

Preface

This special issue deals with selected and reviewed papers on community-based participatory approaches for disaster reduction.

In Japan natural disaster prevention is forced to shift more towards disaster risk reduction in a more participatory manner. Government-public partnership needs more attention, and community initiatives by individual residents are becoming increasingly important at both household and neighborhood levels. Why so?

Japan has learned much from the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster, and one of the valuable lessons was that in the vent of such a low frequency but high impact disaster, even the local government might become victimized and thus unable to immediately start rescue and relief activities for community people. This lesson means that in order to survive such a catastrophic disaster, individual residents and households have to be the first to save life by themselves.

Entering into the 21st century and almost 15 years later after the Kobe disaster, now in Japan, Tokai-Tonankai-Nankai Earthquake is considered to take place in the near future with a very high probability. The challenge is to actually implement community-based participatory approaches for disaster reduction. To us researchers and disaster professionals, the challenge also means our self-induced effort to enhance our scientific products and activities reachable to common people as potential end-victims. For this reason the major objective of this special issue highlights such edge-cutting research challenges.

The reader will find the collection of papers included in this volume extremely diverse and different in focus, approach and concerns that drive research into practice. At the same time it is hoped that the reader will also discover a common denominator in each of the research works. The common denominator is “the social implementation process” of participation and forming partnership. Thus the “process” matters largely in motivating oneself to carry out research. In other words this issue, though small in number and limited in scope, is expected to trigger intellectual reactions, debates and interests on the side of researchers who are engaged in disaster reduction knowledge development. What science(s) can do for disaster reduction, more towards social implementation? The reader is now invited to find some clues to answering the question.

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