

The 6th emergency recommendation regarding the response to the Great East Japan Earthquake

Perspective of gender equality with regard to relief, support, and restoration

April 15, 2011

Science Council of Japan

Great East Japan Earthquake Task Force

Regarding the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Science Council of Japan recognized in the Statement of the Executive Committee Meeting held on March 18, “Regarding the Disaster in Tohoku and Kanto and Nuclear Reactor Accident”, that the present disaster revealed many problems in the design and operation of the socio-economic systems of Japan that need to be solved in the future. Moreover, the Science Council of Japan stated in its third urgent proposal of April 5, “For the relief of victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the recovery of the disaster-stricken areas” as follows: “Participation in recovery and restoration should be based on gender equality, with participation by young people encouraged. Measures allowing participation by children, elderly and disabled persons, foreigners, etc. should be made, as well as recovery measures taken for their benefit.”.

Among the problems in the socio-economic system of Japan, taking a perspective sensitive to gender, in particular gender equality in participation in activities, more active and concrete actions are being demanded. For further concrete execution of the third urgent proposals listed above and to push forward the relief, support, and restoration of the disaster-stricken areas with a view to promoting gender equality of participation, the following measures are urgently proposed.

(Note) “Gender (social and cultural distinction between the sexes)”, depending on culture, ethnicity, social status, age, presence of disability, and so on, can take on in many different forms. “Gender sensitive perspective” refers to the perspective that is aware of the diversity of humans including gender.

1. For the promotion of gender equality and the participation of the young people, the central and local governments, political parties, and private organizations shall be thoroughly observe gender equality in their organizations that decide on relief, support, and restoration works (disaster headquarters and so on) and in giving

opportunities for operations (operation of the shelters, handling of neighborhood associations, and etc.), and shall keep in mind that the needs of children, elderly, disabled, and foreigners can be varied, and should be met with a similar degree of attention as that of gender issues.

2. The activities of human care support are equally important to materialistic support. Care for the care givers such as medical staff, nursing staff, day care staff, teachers, and government workers who are working night and day must be provided.
3. In the third urgent proposal mentioned above, “consideration for the information transmission to language challenged people” is proposed. Bear in mind that there are various types of “information challenged”, such as people who don’t have access to the means to obtain information, such as people not owning communicative devices, and people that have difficulties operating such means, in addition to the language challenged. Therefore, it is necessary to collect and provide information with as much care as possible to make sure that it is successfully delivered to the people with various language related needs.
4. Violence toward women and children (including sexual violence) is a concern. In the meeting of April 6 “regarding countermeasures to ensure safety and public safety in disaster-affected areas” of the “Working Team for Measures to Ensure Safety and Public Security in Disaster-affected Areas” which is comprised of all chief members of the related government ministries, a number of measures were decided including dispatching female police officers from all areas of the country to the stricken areas, designing of shelters considering needs of women and child rearing, participation of women in the operation of shelters, and creating and publicizing consultation services addressing issues causing the distress of women and violence against women. These decisions must be implemented immediately and must not be limited to utilization of female police officers but also females in Self-Defense Forces or female security guards, to strengthen the general support system for women and children and make it more suited to the current situation.
5. Investigations shall be held with the aim of contributing to the realization of gender equality in participation in the process of restoration, including actual investigation of the participating parties from a perspective sensitive to gender.