Educating for Sustainability in Japan

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) approaches are holistic and interdisciplinary, values-driven, participatory, multi-method, locally relevant and emphasise critical thinking and problem-solving. This book explains how ESD approaches work in the Japanese context; their effects on different stakeholders; and their ultimate potential contribution to society in Japan. It considers ESD in both formal and informal education sectors, recognising that even when classroom learning takes place it must be place-based and predicated on a specific community context. The book explores not only ‘Why ESD’, but why and how ESD in Japan has gained importance in the past decade and more recently in the wake of the triple disaster of March 2011. It considers how ESD can help Japan recover and adapt to disasters and take initiative in building more resilient and sustainable communities.

This volume asks the questions: What are some examples of positive contributions by ESD to sustainability in Japan? What is the role of ESD in Japan in activating people to demand and work towards change? How can schools, universities and non-governmental organisations link with communities to strengthen civic awareness and community action? After an introduction that elucidates the roots and recent promotion of ESD in Japan, part one of this volume looks at the formal education sector in Japan, while part two examines community-based education and sustainability initiatives. The latter revisits the Tohoku region five years on from the events of March 2011, to explore recovery and revitalisation efforts by schools, NGOs and residents.

This is an invaluable book for postgraduate students, researchers, teachers and policy makers working on ESD.

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Educating for Sustainability in Japan

Fostering resilient communities after the triple disaster

Edited by Jane Singer, Tracey Gannon, Fumiko Noguchi and Yoko Mochizuki
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11 From challenge to opportunity
Japanese non-profit organisations harness post-3.11 civic engagement

*Sarajean Rossitto*

**Introduction**

The multiple disasters of 11 March 2011 (known as 3.11) resulted in a large inflow of resources and a surge in civic activity in a region of Japan facing both ongoing challenges and limited non-profit sector development. The response of Japanese non-profit, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to the disasters was wide reaching but often constrained by insufficient capacity and the scale of the devastation. While problems have been the focus of many previous articles, some organisations that were active in Tohoku were able to convert challenges into opportunities for public engagement, capacity development and public image transformation. After an overview of the development of the non-profit NGO sector in Japan and the Tohoku context, this chapter will introduce the non-profit response and the impact of the disasters on sectoral development. The focus will then turn to two organisations, Peace Boat and Greenpeace Japan, that have harnessed the post-3.11 momentum to engage citizens and to foster expanded public dialogue on the issues of energy, disaster policy and sustainability. These organisations leveraged their strengths through rapid and innovative responses, providing positive examples from which other groups may learn.

**Overview of the Japanese non-profit NGO sector**

Although the development of the modern Japanese non-profit NGO sector is widely seen as dating from the 1995 Hanshin Awaji Earthquake (also called the Kobe Earthquake), the public has been active in various types of associations – including neighbourhood associations and local religious groups – since long before 1995. The first non-profit corporations – public benefit organisations (PBOs) – were established to benefit vulnerable members of society requiring specific support. They came into being in 1896 under the Japanese civil code and were under close government scrutiny. Given their reliance on government funds and staff, the status of these organisations as autonomous NGOs has been questioned (Simon and Irish 2004; Rossitto 2000). From the 1930s and through World War II, other types of civic organisations, including youth groups, religious organisations and workers’ associations, were codified and centrally regulated by government bodies (Amenomori 1993).
The defeat in World War II, combined with the US occupation, allowed for the resurgence of civil society. After the war, private schools, social welfare organisations and religious organisations were able to apply for approval under new laws, although some degree of government control remained. Leftist sentiment, as expressed through workers’ and teachers’ movements, intensified until Cold War pressures caused the occupation to suppress them, resulting in many organised workers losing their jobs or being silenced for engaging in social reform activities (Amenomori 1993).

Citizens’ groups flourished in the 1960s and 70s, focusing on quality of life and social issues associated with Japan’s rapid economic development, which had led to increased air, water and noise pollution (Rossitto 2004). These civic organisations entered into lengthy court battles, seeking corporate and government redress in association with major environmental scandals such as Minamata disease, caused by mercury poisoning in chemical wastewater, and severe air pollution in the industrial city of Kawasaki. These cases eventually helped strengthen environmental laws, institutions and organisations and represent successful examples for Japanese civil society, despite a lack of broad public recognition.

In the 1970s and 80s, human rights organisations attempted to gain social parity for women, *burakumin* (a Japanese underclass) and residents of Korean and Chinese descent. Becoming a signatory to international human rights treaties put pressure on the Japanese government to develop concomitant domestic legislation ensuring rights protection. Japanese NGOs became adept at employing outside pressure by focusing international attention on contentious issues (Reimann 2005) such as gender inequality, when they pushed for the creation of the Equal Employment Opportunity Law to comply with the CEDAW, the Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women (Rossitto 2000; JNCC 1996).

In the 1980s, the emergence of Japan as a major donor of overseas development assistance (ODA) helped catalyse NGO development as monies were channelled through Japanese NGOs (Osa 2013). Community leaders’ efforts to develop a new system for NGO registration by lobbying Diet members and sponsoring public discussion culminated in the 1998 Specified Activities Non-Profit Corporation Law (the ‘NPO Law’). This is widely seen as the first case of civil society actively promoting government policy change in Japan (see Pekkanen 2000 and Schwartz 2002). Original efforts focused on developing officially recognised mechanisms for volunteer activities. However, the new government registration system implied less government interference in non-profit activities than under the previous PBO Law, so it has also provided impetus for rethinking the role of citizens in community and policy formulation. The 1998 NPO Law set out guidelines and criteria for registration, allowing organisations to apply for tax exemption status at their discretion, but the arduous application process has resulted in fewer than 200 of the more than 40,000 registered organisations being granted such status (Government of Japan Cabinet Office 2010).

Even before the non-profit law, it was estimated that there were more than 1 million unincorporated organisations, including civic groups, children’s groups, senior citizens’ associations and neighbourhood associations (Imidas 99, 1999). After
the enactment of the NPO Law, the number of organisations seeking official NPO recognition increased rapidly, peaking at about 500 organisations per month in 2003 (Government of Japan Cabinet Office 2004). By 2010, Japan had more than 40,000 registered non-profit organisations, 50 per cent of which had less than one full time staff member and an annual operating budget smaller than US$100,000 (Government of Japan Cabinet Office 2010). After the 2011 multiple disasters, there was another rapid increase in the number of new organisations. As of June 2015, more than 50,000 organisations have been incorporated under the NPO Law and the average number of full-time staff in each organisation has increased to four (Government of Japan Cabinet Office n.d.).

Tohoku, March 2011

Before the disaster, Tohoku was already a marginalised area facing many of the challenges common to rural areas in developed nations: a rapidly ageing population, economic stagnation, limited physical access to other parts of the country and a limited number of sizable civil society organisations.

The Tohoku economy is based on fishing and agriculture and, according to the 2010 census, about 30 per cent of the fishers and farmers are over 65 years of age. Ageing industries and limited job opportunities have resulted in an outward migration of young people seeking better education and job opportunities. Approximately 24.8 per cent of the population of Tohoku is over 65 years old, higher than the Japanese average of 23 per cent, and the percentage is even greater in the coastal towns that were most affected by the tsunami (Government of Japan 2010). Given the mountainous terrain of Tohoku, where villages are separated not only by mountains but also by inlets and small fishing bays, coastal villages are often difficult to access, resulting in the evolution of distinctive lifestyles, practices and dialects among the populations. These communities had operated quite autonomously and were unaccustomed to outside interference (Japan NPO Centre 2014).

Before 11 March 2011, there were limited numbers of registered civic organisations in north-eastern Japan. While neighbourhood associations have played an active role in community-based functions such as festivals, they are not autonomous from local government or business associations. Reliance on government agencies for most, if not all, social services and a traditional patriarchal local hierarchy have been the norm, resulting in limited space for autonomous civic activities. The multiple dimensions of the disasters, coupled with the influx of resources – including funds, goods and people – have caused dramatic and ongoing changes in the way these communities function (Japan NPO Centre 2014).

The triple catastrophes of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown that hit Tohoku affected several million people. Close to 500,000 people were evacuated, 15,890 died, 2,589 went missing and 6,152 were injured. As of March 2015, 228,863 Tohoku disaster evacuees still lived in temporary housing, including those in government-sponsored interim housing, those living with family or friends and those with other irregular tenure (Asian Disaster Reduction Centre 2015).
Government employees and elected officials in Tohoku were affected directly because many local government offices were destroyed or rendered non-functional and staff were often overwhelmed by the magnitude of the public need in addition to their own losses. The accidents at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, located between Tokyo and the areas worst affected by the earthquake and tsunami, slowed the response time and affected access given concerns about radiation and the lack of accurate information. The extent of the damage, exacerbated by the nuclear meltdown and Tohoku’s pre-existing social problems – demographics, weak economy, poor accessibility and limited civil society – inhibited an efficient and effective initial response by the government, civil sector and the international community (Japan NPO Centre 2014).

2011 Tohoku disaster response by civil society organisations

Emergency relief phase

Immediately after the disasters, institutions and citizens within Japan and around the world initiated drives for necessities and funds. In the early stages of the response, most non-profit organisations focused on satisfying daily needs and then expanded to include physical rehabilitation, removing debris and protecting marginalised populations (Japan NPO Centre 2014).

Hundreds of organisations and citizens’ groups responded, including Second Harvest Japan (2HJ), a Tokyo-based food bank, which provided food to temporary shelters, evacuation centres and residents living in the affected areas. This continued long after the emergency relief period concluded, totalling 225 deliveries of more than 25,000 food packages containing more than 1.5 million tons of food (2HJ 2015). Kyoto-based NICCO (Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development) provided 5,900 hot meals to more than 1,600 people, ran a mobile health clinic and monitored the conditions of the elderly with door-to-door visits. NICCO has supported 30,481 people through food and goods distribution, psychosocial care programmes, child protection activities, agriculture redevelopment and livelihood support projects. It has also assisted many others less directly through pest control and streetlight projects (NICCO 2013; Yeoh 2012a; Yeoh 2012b).

Given the vastness of the disaster-affected area, coordination, assessment and information sharing were challenging. The Japan Platform, founded in 1999 to ensure a coordinated and rapid response to humanitarian crises overseas, links NGOs with the business community and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan Platform 2015). However, there was no similar structure in place for domestic disasters. Intermediary organisations, such as the Tokyo-based Japan NPO Centre (JNPOC), established in 1996 to support civic activities and promote the growth of the non-profit sector (Japan NPO Centre 2014), took the initiative because many of its community-based non-profit members lacked access to expert personnel and funding. JNPOC and Nagoya-based Rescue Stockyard, founded in 1996 to foster disaster volunteerism in Japan, took leading roles in developing a coalition of multi-sector actors. At its peak, the Japan Civil Network for Disaster
Relief in East Japan had more than 850 member organisations sharing information and expertise, more than 21 per cent of them from within the Tohoku region (Japan NPO Centre 2014). However, this was not a formal organisation with disaster management experts and so could not take the place of a highly endowed coordination agency.

Because domestic Japanese organisations often work within a specific community, Japanese and non-Japanese international NGOs (INGOs) with experience in humanitarian response were encouraged by the Japanese government and intermediary organisations to partner locally embedded organisations. Since the local organisations did not have the capacity for large-scale operations, these partnerships were crucial. Japanese INGO staff also faced challenges because, while they were experienced and skilled in humanitarian relief, many were not accustomed to providing a response in a developed nation or did not have professional experience in Japan. Given the insular nature of Tohoku, in some communities the disaster response expertise of INGOs was seen as not applicable. Other challenges arose because the domestic organisations lacked knowledge of standardised practices, such as stakeholder needs assessment, inclusion of diverse populations in programmes and programme assessment. This sometimes made it difficult for local organisations to access overseas resources or to develop equal partnerships with larger organisations.

Health and safety concerns after the nuclear disaster resulted in fewer organisations responding in Fukushima than in other areas. However, some chose to make Fukushima a priority. When staff from the Association for Aid and Relief Japan visited a local school in Minami-Soma in April 2011, they witnessed children being served meals consisting of a single slice of bread and water. Delivery trucks refused to bring food to the region and local food production halted because of radiation fears. The organisation stepped in, providing lunches for students and food packages for the elderly and disabled along with wheelchairs and other necessary equipment (Yeoh 2012b).

**Recovery and redevelopment**

The move from the evacuation centres to interim housing complexes started in mid- to late 2011, marking a shift in people’s needs. Non-profit NGOs responded by focusing their efforts on community building, providing food, daily necessities and services in the transition from relief to recovery. To improve the limited access to fresh, healthy food and to provide employment income for residents, some organisations organised shuttle bus services and helped establish new businesses such as grocery stores and restaurants. Eat and Energize the East and IMPACT Foundation supported business expansion by marketing new products and sponsoring skills training (D. Takahashi, Chief Administrator, Eat and Energize the East, personal communication 2014; H. Nishida, Executive Director, Women to Women Japan, personal communication 2014).

To target the needs of people living in new communities of strangers, some groups sponsored socialisation activities to bring people together and foster
a sense of community. NPO Aichi-Net started with community engagement, facilitating the annual summer festival in the Rikuzentakata area, approximately 155km north-east of Sendai. By working with residents, they learned that the disruption of rice farming had affected both the food supply and the sake industry. Aichi-Net collaborated with a local sake brewery and supported its product marketing through consumer cooperatives (Yeoh and Rossitto 2013).

Other non-profit organisations sought to facilitate dialogue between interim housing dwellers and local government and share ideas about redevelopment to promote new relationships and deepen personal connections. Pacific Asia Resource Centre Inter-People’s Cooperation produced community newspapers providing information on business openings, transport, government hearings and reconstruction plans while also encouraging all to take part in redevelopment hearings with government officials (R. Inoue, Chair, PARCIC, personal communication 2014).

The interim housing did not always meet the needs of single mothers and those who were elderly, disabled or less mobile. Rescue Stockyard added handrails, wheelchair slopes, storage units and benches in interim housing to improve access and conditions for all residents (Yeoh 2012b).

However, meeting physical needs proved easier than meeting the psychological needs of the many residents who had lost loved ones. The range of psycho-social needs varied from socialisation support to professional psychiatric treatment. Given the stigma associated with mental illness in these traditional communities, many needy residents did not seek support. Some non-profit organisations provided access to professional mental health services, while many others set up social events. Concerned about individuals dying alone in isolation, volunteers and staff encouraged residents to keep track of their neighbours – particularly men – to prevent them from avoiding social contact for extended periods of time due to trauma, depression, alcoholism, loneliness or boredom (Inoue et al. 2014).

The suicide rate in May 2011 was 19 per cent higher in the disaster-affected areas than it was in May 2010 but this significant increase was not long lasting (National Police Agency 2011). The female suicide rate increased in the short term while the increase in the male suicide rate was more delayed – in the first two years after the disaster, suicides fell overall but started to increase after that (Orui et al. 2014). Mental health surveys in 2013 showed that 10.3 per cent of evacuees had experienced high levels of distress and 17.2 per cent were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder – higher rates than those recorded in 2011 and 2012 (Ohto et al. 2015).

Some organisations continue to focus on meeting the basic needs of those still living in temporary housing, especially the most vulnerable people – the long-term unemployed, elderly poor women, female-headed households and people displaced by the Fukushima nuclear disaster (Y. Suzuki, Executive Director, Sanaburi Foundation, personal communication 2015). These needs persist and, while the government is ill-equipped to handle recovery alone, due to the scale and complexity of the impacts, the socio-economic and demographic problems that have existed since before the disaster cannot be solved by local or international non-profit NGOs.
Impacts on the non-profit sector

The disaster’s magnitude affected the work, scale and nature of many non-profit organisations. In the three prefectures worst hit by the disaster, the number of registered non-profit organisations increased by 40–43 per cent, compared with a rate of 27 per cent in the country overall (Japan NPO Centre 2014). Other organisations were established as ‘general associations’ under a 2008 law whereby registration could be completed at a notary’s office in just a few minutes (Coalition for Legislation to Support Citizens’ Organisations (C’s) n.d.). Because no annual reporting is required and no central agency is responsible for collecting data on these groups, data on these organisations is lacking (T. Hayasaka, accountant, personal communication 2014).

Following 3.11, the Coalition for Legislation to Support Citizens’ Organisations (C’s), an alliance of non-profit and grassroots organisations, created in 1994, that had been instrumental in campaigning for the 1998 NPO Law, applied pressure on the government to make it easier and faster to realise tax credits and tax-exempt status for organisations (C’s n.d.; Rossitto 2004).

Household donations in Japan rose impressively after the disasters. Charitable donations from fiscal year (FY) 1995 through FY2010, based on self-reported data (see Figure 11.1), remained constant at approximately 3,000 yen per household per year, but the figure rose to 6,579 yen in FY2011 (Government of Japan. Japan Statistics Bureau1995–2010, 2011). Based on data derived from individual interviews, the Japan Funding Association’s annual giving report 2011 found an average closer to 14,000 yen. Of those interviewed, 76.4 per cent reported making charitable donations in 2011 (Japan Fundraising Association 2011). However,
Tax Agency figures for FY2012 and FY2013 suggest that the increase in donations was short lived as average donations decreased to 3,400 yen per household. It is not clear if a new wave of volunteerism has occurred because the data is neither consistent nor comprehensive. Disaster Volunteer Centres are set up by municipal Social Welfare Councils when a disaster strikes. They coordinate volunteer activity by linking people who want to volunteer with those who need volunteers to assist after a natural disaster. Their official data includes a calculation for 'volunteer days', indicating the number of days volunteers are placed. However, this only includes volunteer placements organised by the Disaster Volunteer Centres. Many large NPOs recruited volunteers in urban areas and online so they could carry out orientation, training and material preparation before dispatch to disaster sites. In addition, official data does not account for repeat volunteers because it measures days of work only. From 12 March 2011 to 31 July 2014 there were a total of more than 1.3 million volunteer days: 500,800 for Iwate Prefecture, 649,900 for Miyagi Prefecture and 186,000 for Fukushima Prefecture (Government of Japan Disaster Volunteer Centre 2014).

Volunteering data can be inconclusive on the question of long-term change in behaviour. In a 2012 Japanese Cabinet report on the status of NPOs, 27 per cent of the respondents said they had volunteered but only 3.2 per cent of them became interested in doing so after the 2011 disasters. A 2015 follow-up study showed only 0.1 per cent more people had volunteered over the past three years (see Figure 11.2).
It is too early to tell if the 2011 increases represent lasting changes in donor or volunteering behaviour or a short-term aberration. An increase of even 2 per cent in volunteering may bring about slow, sustainable change because an engaged population is more likely to be involved in charitable giving as well (Charities Aid Foundation of America 2014). Research done in 2013 by the Japan Funding Association indicated that people who volunteered tended to donate more (18,814 yen per person) than those who did not (11,161 yen per person). In some post-disaster contexts, volunteering stays at an increased level due to the expectations and character of those who become involved (Silva et al. 2009). This suggests we need to know more about the people who volunteer and what they hope to achieve in order to understand the long-term impact on civil society.

Environmental organisation case studies

In Tohoku, NGO activities were usually facilitated in coordination with government agencies (Leng 2015). In crisis situations where civic organisations work in concert with governments, sustainability and ongoing collaboration can contribute to the development of legitimacy and the capacity of civil society (Catholic Relief Services 2014). As people increasingly recognise the important role community organisations can play, their value rises and they assume visible and integral roles in the recovery process. By advocating for the people affected, they also gain public trust, becoming ‘embedded in the public’s psyche’ (Choate 2011. See also Civicus 2013). This phenomenon can be seen in the rise in anti-nuclear sentiment and support for anti-nuclear groups after the Fukushima power-plant accidents as the public came to appreciate the important role civic organisations could and should play (Aldrich 2013).

After disasters, the inflow of resources – money, material and expertise – is often immense. For the Tohoku disaster, more than 160 nations provided more than US$1bn of support (Asia Disaster Reduction Centre 2015), including US$750m from the US alone (Japan Centre for International Exchange (JCIE) 2014). Local organisations with limited resources and/or experience had the opportunity to build their capacity by making use of this windfall.

Partnerships between local organisations and international humanitarian aid agencies provided opportunities for resource and capacity development. Knowledge and skills were shared to enhance future emergency response. Assessments conducted by Japanese non-profit organisations were made possible by international partners such as World Vision, Give2Asia and Mercy Corps. Lessons learned from collaboration and assessments led to the creation of policy recommendations for future disasters (Japan NGO Centre for International Cooperation (JANIC) 2013). Based on outcomes of the evaluation reports, training programmes attempted to meet the gaps in organisational capacity and individual skills by developing an understanding of the applicability of crisis response standards. The focus was on the value of standardised practices in needs assessment, inclusion of marginalised persons, security and safety, accountability to stakeholders and cash transfer programming as well as monitoring and evaluation (JANIC 2014).
The following case studies illustrate how Peace Boat and Greenpeace Japan, two organisations that were active both before and after the disasters in Tohoku, have been able to expand their programmes and approaches after 3.11 to engage the public more actively while linking with groups locally and internationally to improve local capacity.

**Japanese INGO with a local partner: Peace Boat and Fukushima Action Project**

**Pre-disaster positioning in Japan**

Peace Boat is a 30-year-old Japanese network of three separate but affiliated organisations. It was established by university students visiting countries in north-east Asia to develop better mutual understanding of their shared regional history in order to build a foundation for peace (Peace Boat 2015). Peace Boat the NGO focuses on the group’s original aims of achieving peace and opposing nuclear power and nuclear weapons. Peace Boat ocean liner cruises circumnavigate the globe four times a year to promote understanding, involvement and peace. The organisation develops individual connections by sponsoring guest speakers, who embark or disembark at each port and speak on the theme of social justice.

The Peace Boat Disaster Relief Volunteer Centre (PBV) was established as a separate ‘general non-profit association’ in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture, for disaster response. While Peace Boat is generally regarded as a social movement organisation, since founding PBV it has expanded its profile by collaborating with a broader audience (T. Yamamoto, President, PBV, personal communication 2014). These organisations support and enhance each other’s activities by drawing on local, domestic and international networks for information sharing, resource mobilisation and recruitment (M. Joyce, International Coordinator, Peace Boat, personal communication 2014).

**Disaster activities**

Although Peace Boat is not a humanitarian response organisation, it was able to draw on its long-established network, ability to activate and manage large numbers of volunteers and history of anti-nuclear activism to share information and mobilise volunteers in relief and recovery projects (Peace Boat 2011a; 2011b; 2011c). By the end of FY2013, PBV had recorded 87,500 volunteer work days, dispatching 14,759 people — including 3,510 non-Japanese from 56 nations and 8,288 people from 106 corporations, schools and other organisations — in PBV volunteer trips to Tohoku (Peace Boat 2015).

Building upon its network of experienced volunteers, PBV has developed a disaster training programme that develops the skills of volunteer leaders from across the country so that they are equipped to play a role in future disasters. As of spring 2015, more than 3,700 people have taken part in the volunteer training programme and 678 have become certified disaster volunteer leaders (Peace Boat 2015).
At the local, national and international levels, Peace Boat has been trying to stimulate public discussion on issues relating to energy, nuclear weapons and development. For example, in January 2012, in Yokohama, the group co-organised the Global Conference on a Nuclear-Free World to create a platform for a nuclear-free future and to build bridges between activists and ordinary citizens while promoting future leadership (Joyce, personal communication 2014).

The two-day event, the first of its kind in Japan, leveraged the momentum sparked by the disasters. Approximately 15,000 people – advocates, educators, members of youth and community groups, long-term activists and other concerned citizens – came together to share their thoughts. Half of the programme was devoted to workshops or discussion groups, creating a rare opportunity for members of the public to engage with environmental experts, nuclear experts and NGO leaders from around the world. It was the first time that groups opposing nuclear power and nuclear weapons had been brought together at a public event in Japan and the public was particularly receptive to these messages after the Fukushima disaster.

One of the outcomes of the conference has been the close collaboration between Peace Boat and the Fukushima Action Project (FAP), a local citizens’ group comprising activists, residents and community leaders. Fukushima community leaders run the organisation and decide its direction, while Peace Boat continues to supply advice, technical assistance and occasional funding. FAP has focused on two areas – public engagement with government officials, and monitoring radiation levels and disseminating results (Joyce, personal communication 2014). Recently, FAP has begun focusing on the government’s new educational curriculum in Fukushima schools, which, it believes, promotes the safety of nuclear power without explaining about radiation and the health risks (Joyce, personal communication 2014).

The global conference, FAP collaboration and volunteer programmes have been vehicles for engaging concerned citizens in dialogue and action, both domestically and internationally. Peace Boat has been able to improve its organisation-wide ability to regularly share information from overseas through seminars held in Japan and by developing materials about radiation, health issues, Fukushima updates and energy policy. At the international level, Peace Boat’s participation in United Nations and international conferences enables it to share individual testimonies and involve FAP to ensure local voices are heard (Joyce, personal communication 2014).

PBV served as an organising partner for the Japan Civil Society Organisation Network, a coalition of more than 80 organisations, in preparation for the 2015 World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai in March 2015. The network aimed to share experiences of the multiple disasters to promote more disaster-resilient communities and to prepare for future disasters (T. Yamamoto, President, PBV, personal communication 2014). In collaboration with JANIC, Peace Boat played a key role in creating a booklet entitled Ten Lessons From Fukushima, which was disseminated at the conference.
Peace Boat’s expertise and network allows it to raise awareness of contentious issues and encourage the public to transition from being distraught to being empowered to bring about change. Based on what was learned from the Tohoku disaster response and from Fukushima in particular, Peace Boat is publicising its model for activism, focusing on the importance of transmitting local experiences and knowledge through public engagement (Joyce, personal communication 2014).

**INGO with a long-term presence in Japan: Greenpeace Japan**

**Pre-disaster positioning in Japan**

Although Greenpeace Japan works on a wide variety of environmental issues, such as climate change, biodiversity and sustainable forest management, before 2011 it was mainly known in Japan for its anti-whaling campaign. Many Japanese regarded Greenpeace as a radical group that was generally critical of Japanese ‘food culture’. However, this image does not reflect the fact that Greenpeace has served as a witness to environmental risks in more than 40 nations for more than 40 years. It employs non-violent direct action, advocacy and public education to inform the public, decision-makers and the media about environmental degradation. Such methods are sometimes not well understood in countries like Japan, where few organisations directly engage public dialogue to promote policy and social change (M. Reyes, COO, Greenpeace Japan, personal communication 2014). Since the 3.11 disasters, Greenpeace Japan has been focusing on three main campaigns: nuclear power and energy, seafood sustainability and sustainable agriculture.

**Disaster activities**

Greenpeace first focused its post-3.11 efforts on the Fukushima nuclear disaster but later broadened its efforts to issues more accessible to the public (Reyes, personal communication 2014; Greenpeace Japan 2014). Within days of the nuclear disaster, Amsterdam-based Greenpeace International dispatched experts to assist Greenpeace Japan with the monitoring of ocean radiation levels from a ship off the coast of Fukushima while also checking the terrestrial effects. Given the broad public concern and a lack of trust in the official government data, Greenpeace Japan was able to engage the public and media more directly than it had ever done before. Concerned that government radiation estimates were too conservative and were being released too slowly, Greenpeace Japan immediately shared its land and sea radiation readings with the government, media and general public (Reyes, personal communication 2014).

To increase public awareness, Greenpeace International has released several reports on the effects of the Fukushima disaster on the nuclear power industry, utility companies, energy and stock prices in Japan. It has also assessed the socio-economic and health impacts the disaster has had on the communities that depend on the nuclear power industry (Greenpeace Japan 2014). Greenpeace Japan has
engaged policymakers, bureaucrats and corporate officials directly in dialogue on energy policy and nuclear power redevelopment. In sponsored public information sessions around the planned restart of the Sendai plant in Kyushu, Greenpeace Japan has shared information on evacuation and negotiation plans that had not been previously released to the general public. In 2014, Greenpeace Japan gathered 12,000 signatures in three weeks to a petition opposing the restart of Japan’s nuclear power plants, which was an impressive response compared with the organisation’s past experience in Japan (Reyes, personal communication 2014; Greenpeace Japan 2014).

Based on previous levels of public distrust, Greenpeace Japan decided to rely on volunteers rather than regular staff to deliver information to the public. For example, volunteers compiled local press advertisements promoting nuclear power and published them in a book to raise public awareness of pro-nuclear promotional tactics. Greenpeace Japan continues to monitor radiation in Fukushima and to publicise its findings through events and social media to keep the issue in the spotlight (Reyes, personal communication 2014).

**Themes for engaging the public**

Another recent Greenpeace Japan initiative involves advocating for changes in fishing policy to protect against over-fishing and dwindling fish stocks while informing and educating the public and working with producers. This is part of a broader regional campaign in north-east Asia that is being conducted in coordination with other NGOs, corporations and governments. In 2011, a Greenpeace Japan poll indicated that most Japanese respondents preferred to eat seafood that was sustainably fished to ensure that there would be healthy ocean and freshwater fisheries for the future. Respondents also wanted food labels to indicate fish species and sources more specifically to help them make more informed choices. In 2011, Greenpeace Japan released its first seafood ranking guide, listing fish species in danger of extinction, and then expanded the campaign to educate the public on seafood safety issues (Reyes, personal communication 2014; Greenpeace Japan 2014).

Greenpeace Japan is also using digital media in the hope that educated consumers will use their economic power to exert pressure on the fishing industry. The Green Shopping Guide is a smart-phone application that enables consumers to check the sustainability of different seafood products (Greenpeace Japan 2014).

Greenpeace is educating producers by involving corporations and representatives of fishers’ cooperatives in dialogue to promote sustainable seafood practices. Whereas three years ago many corporations and fishers’ associations would have refused a meeting, representatives now reportedly reach out to Greenpeace Japan for advice on improving sustainability practices (Reyes, personal communication 2014; Sato, personal communication 2015).

Since 2014, Greenpeace has been advocating for a national sustainability policy for all seafood sold in Japanese stores, with a primary focus on those fished and raised in Japanese waters. Greenpeace Japan conducted an investigation into the
fish sold at supermarkets and ranked them based on five categories: 1) recognition of over-fishing; 2) procurement policy; 3) traceability, including fishing method and distribution channels; 4) information disclosure on environmental impacts; and 5) information on the sustainability of seafood used in seafood products (such as canned tuna or prepared foods) (Greenpeace International 2012). A leading Japanese nationwide department store, Aeon, is reported to be phasing in a more inclusive sustainability policy for seafood after consulting Greenpeace about the company’s systems (Reyes, personal communication 2014; J. Sato, Executive Director, Greenpeace Japan, personal communication 2015).

Greenpeace Japan is also part of a global campaign on food sustainability aimed at ending the use of harmful chemicals in agriculture. Drawing on a growing public interest in food safety, Greenpeace Japan is focusing on the damaging effects of agrichemicals on health and biodiversity, and is promoting citizen pressure to change Japanese standards for toxins and harmful chemicals in pesticides and fertilisers as well as to reduce their use overall. Greenpeace Japan asserts that the Japanese public has become more interested in this campaign since 3.11 (Reyes, personal communication 2014; Sato, personal communication 2015).

Greenpeace Japan continues to promote civic action for health, food safety and sustainability, while recognising the economic interests of the energy, fishing and agricultural sectors. It hopes to change policy so that the sectors are more accountable to the public and practices are more transparent and compliant with international standards. These campaigns promote a more positive image in a society that formerly considered Greenpeace to be overly confrontational.

Both organisations, Peace Boat and Greenpeace Japan, have garnered media and public attention, promoting positive messages aimed at engaging the public to create a better future. Building on the post-3.11 momentum, they have developed new networks and built trust for future campaigns while empowering the participants in their capacities as consumers and citizens.

**Conclusion**

The case studies above illustrate how disaster responses can lead to enhanced public engagement, organisational capacity and expanded public awareness of issues as well as civil society organisations. Both Peace Boat and Greenpeace Japan have aimed to engage and empower individuals to be citizen activists acting for sustainability by transforming policy around energy, seafood safety and disaster risk reduction. Both organisations used the heightened interest in the environment, health and government accountability after 3.11 not only to transform their public image but also to engage broader sections of society in more issues.

It may be too soon to tell if the increased involvement by the public as volunteers or donors will bring about deep or lasting changes – the greatest challenge may be in maintaining the momentum as the events of 3.11 fade from the media gaze and public attention. Many may feel that the main disaster issues have been resolved, not realising that more than 200,000 people are still displaced.
Organisations like Peace Boat and Greenpeace Japan will need to continue sharing the experiences of people who are unable to forcefully represent their own interests, in order to help the general public make connections between sustainable recovery, sustainable energy policy and sustainable living. Perhaps this public mobilisation, rather than the occurrence of the disasters, will be the catalyst for the next phase of development in Japan’s non-profit sector. Such engagement will be necessary to address pressing social problems, such as gender inequity, an ageing society, mental health and poverty.

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