

The Multicultural Society Challenges the Disaster ~Necessary Daily Activities in the Community~

The effort of KIF (Kumamoto International Foundation) after the Kumamoto Earthquakes were superb, greatly exceeding expectations regarding the usual support for foreigners in times of disaster in Japan. From now on efforts which exceed those in Kumamoto are required. To do this, we need to understand and analyze the main reasons why KIF could accomplish. Using my experiences with foreigner support in various disaster areas since the Kobe earthquake as a basis, I will summarize the necessary preparations into three categories.



The first is to build visible relations with key persons in the area. Through Japanese classes and consultation services, KIF has conducted various activities work closely with foreign residents. Frankly speaking, preparations for disaster in Kumamoto were far from perfect. However such daily informations let to the decision providing for the proper support for foreign evacuees. Let us systematically society promote a multicultural conviviality.

The second is an exquisite sense of distance with the government. Although KIF is not the government, they have done various projects working closely with Kumamoto City since they was established. The International Associations, which have a similar history exist in each area. However, operating independently from the city, KIF can share necessary information, such as data on foreign residents in the city with the city. The idea to use the center as a foreigner evacuation is determined at once with the city which should have been difficult decision. For a municipal organization this kind of decision is rather difficult and it was also difficult for private sectors. Due to the reform of public-interest corporation systems and the designated administrator system, there should be many areas where there are huge gaps between administrations and international associations. We need to reconsider roles and collaboration methods.

The third is receptivity properly to accept external support. At the time of the disaster the offers of support and inquiries of various people from outside of the damaged areas were received in great numbers. They were appreciated but it caused some problems. This time, even right after the disaster, the work was divided into two parts by KIF one was the work only done by local members and the other done by supporters from the outside. KIF relied their coordination of supporters from the outside on the Kyushu Block International Associations and NPO National Conference of Multicultural Managers. Local staff focused on work in the center and on patrolling evacuation sites and providing multilingual information were done by supporters from the outside. Nurturing volunteers and improving the staff system in the wake of disasters were done in many areas. However, when the areas were damaged, volunteers and staff were also damaged. And the number of inquiries and offers of support and volunteers were much more than expected. We need to develop a concrete plan regarding how we receive supporters from outside.

We are facing on increase of seismic activity and flooding because of global warming.

We need to consider again the roles of the local government, (international associations) and NPOs, and reorganize the daily work necessary after a disaster.

October 10, 2016
Taro TAMURA Representative
NPO National Conference of Multicultural Managers