregnant women and nursing mothers, babies and infants, and child-rearing families as well as gender differences, by using the “Stockpile Checklist (p. 8)”.
4. The participation of women in voluntary disaster management organizations, which is operated by local residents, should be promoted. It is also necessary to develop female leaders and provide a place where leaders can collaborate with each other and engage in disaster prevention activities during normal times.
5. In disaster education and drills, male leaders should be encouraged to understand the different needs and impacts of women and men during disasters, and the importance of disaster response from the perspective of gender equality.
6. In the survey of disaster situation, gender-disaggregated data should be collected and analyzed to understand how women and men are affected differently by the disaster.

Case Study

City's Efforts in Disaster Prevention from a Gender Perspective and Activities of Local Female Leaders

In 2012, Kochi City council discussed how to promote disaster prevention efforts from a gender perspective and the assignment of female officials to the disaster management department. The city council also partially revised the Kochi City Disaster Management Council Ordinance, increasing the number of the members of municipal disaster management council by 10 and appointing three female members, who had previously not been included.

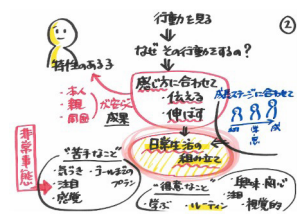
In these circumstances, from 2012 to 2013 female officials in their 20s to 50s from the city formed a committee to discuss Nankai Trough earthquakes from a gender perspective (succeeded by a follow-up committee from 2014 to 2015) and proposed initiatives required from women's perspectives in the city's disaster management measures.

In response to the committee's proposals, the city's Gender Equality Promotion Center (Kochi Gender Equality Center “Sole”) launched a disaster prevention course called the Women's Disaster Reduction Project. Those who completed the course started the Kochi women's disaster reduction group, training local female leaders, disseminating information on their activities, and building a prefectural network of disaster prevention activities.

In addition, the city held a workshop for women in the process of creating a supply distribution manual, which describes what supplies are necessary and how to procure them in times of disaster. Some members of the Kochi women's disaster reduction group participated in the

workshop and created a list of supplies necessary for women as an appendix to the manual.

Kochi City trains female leaders and actively uses them for its disaster prevention efforts with an understanding that reflecting a gender perspective in disaster response will improve local disaster preparedness.



Activities of the Kochi Women's Group for Disaster Reduction



Donation of relief goods in the time of the western Japan torrential rains in 2018

2 Initial response

In order to incorporate a gender perspective into initial response, it is important for local disaster management headquarters to have a system in place to provide information on and raise issues concerning the necessary response to women's needs and challenges.

1. Female officials and staff of gender equality departments should be assigned to local disaster management headquarters and its subsidiary organizations.
2. There is a need to support local government officials who are taking care of children or family members so that they can keep engaged in their disaster response duties.
3. In addition to mobile-phone networks and emergency public-address systems, email systems and social networks should be developed in order to better provide evacuation recommendation to women who are indoors (engaged in caring for small children or seniors, for example) when disaster strikes. Pregnant women and nursing mothers, parents with their babies or infants, and those who are caring for their elderly or disabled family members at home need to be considered in evacuation guidance and assistance.
4. The policy on zero-tolerance for violence against women and children should be disseminated and enforced so that evacuees and volunteers will become neither victims nor perpetrators of DV and sexual violence in designated shelters, temporary housing, and volunteer activity places after disasters. To protect women and children from any form of violence and ensure their safety, the following actions should be undertaken:
 - Put up posters to promote the prevention of DV and sexual violence
 - Install toilets, changing rooms, and bathing facilities at appropriate places and ensure users' safety with lighting and personal alarms
 - Patrol shelters in male and female pairs
 - Make sure that female staff patrol women's toilets and changing rooms
 - Have female counselors and a women's helpline in place

Case Study

Response of the City's Disaster Management Headquarters to the Western Japan Torrential Rains in 2018

The torrential rain that began in western Japan in the early hours of July 7, 2018 caused flooding in Kurashiki City, Okayama Prefecture. In the initial response phase on the following day, some officials of city's gender equality department were assigned to the secretariat of the local disaster management headquarters since the disaster management department decided that women's perspectives were necessary for the operation of shelters.

In the early stage of the disaster, shelters were in chaos. Therefore, under the supervision of the Civil Affairs Bureau, which was responsible for the operation of shelters at that time, the officials of the gender equality department were directly able to provide support to evacuees from a gender perspective in shelters based on the latest information about the moves of the disaster management headquarters, disaster damage and the conditions of shelters, and disaster response.

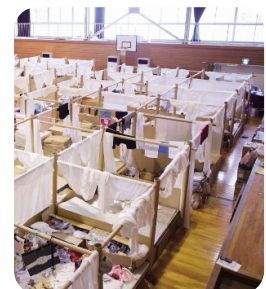
The initiatives from a gender perspective early phase of the disaster helped improve the living environments of shelters. Since disaster management departments alone are not capable of handling disasters, it is important for them to work with gender equality departments during normal times.

Major activities

- Ask evacuees about their needs in shelters
- Raise public awareness on the prevention of sexual violence and provide evacuees with hotline information
- Procure and distribute supplies for women and vulnerable groups
- Give consideration to sexual minorities



City officials (public health nurses) asking evacuees about their needs



Conditions at the shelter

3 Life in shelters

In past disasters, women faced challenges such as little privacy and a shortage of toilets. To make matters worse, many shelters were managed by men, which made it difficult to reflect women's voices in their operation. To solve these problems and meet the needs of both women and men in shelters, more women need to be involved in the management and leadership of shelters.

- Both women and men should be appointed in managing shelters.
- Women should participate in evacuees' voluntary operating bodies for shelters with the goal of increasing the ratio of women in leadership positions to 30 percent or higher.
- To improve the living environment of shelters, the following measures should be taken upon the opening of shelters:
 - Install partitions that ensure sufficient privacy
 - Install nursing rooms. Toilets, clothes-drying spaces, changing rooms, rest spaces, and bathing facilities should be separate for men and women
 - Install more toilets for women than those for men
- For evacuees who stay at home or in their cars, necessary supplies and information should be provided, taking into consideration the different needs of women and men.
- The distribution of sanitary goods, underwear, and other women's products should be handled by women, and always placed in easily accessible places in women-only spaces and women's toilets.
- Measures should be taken to ensure that pregnant women and nursing mothers, babies and infants, and elderly women can maintain their health and have necessary nutrition, as well as to secure clean environments, including preventive measures against infectious diseases.
- "Shelter Checklist (Annex)" should be used for local governments to continuously check whether they fully meet the different needs of women and men.



Paper partitions
(Photo courtesy of Shigeru Ban Architects)



Clothes-drying space for women
(Kumamoto City)



Changing/nursing room (dome tents)
(Kumamoto City)



Changing room for women (using cardboard curtains)
(Asakura City)

Case Study

Activities of Kumamoto City Gender Equality Center Harmony in the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake

In the aftermath of the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake, Kumamoto City Gender Equality Center Harmony consulted with Kumamoto City on its response to disaster based on information provided by Gender Equality Promotion Centers and other organizations across the country. With the city's consent, Kumamoto City Gender Equality Center Harmony formed a team of staff and launched a "shelter caravan" initiative right after the earthquake.

One of the activities was to improve the living environments of shelters with the Shelter Checklist. In the

early phase of the disaster, it was still difficult for the caravan team to talk with shelter managers because most of the shelters were in the midst of confusion. In such cases, the team members obtained the consent of the managers and checked the living environments in shelters on their own with the checklist. For shelters without changing rooms, they proposed installing changing rooms by bringing changing room signs. They also proposed to provide free access to sanitary goods in women's toilets.



Handed out changing and nursing room signs and proposed hanging the signs on the doors of changing and nursing rooms.



Called for and distributed relief supplies for women and children.



Caravan team interviewed shelter managers and checked the living environments in shelters with the checklist.



Proposed placing samples of sanitary goods.



Installed suggestion boxes called "Everyone's Voice" in men's and women's toilets, regularly collected the boxes, and proposed making improvements based on the suggestions.

Another activity was to raise public awareness of the prevention of DV and sexual violence. Immediately after the Kumamoto earthquake occurred, Gender Equality Promotion Centers in the East region informed Kumamoto City Gender Equality Center Harmony that DV and sexual violence cases were reported in the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. In a bid to prevent such cases in Kumamoto, they created posters against DV and sexual violence that provided helpline information and posted them in shelters.

Their activities resulted in shelters paying more attention to the privacy of female evacuees by providing changing rooms and nursing spaces. The activities also improved the way of distributing supplies for women and made other improvements from a gender perspective, which had been overlooked before.



Activities to raise public awareness of the prevention of DV and sexual violence

4 Recovery and reconstruction

In the recovery and reconstruction phase, affected people need to restore their homes, and livelihoods as well as reconnect with others. Unfortunately, women are more likely to lose their job after a disaster because more women are contractual workers employees. For this reason, the perspective of gender equality should be incorporated in recovery and reconstruction measures.

1. More women should be appointed to local reconstruction headquarters.
2. More women should participate in the policy-making process in developing reconstruction plans.
3. The participation of women should be encouraged in the decision-making process for their planning and designing of temporary housing. Measures (such as installing outdoor lighting) should be taken to create an environment that prevents violence against women and children.
4. In order to reduce the gap in return to work between men and women, efforts should be made to secure places for children and the elderly who need nursing care, create a work environment where it is easy to balance work and family, provide income compensation, and support continued employment.
5. Medium- to long-term mental healthcare should be provided to help reconstruct the lives of affected people.

Case Study

Restoration of Livelihoods and Employment

NPO Yappesu in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture, which was struck by the Great East Japan Earthquake, has made continued efforts to help women find a job and start businesses for more than 10 years since the very beginning of the disaster to use women's power in rebuilding the city and tackling local challenges.

Their activities to support women's employment and entrepreneurship prevented the outflow of the young population and revitalized the local community. If a local citizens' group that has a gender perspective and knows the local community well works with the local government, they can promote the reconstruction of the local community very effectively.

Major activities

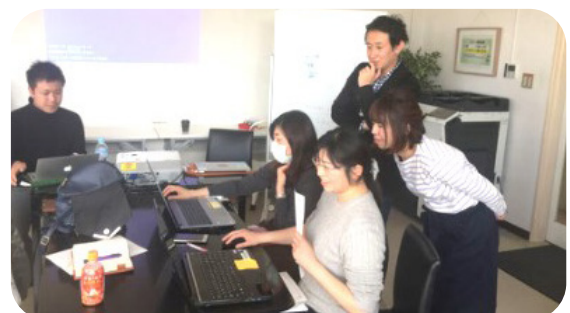
Support for employment and other services for women, mainly mothers, in the Ishinomaki area

- Provide job counselling and hold employment support programs with childcare service and job fairs to help women rebuild their lives themselves
- Work with local companies to provide work-at-home opportunities to mothers with small children who cannot work outside home
- Provide a consultation service to help women start businesses, low-rent incubation offices, and business advice from experts
- Open a "challenge shop" where women entrepreneurs can display their products and hold sales and other events to help their business

Train mental care specialists for women in coaching, mental health, and resilience by providing human resource development programs to improve self-recovery for women under considerable stress from the disaster in cooperation with private companies



Human resource development program to improve self-recovery for women under stress



Business startup support program

Part 3 provides checklists, posters, and other useful materials readily available at the site of disaster response.

Stockpile Checklist

- ▶ The selection and quantities of supplies for stockpiling need to reflect the different needs of women and men, as well as the needs of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and child-rearing families. Women should be involved in discussing the selection and quantities of supplies.
- ▶ Although everyone has different needs, each person needs to stockpile at least three days' worth of supplies. Residents should be encouraged to stockpile necessary supplies during normal times.

Check

For women	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sanitary napkins (including ordinary ones and ones with long-lasting protection)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pantiliners
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sanitary shorts
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal alarms and safety whistles
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-transparent disposal bags
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Underwear for women (in various sizes)
For adolescent girls and young women	<input type="checkbox"/>	Underwear for girls (in sizes and shapes suitable for each developmental stage)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal alarms and safety whistles
For pregnant women and nursing mothers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Underwear for pregnant women and nursing mothers
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clothing for pregnant women and nursing mothers
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal alarms and safety whistles
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nursing pads
For babies and infants	<input type="checkbox"/>	Powdered milk (including hypoallergenic products) or liquid milk
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pillows or cushions (a few for each nursing room) and capes or bath towels for nursing (or stoles)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drinking water for babies and infants (soft water)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nursing bottles, artificial nipples, cups (or disposable paper cups for nursing using cups), disinfectants, detergents, washing brushes and other tools, and disposable wooden chopsticks
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Kettles and pots for boiling water (these pots should not be used for cooking)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Weaning food (including non-allergenic products)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dishes and spoons
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disposable diapers for babies and infants (in various sizes for girls and boys) and plastic bags for disposal of diapers
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sanitary wipes
For nursing care	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disposable diapers for adults (in various sizes for women and men) and plastic bags for disposal of diapers
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Incontinence pads (for women and men)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sanitary wipes
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nursing meals (rice porridge, thickened food, and thickening agents)
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Portable toilets and Western-style fixed toilets
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal alarms and nurse call buttons
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Denture cleaners
For foreigners (women)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spoons and forks
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stoles
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food that can be eaten regardless of religious beliefs
For all people	<input type="checkbox"/>	Partitions that provide sufficient privacy
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bedding for people with leg or lower back problems (such as cardboard beds)