



Disaster Risk Reduction

Building a Foundation for Our Future

Japan has learned through hard experience the importance of investing in disaster preparedness, and it is using those lessons to help other countries. Japan experiences 20% of the earthquakes of magnitude 6 and higher that occur in the world, and it is exposed to uncountable natural disasters like typhoons and active volcanoes. Japan thus has a long history of awareness of the importance of disaster risk reduction. Today, it is one of the few countries in the world where proactive disaster risk reduction measures are widespread. Japan's history shows that disaster risk reduction must become a cultural norm in society to minimize disaster-related damage.

The culture of disaster risk reduction greatly varies by country. In the southern United States, which is hit frequently by hurricanes, people often buy insurance to be able to move or rebuild houses damaged by a disaster. This approach is simple, but it results in a big disparity in disaster impact, leaving those who cannot buy insurance vulnerable. Moreover, insurance itself cannot reduce damage caused by a disaster.

The perception of disasters also differs in temperate/tropical countries like those in Asia, where typhoons and cyclones occur frequently, and Europe or North America, where natural disasters are relatively few. Europe mainly experiences floods and forest fires, and the scale of destruction affecting the infrastructure is significantly smaller than that of large earthquakes and typhoons that can damage vast areas several times a year. With its experience with frequent, diverse natural disasters, Japan can understand the viewpoint of disaster-prone developing countries.

For example, while Southeast Asia is often affected by tropical cyclones, Africa is more often hit by droughts than by water-related disasters. Planning appropriate projects using the knowledge of each region is necessary to improve the disaster risk reduction capacity of each country. Japan has earned the world's trust for their assistance with international disaster risk reduction efforts.

Japan applies its accumulated knowledge in cooperation with developing countries to help train personnel and develop research in this area. It will ultimately lead to spread a culture of disaster risk reduction and economic growth in the affected countries.

The international community shares the view that disaster risk reduction is indispensable for sustainable development. Since 1994, the UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduc-

tion has been held every ten years to discuss policies related to disaster risk reduction.

The first session in 1994 adopted the Yokohama Strategy, composed of ten principles designed to make a safer world. The second session in 2005 identified five priorities for action as part of the Hyogo Framework for Action, to build disaster-resilient communities. And in 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction set seven global targets in coordination with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also identified 38 indicators to measure the progress of implementation of these seven global targets. Member countries are now working on disaster risk reduction measures as 2030, the target year for the fulfillment of the goals, approaches.

Because disaster risk reduction initiatives are slow to produce results, it can be difficult to obtain the public budget they require. The adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which promotes the importance of investing in disaster risk reduction, can encourage the allocation of national and international budgets for disaster risk reduction in developing countries.

Some criticize that Japan, as a rich developed country, can implement disaster risk reduction measures that are unavailable to poorer countries. However, this is not entirely correct. Until the end of the Second World War, Japan's national budget was mainly spent on war, and other fields including disaster risk reduction were neglected. This led to severe damage caused by numerous typhoons and floods after the war. Foreseeing that disaster risk reduction would be key to post-war reconstruction, Japan began to allocate a fixed amount of its limited national budget to disaster risk reduction measures to minimize the damage caused by large typhoons and floods. Such efforts later led to Japan's economic growth, demonstrating that disaster risk reduction is an investment for growth. Investing in disaster risk reduction for growth, instead of considering it an expenditure, is the essence of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Large earthquakes of magnitude 8.1 and 7.1 occurred in Mexico in September of 2017, reminding us again of the horror of disasters. However, severe damage can be prevented by learning from past disasters and preparing for the future. It is essential to cooperate with other countries and develop a new culture of disaster risk reduction to make a better world.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015)

Seven global targets

- A. Substantially reduce disaster mortality
- B. Substantially reduce the number of affected people
- C. Reduce direct economic loss
- D. Reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and basic services
- E. Develop national and local disaster risk reduction strategies
- F. Substantially enhance international cooperation
- G. Improve access to early warning systems and disaster risk information

Priorities for action

- 1. Understanding disaster risk
- 2. Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk
- 3. Investing in disaster risk reduction to increase resilience
- 4. Enhancing disaster preparedness for effective emergency response and better recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction (Build Back Better)

