



Analyzing Life Restoration Processes of Victims in Temporary Housing and How Public Aid Should Function -Survey from the East Japan Earthquake-

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Abstract

In the Great East Japan Earthquake, 130,000 houses were major damaged and 260,000 houses were moderate damaged. After Disaster, 140,000 units of temporary housing have been provided for the victims, and more than half were housing by renting of private rental housing (designated temporary housing). This study analyzed life restoration processes of victims in temporary housing and how public aid should function after the Great East Japan Earthquake. Designated temporary housing drastically reduced the suffering of victims living in evacuation centers by allowing them to move to a dwelling without having to wait for prefabricated temporary housing to be built. It was made clear that especially for households having difficulty living in evacuation centers such as those with infants and the elderly there were many advantages such as being able to avoid living in evacuation centers by living in designated temporary housing. A warm handed public support is a popular policy both politically and in terms of mass media. However, it is a grave fact that there is a discrepancy in the life restoration ability of victims. Making support measures unequal depending on conditions such as age, financial position and home ownership type is what is going to realize ideal equality of public support and this will lead to support that will increase self-reliance and independence of the victims.

Keywords: keywords1, designated temporary housing, life restoration process, the great east japan earthquake



1. Study Objective

In the Great East Japan Earthquake, 130,000 houses were major damaged and 260,000 houses were moderate damaged. After Disaster, 140,000 units of temporary housing have been provided for the victims, and more than half were housing by renting of private rental housing (designated temporary housing) (Fig.1). It is a policy that has been adopted officially for the first time by the Great East Japan Earthquake. Until now the mainstream of temporary housing style was prefabricated houses which was constructed on the same site. Therefore, there are few accumulation of knowledge about support measures for life restoration of victims. This study analyzed the difference of life restoration process between prefabricated housing dwellers and designated housing dwellers. Moreover, the study suggest improvements in Japan's public life restoration aid.

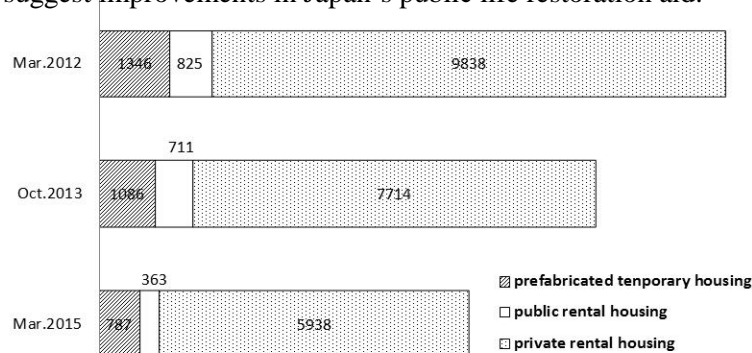


Fig. 1 Changes in the number of temporary housing (Sendai City)

2. Analysis of Life Restoration Aid in Sendai City

2.1 Study Method

In Sendai, where they have the most number of temporary housing of all disaster stricken areas from the Great East Japan Earthquake, temporary housing using designated temporary housing comprise 90% and also dwellers from outside Sendai represent one-third of all dwellers and hence it has a different characteristic to that of other disaster stricken areas. Therefore it has recognized the importance of life restoration aid of victims and commenced aid at an early stage after the disaster. An on-going participant-observation of the Sendai Restoration Operations Bureau-Life Restoration Support Office was conducted and the person in charge was interviewed.

2.2 Analysis of Life Restoration Aid at Sendai City

(1) Confirmation of Whereabouts of Dwellers and Individual Survey

City of Sendai, recognizing the importance of confirming the whereabouts of dwellers and their individual information, visited each designated temporary housing in early August, 2011 mobilizing 400 of its staff over two days. In May, 2012 a survey of all temporary housing households was carried out receiving up to 95% of responses. Furthermore, in October, 2013 it commenced a visit of all households affected by the disaster. After a period of more than two years from the disaster, victims started to see the visitors as just a nuisance. Therefore a decision has been made to centralize the information held by the group supporting the victims, share it and mainly make individual visits to people in need.

(2) Building a Victim Support System

From the 2011 household survey it was clear that a system to centralize victim related information was necessary and in July, 2012 the system went into operation. The data input is all done by the ward office staff and currently it manages approximately 12,000 individual information. Using government office LAN information can be viewed at the ward office and other departments by staff involved in victim support registering their ID. However, as insurance and welfare related information contain important private information it only has information of "supporting" and no information relating to the details of the support are included.



(3) Victim Support Measures

Of the approximately 8,500 households visited or contacted by phone approximately 60% have their restoration policy and periods decided and were found to live without any special problems. On the other hand, 5.7% of households required support in their daily lives, 30.6% had concerns about restoring their dwellings and 4.2% of households had problems with both their daily lives and restoring their dwelling (Fig.2).

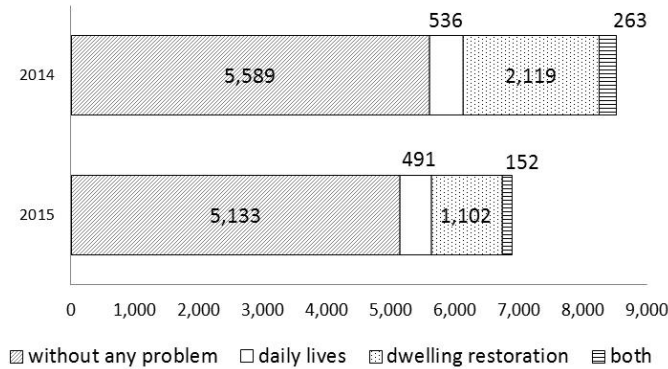


Fig. 2 Changes in the number of households facing a life restoration of the problem

The City of Sendai outsourced its work of visiting temporary housing to the City of Sendai Silver Citizens Work Placement Center since April, 2012 and 33 silver members have since conducted these visits as a life restoration supporter. The City, in order to focus support on the approximately 360 households in need of some kind of support in both aspects of daily life and rebuilding their dwelling in the future has dealt with the issues by setting up a victim liaison and adjustment meeting at each ward office, preparing a separate support plan, sharing information with various departments and referring them to specialized agencies if need be. Furthermore, with regards to support necessary for rebuilding dwellings consultation meetings of various fields have been held including the bar association, Government Housing Loan Corporation, financial planners, association of judicial scriveners and the law office. However the timing of consultation differs according to each victim and hence effort is being made to hold the individual consultation meeting periodically and continuously so that the consultation can be had at the appropriate time suiting the victims. The City of Sendai, in order to end the provision of temporary housing at the end of March, 2016, is implementing measures such as individual support of move to rental housing to several dozen households that have no hope yet of rebuilding their houses.

3. Analysis of Work by a Life Restoration Supporter

3.1 Method of Study

In the City of Sendai, having outsourced its temporary housing visits to the City of Sendai Silver Citizens Work Placement Center since April, 2012, 33 silver members have worked as life restoration supporters for the purpose of supporting life restoration and dwellings rebuild of many designated temporary housing dwellers living in various parts of the city as well as victims moving in from outside the city. In this study an individual interview was conducted towards the 33 supporters. Approximately 2 hours were allotted per interview with no questions asked but having them freely talk about their experience and thoughts relating to the support work and their personal experience from the time the disaster to the present. The 33 interview subjects were aged between 60-76 years of age of which 22 were male and 11 were female.

3.2 Selecting Life Restoration Supporter

Subcontracted by the City of Sendai, the selection of members who were to act as life restoration supporters was carried out by inviting people at the center who were thought to be ideal for this job and also those nominating themselves and had them participate in a group interview. Throughout the interview sociable manner, impression



by the other person and thoughts towards support work were comprehensively judged and 18 people were selected and their work as the City of Sendai life restoration supporter commenced on the 1st of April, 2012. Later on the number of supporters has increased twice due to the increase in the work load and except for 1 person retiring in late 2014 for the reason of old age there has not been a single person who has retired as a supporter up to now.

3.3 Life Restoration Supporter Survey Result

(1) Role of Life Restoration Supporter

- The existence of the supporter lies in the middle, between the city office and the victims and the supporter is the intermediary between the victims and the administration. Therefore their role is of a shock absorber softening the collision between the victims and the administration, controlling the frustration of the victims who are about to explode.
- Aim was to listen to the victims and relay that message precisely to the support system. For that what was required of a supporter is the skill of listening intently to the other person (communication skill) and the skill of relaying that message accurately back to the administration (presentation skill).
- The security which a 60-70 year old gives to a victim was huge with the elderly opening up to them and talking and they were able to connect with the young as if they were their parents.

(2) The Effect Only a Silver Member Can Have

- Abundance of life experience and going through tough times, that relates to the concerns of the victims and they are able to think in terms of the other person. Therefore, they are able to deal in a kind manner and the advice they give comes from the heart hence the other person could speak without any hesitation.
- There were many supporters with managerial experience and hence had the tolerance to prevent trouble between supporters. In addition, because they were people of similar level and knowledge, they managed to carry out their duties seeking improvement without anyone quitting mid-way.
- When they were actively working they were so used to complaints coming from customers that they easily handled complaints by the victims.
- They thought of this as a sales job and thought of victims as their customers. With a helpful spirit they always made sure not to offend the other person with their outfits and their use of words.

(3) What to be Mindful of When Dealing with Victims

- The attitude of the victims who normally showed an arrogance on the phone softened by going, meeting in person and having a heart-to-heart talk.
- Strived to listen 70-80% of the time and made sure not to impose their values on the victims.
- Studied and became well informed about various support programs and explained to them in an easy to understand way. All choices available to the victims for problem resolution were presented but never forced them to do it a certain way.

(4) Issues Identified Through Their Work

- To what extent we were to dwell into each households complicated situation and to what extent we were to assist were left to each individual and this was a source of concern.
- By visiting temporary housing the existence of victims with many difficulties to restore their lives such as welfare, fatherless families and mental disorders surfaced.
- There was no difference between providing temporary housing to those who owned their own home and to those who rented. Therefore there is a strong feeling of unfairness among citizens when providing free housing for 5 years to those who lived in rented dwellings.
- The details of various support programs in other cities were not known hence all that could be done when questioned was to hand them a list of contacts and to have them make an inquiry themselves.

(5) Advice Towards Support Activity

- It is very important to understand accurately at an early stage the purpose and role of the supporter program. Furthermore it is important to bring out information which the administration requires from the victims and to accurately relay the ideas of the administration to the victims.
- There is a limit to what the administration can do as it is based on law. On the other hand, as a supporter, there



are many instances where feelings of wanting to help more arose and hence this dilemma had to be faced with a firm clear cut mindset.

- What is the factor obstructing the rebuilding of dwellings? Is it something existing prior to the disaster or after? We need to determine that and deal with it accordingly. It is important to understand the victims suffering from the disaster both physically and spiritually but you cannot solve the problems that the victims have just by sympathizing.
- If the victims themselves do not make the decision life restoration will not start.

3.4 The Role Played by the Life Restoration Supporter

Based on survey results conducted so far, summarized below are the roles played in restoring the life and dwellings of the victims utilizing the skill and characteristics which the Silver Citizens Work Placement Center members possess and points worth noting from the support visits made to the households stricken by the disaster.

(1)It was made clear that the support visits by the silver members with their rich life experience played an important role in supporting the life restoration of disaster stricken households facing various difficulties and their skill, nurtured from years of experience as members of society and the enterprise, were utilized to the maximum.

(2)In the case of the City of Sendai, the role expected was as an intermediary between the disaster stricken households and the administration and not for the supporters themselves to solve problems. Hence, what were expected of the visiting supporters were the skill of listening intently to the victims (communication skill) and the skill of relaying the message properly to the administration (presentation skill) and the silver members fully possessed these skills.

(3)During their active working years their experience was wide and varied with many members having experience in sales and management hence they possessed the know-how to deal with complaints from the victims as well as maintaining a good relationship with people in the organization.

(4)They were always mindful of the purpose of their work as a supporter and of working by fully understanding the position they were put in, not doing their own thing just by compassion or assumption and made sure that it led to a program helpful in their support. As a result, a fair and effective support was provided and the number of households in need of support drastically declined.

(5)On the other hand, there were many supporters working while feeling the limits as a supporter always worrying about to what extent they can dwell into the victims' individual situation and to what extent they should assist.

(6)Not once has there been a transfer of a main person in charge involved in the life restoration support in the City of Sendai and a strong trusting relationship was built between the administration, Silver Citizens Work Placement Center and the supporters and the needs of the victims acquired through the support visits have steadily led to tangible support.

(7)The life restoration supporter program in Sendai utilizing the Silver Citizens Work Placement Center has played an important role in rebuilding the life of the victims. At the same time, as a model case of what a support structure should be where citizens support citizens, there are many matters that can be used as a guide for the future.

4. Analysis of Life Restoration Process of Households Stricken by the Disaster

4.1 Method of Study

Targets were extracted making sure that attributes such as family composition, age of the head of the household and ownership type of dwelling were not biased and through detailed Ethnography survey (unstructured interview) the process leading up to the rebuilding of dwellings were recorded. With regards to the selection of survey targets cooperation was obtained from the people living in the target area of Natori-Shi, Miyagi and Ishinomaki-Shi who were able to act as a key person in the selection process possessing a strong trusting



relationship with the victims as well as an understanding of this study. In Natori-Shi the services of Mr. S who is the head of a nursery school in Yuriage region and in Ishinomaki-Shi services of Mr. K who is a manager of a well-established restaurant with a 100 year history were enlisted to “conduct detailed interviews, select households affected by the disaster with various attributes and to cooperate with the survey”. The survey targets were 22 households.

4.2 Analysis of Life Restoration Process

The timeline of the 22 target households from the time of the disaster to the survey date is shown in Fig.3. Also noted below are the characteristics of the securing process of dwellings obtained from the survey.

(1) Process Leading up to the Move to Temporary Housing

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred during lunch time on a weekday the families were scattered in and out of the disaster area and hence few days were required for them to reunite. Places to reunite with their loved ones were mainly the evacuation center and homes of relatives living in the suburbs and rather than leaving immediately they tended to stay a few days at the place of reunion.

The motivation for moving out of the evacuation center at first was not only because of family situations such as having young children and the elderly but was mostly due to urgency of school resumption and information (rumor) that apartments may be gone if they do not decide straight away. Especially, if you have a family with an elderly or disabled person, then those households found it difficult to live even for a few days at an evacuation center immediately thought of a place to live after the disaster besides the evacuation center and enthusiastically searched for an available public residence. Therefore, households who rented their temporary housing never experienced life at an evacuation center. Or even if they stayed at an evacuation center there were many households that have moved out in a short period of time. Furthermore when searching for designated temporary housing there were no households which used the matching system of the administration and it became clear that they secured their own dwelling with self-reliant effort, enlisting the help of work colleagues and relatives and visiting real estate agents and looking for property themselves.

In addition, since designated temporary housing is a property which is a private rental housing basically it is built in a location which is relatively convenient with transportation, shops and medical institutions nearby. Therefore the point of “being close to a station” of designated temporary housing was highly evaluated, which was never thought much about living in Yuriage, and it is becoming a major factor in searching for a property on which to rebuild their homes.

(2) Living Environment of Temporary Housing

It was predicted that victims living in designated temporary housing were scattered and hence held a feeling of unfairness not getting material and personal support from outside compared to those victims living in prefabricated temporary housing. However, such opinions were never heard from the target households. From the time they moved in a normal life of buying things with their own money and going places by themselves continued as they did prior to the disaster, and many voices wishing for that kind of life were heard. There may be issues in terms of fairness but in terms of rebuilding victims’ independent lives designated temporary housing is providing an appropriate environment. In addition, since it is a dwelling selected by themselves although it is in the form of temporary housing, complaints about living environment often heard among prefabricated temporary housing were hardly ever heard.

On the one hand, among the residents of prefabricated temporary housing problem of reliance on support has come to the fore and furthermore the prefabricated temporary housing community is important in terms of operating temporary housing but on the other hand there were opinions of obligations and ties abound which made it difficult to leave. The fact that each household can go ahead with the process of rebuilding their lives freely depending on their individual situation not worrying about these issues is a big advantage of designated temporary housing.

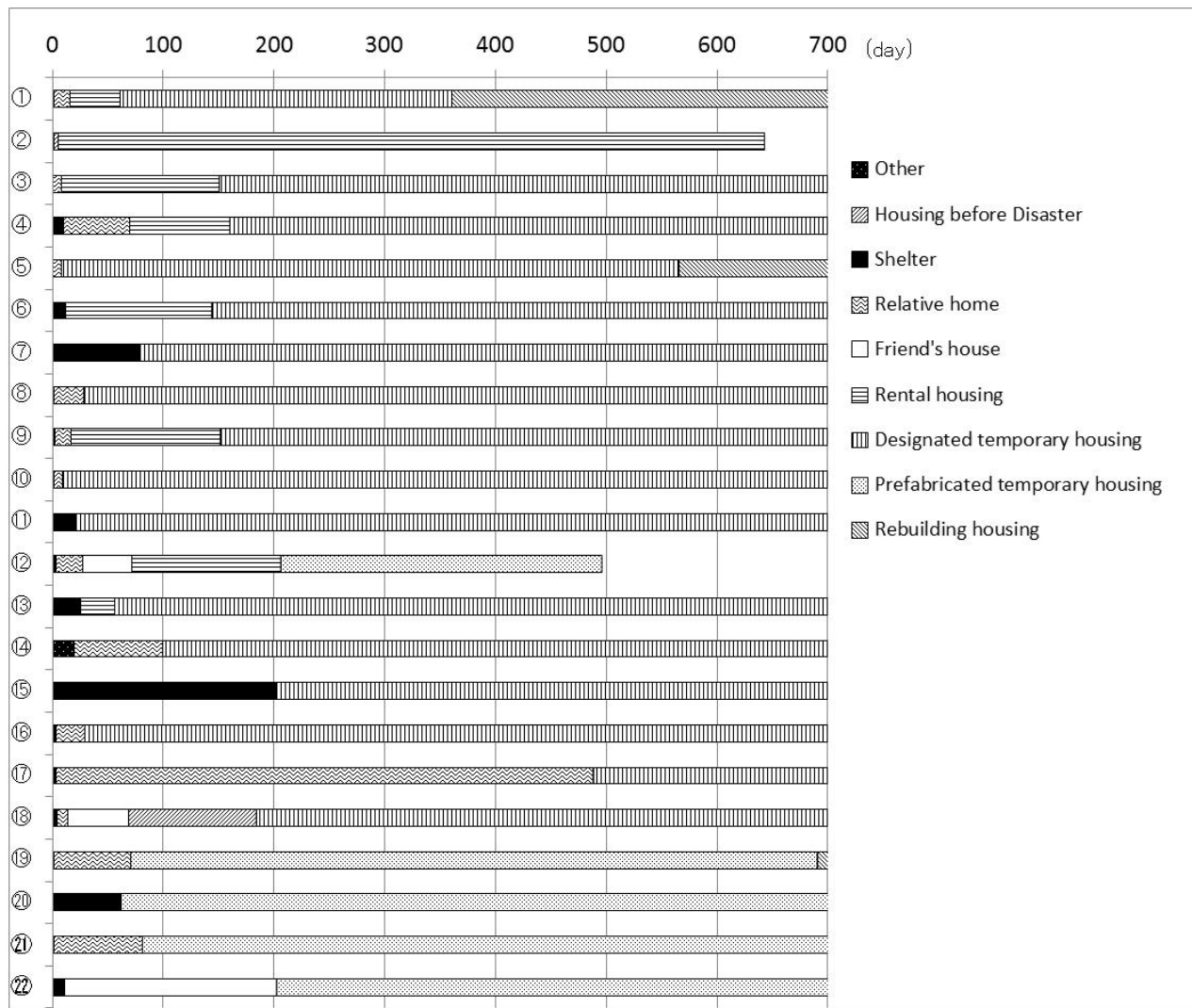


Fig. 3 Timeline of the restoration process-like dwelling

(3) Re-building Dwellings

Rebuilding is going ahead at an alarming speed such that of the 13 households residing in designated temporary housing in Natori-Shi 7 households have completed rebuilding their homes within 2 years of the disaster. In these households individual rebuilding plans were drafted and implemented irrespective of the state of progress of Natori-Shi restoration plan. At the background of this speedy rebuild was not only the financial factor that no housing loans existed at the time of the disaster and earthquake insurance payouts which were to fund the purchase of land were received but also a sense of urgency that if a decision was not made immediately there will be no land left and that the older you get the more difficult it will become to obtain a loan was noted as being the accelerating factor. Furthermore, whether a loan was able to be taken out was a major factor in the end in determining whether to move into a disaster public housing or to rebuild on your own.

Furthermore, there were victims who moved out of designated temporary housing and into other private rental housing but in these cases it occurred because at the start there were lack of property and households wanted to rent whatever they could and households which have increased in size required a bigger house to move in to. The designated temporary housing system, as a general rule, does not allow moving out of designated temporary housing and after moving out you will have to pay your own rent. These victims will not be classified as living in temporary housing but they are thinking of it as a house to live in the meantime.



(4) Ties with the Original Local Community

The community of Yuriage region was recognized as a region with especially strong regional ties amongst Natori-Shi communities. For newcomers (especially wives from other regions) it seemed like a place too forbidden but once you become accustomed to the region it was a region where strong ties existed. However, due to the earthquake disaster, if a life of scattered residence continues maintaining these ties become difficult and there are not that many people who have kept ties with their neighbors and neighborhood associations from back then. Regional bonding becomes weak and ties that do remain are mostly those with fellow classmates and school ties of seniors and juniors. Life restoration of such people has already begun at various regions and although they have interest in the restoration of Yuriage in most cases they seem to treat it separately to that of their own life restoration.

(5) Characteristic of Ishinomaki-Shi

This is a comparison with the households residing in temporary housing in Ishinomaki-Shi but in the case surveyed this time in Ishinomaki-Shi there are cases of wanting to move to a prefabricated temporary housing in the beginning but not quite winning the draw and being requested to move out of the evacuation center reluctantly had to find a designated temporary housing. Also many households switched to designated temporary housing because when a decision was made to move to temporary housing already prefabricated temporary housing was full. This is a characteristic not seen in Natori-Shi. One of the reasons is that the population of Ishinomaki-Shi is approximately 170,000, larger than that of Natori-Shi, and also because the damage from the Tsunami was huge the supply of prefabricated temporary housing could not keep up with the number of victims..

5. Proposal of How Public Support should Function

5.1 Effect and Issues of Disaster Temporary Housing System

Designated temporary housing provided during the Great East Japan Earthquake drastically reduced the suffering of victims living in evacuation centers by allowing them to move to a dwelling without having to wait for prefabricated temporary housing to be built. It was made clear that especially for households having difficulty living in evacuation centers such as those with infants and the elderly there were many advantages such as being able to avoid living in evacuation centers by living in designated temporary housing.

In addition, although it is a dwelling which is temporary, the act of the victims themselves selecting a dwelling demands initiative on the part of the victims and as a first step in self-help effort towards rebuilding their life thereafter it clearly had the effect of accelerating the speed of rebuilding dwellings. Designated temporary housing played an important role as a place to spend a “self-reliant daily life” which was difficult to realize in a prefabricated temporary housing.

One the other hand, there are many issues which have arisen implementing as part of the emergency temporary housing provision which is based on the Disaster Relief Act and a necessity to establish a different framework to that of existing legal system is identified. In a long term case of staying for 2 years or more the awareness of the victims is more of rental assistance rather than emergency temporary housing. Therefore after a certain period has passed it should be separated from the positioning of temporary housing based on Disaster Relief Act and should be dealt by establishing a different system such as demanding an appropriate amount of rent depending on, for example, annual income. Furthermore, upper limit of rent was set depending on the number of people in the household or floor plan, however by allowing for expenses over the upper limit to be paid at their own expense the freedom of the victims to choose their dwelling was expected to increase which makes it possible to provide dwellings more rapidly. Going beyond the framework of payment in kind based on the Disaster Relief Act the tenants and the lender themselves enter into a contract and after the administration reviews the eligibility the rental assistance system of either cash within the limit allowed or a voucher is implemented and it is hoped that this will lead to resolution of many issues which have arisen this time.

5.2 How Public Support Measures Should Function



After the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake the authors have been undertaking research to record the process of life restoration of the victims. In doing this the author himself as well as many disaster prevention researchers and administrative staff involved in support measures of victims in this country have discussed repeatedly about the balancing of both promoting independent life restoration of victims and how public support ought to be.

As the words of the not too few victims of the Great East Earthquake said, “the more support is given it makes it more difficult to leave the position of a victim”, and “the warm support of the administration is instead delaying the restoration of the disaster stricken area” and these words no doubt possess a side of public assistance gone too far which prevents the independence of the victims. On the other hand, under normal circumstances as a temporary housing which should be provided equally throughout there are victims who cannot but live in defective properties which normally would not have anyone renting it

The current public support measure in place is that influenced only by the degree of damage of the dwelling you lived in which is listed in the damage report and factors such as income and the age of the victim is not taken into consideration. The problems related to life restoration which many people involved in support feel lies in the fact that support measures are provided in the same way to the victims without any consideration of factors influencing restoration of their lives such as type of ownership of dwellings that was damaged, income and age. Public measures are required to be fair and equal. In addition, realizing a warm handed public support is a popular policy both politically and in terms of mass media. For that reason no lines have been drawn with regards to victims who should and should not be ensured of public support and the level of support has repeatedly risen. However, it is a grave fact that there is a discrepancy in the life restoration ability of victims and with assets such as homes lost due to disaster depending on whether it is an owned house or a rented house the pain of the victims will differ greatly. Making support measures unequal depending on conditions such as age, financial position and home ownership type is what is going to realize ideal equality of public support and this will lead to support that will increase self-reliance and independence of the victims.

6. Conclusions

Since the Great Hanshin Earthquake occurred 20 years ago, public support measures for life restoration for disaster victims have been consistently enhanced on the initiative of politicians, mass media, etc. The expanded support has consequently included the people who originally require no support. Using public funds for unnecessary cases should be improved. For low-income earners, persons with disabilities, etc., however, generous care is indispensable and living in the designated temporary housing is unsuitable. Hereafter, it is needed to differentiate the support measures in accordance with the conditions such as ages, incomes, and disabilities of disaster victims.

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