The Process of Drawing up Reconstruction Plans in Extensive Disaster-hit Areas Including Community Relocation and Challenges in the Implementations of Plans

Through Reconstruction Planning Support in Minami-Sanriku Town, Miyagi Prefecture, Devastated by the Great East Japan Earthquake

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Introduction

In damage recovery efforts for the Great East Japan Earthquake, the main issues have been how to coordinate public and private entities for effective distribution of limited resources, local municipalities affected by natural disasters are required to draw-up a reconstruction plan for the recovery of their affected area on their own. However, due to the extraordinary circumstances of the Great East Japan Earthquake in which damage was extended over several prefectures, the "diversity of localities affected compared to small or medium sized earthquake-struck areas" and "the difficulties in coordinating many entities, such as national, prefectural and local governments, civic groups and private organizations for consensus-building" became the challenges for recovery from the damage. In addition, since the Great East Japan Earthquake was an unprecedented disaster, efforts to develop support systems related to reconstruction subsidies and projects have been slow in progress. The affected local municipalities had no choice but to draw up a reconstruction plan for their recovery on their own before the support systems were made clear.

The study summarizes "the transition of the roles of national, prefectural and municipal governments" and "changes in issues hampering the reconstruction plan development processes by local governments", focusing on Minamisanriku-cho, Miyagi Prefecture, where the author has been engaged in supporting activities for reconstruction planning as a quasi-resident adviser since one month after the earthquake. The study also clarifies the position of town and city reconstruction projects, particularly for residential reconstruction projects, including community relocation.

Transition of the roles of national, prefectural and municipal governments

- The government has dispatched specialized consultants in city planning and civil engineering to each municipality to support operations of respective departments of reconstruction projects for municipalities. A concept of multiple-represented planning and deciding the measures necessary for residents' livelihoods is adopted. Prefectures have suggested in their reconstruction plan a policy for local development with reduced disaster which is a base of reconstruction projects for municipalities. In addition, they have adopted reconstruction project for roads and ports managed by the prefectures between municipalities and coordinated the content of reconstruction funding such as damage assessment and reconstruction subsidy application as well as served as liaison between governments.

Changes in issues hampering the reconstruction plan development processes by local governments

- Difficulty in planning reconstruction projects before knowing the budget and which loans/municipalities
- How to construct a real existing house and perform support
- How to get community resources for the reconstruction
- City plan and the impact of the town's plan on the entire region

Reconstruction policy

- Example guidelines provided by the Reconstruction Design Council

Necessity of adjusting the scale of a reconstruction project according to the current relocation of towns to outside the affected municipality

- Coast town population outflow to surrounding inland cities
- Residents over 65years old are over 30%
- Smart shrinking recovery planning and only necessary development is important for "Sustainable recovery"

- Need to balance value of regional characteristics and "importance of quick recovery"

Challenges of Recovery process in light of the diversity of regionality

- The important viewpoint in considering the relationship between housing reconstruction and industrial recovery
- 81% of respondents desire to have jobs within the town (Results of Town People's Questionnaire by Minamisanriku Town)
- Employment is one of most important issue.

Support among local governments

- Support staff members dispatched from outside damaged areas who received transfer orders to work as municipal staff played a significant role. As persons in charge of reconstruction project operation in municipalities have less experience in civil engineering technology and land readjustment projects have played important roles.

- Officers of Urban Renaissance (UR) Agency have taken responsibility for construction project planning of rehabilitation public housing and land readjustment projects.

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Establishment of a reconstruction planning system for small coastal municipalities having poor administrative functions

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