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THE ROLE OF POST-DISASTER NGOS IN THE 2008 WENCHUAN AND 2013 LUSHAN EARTHQUAKES IN SICHUAN IN P.R. CHINA: A CASE STUDY OF GRASS-ROOTS MENTAL SUPPORT NGOS

YUMEI ZHANG*, JUNKO OTANI*

Abstract

This paper describes a case study of the evolution of Chinese NGOs following the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake in Sichuan, China, that occurred on May 12. Many claim that the 2003 SARS epidemic offered Chinese NGOs the opportunity to engage in disaster relief operations. Yet in the aftermath of the Wenchuan Earthquake, about 300 NGOs and 3 million volunteers participated in disaster relief activity. The year 2008 is therefore regarded as the birth year of Chinese NGOs and volunteerism. Just before the five-year anniversary of the Wenchuan Earthquake, the Lushan Earthquake occurred in Ya-an, Sichuan, on April 20, 2013. Many Chinese disaster NGOs were already operating in the disaster-affected area in Sichuan in coordination with the government. The response to the 2013 earthquake was more efficient than the response to the 2008 earthquake because a response system was already in place and more experienced personnel were available after the 2008 experience. However, there were sustainability problems with both finances and human resource management. With this in mind, this paper introduces a case study of the grassroots NGO “Mother House,” which supports mothers who lost their only children because of China’s population policy. It also examines an organization called “Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center,” which provides mental support and other types of support. Further research is required on NGOs in the Chinese context, their longer-term evolution, the influence that they have.

Key words: NGO, mental support, Wenchuan Earthquake, Lushan Earthquake, China

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Contents

1. Introduction.
2. China's NGOs
3. Previous research on disaster-relief activities
4. The Wenchuan Earthquake in Sichuan, May 12, 2008
5. The activities of the grass-roots NGO Mother House in the Sichuan Great Earthquake and the activities of the NGO Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center derived from it
6. The Lushan Earthquake in Sichuan, April 20, 2013
7. Conclusion

1. Introduction

The Wenchuan Earthquake in Sichuan (subsequently, the Sichuan Great Earthquake) occurred on May 12, 2008. It was a magnitude 8.0 earthquake with its epicenter below Yingxiu, Wenchuan, Sichuan Province, and it caused massive damage. Five years later on April 20, 2013, the Sichuan Lushan Earthquake (subsequently, the April 20th Earthquake) occurred, with a magnitude of 7.0. But due to the 2008 earthquake, there were already more than 300 private-sector organizations participating in disaster-relief activities in Sichuan Province. According to the report “Disaster-Relief Activities in China” (2009) by the State Council of the People's Republic of China, the number of domestic and international volunteers had risen to more than three million people, while in the background there was also thought to be another 10 million volunteers providing support.

Mr. Yongguang Xu, who is a pioneer of philanthropic projects in China, positioned 2008 as the “Year one of NGOs in China.” But five years after the May 12th earthquake, many NGOs had ceased their activities. Yet even today, there are still grass-roots NGOs in the disaster areas that are continuing to provide support for the post-earthquake recovery. They also played a major role in the disaster relief following the April 20th Earthquake in 2013. In the post-disaster recovery process, the needs in the disaster-affected areas where the recovery is actually taking place are constantly changing. After the 2008 earthquake, in the context that there were no models of precedents for reference, it is important to clarify how grass-roots NGOs developed their activities in the disaster-affected areas as they groped for solutions to the problems that confronted them.

In this paper, the grass-roots NGO Mother House, which aims to spread through society the spirit of acting in the public interest by continuing to provide support for those mothers who lost their only child and for children, and in addition the NGO Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center, whose activities are derived from those of Mother House, are investigated as case studies. In the disaster-affected areas in the five years after the Sichuan Great Earthquake

of 2008, Mother House provided mental support to mothers who had lost their only child and for children, and is considered to be “the organization that continued activities the longest in the disaster-affected areas¹.” Therefore, in this paper, the activities and experiences of these NGOs up to the present time are analyzed, such as their various responses when dealing with the government, project plans, the direction of their activities in the future, their efforts to secure funding, management and personnel training, information management, and the philosophies underpinning their activities. From this analysis, the problems they currently face and their future directions are clarified. It is hoped that this will contribute in the future to the further development of the NGOs that are active in actual disaster-recovery areas.

2. China’s NGOs

In China in 1988, the State Council renamed the former Bureau for the Administration of Social Groups within the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Bureau for Management of Nongovernmental Organizations and positioned NGOs as “civil organizations” in public venues (Qi 2000: 30). Following the November 2007 Exchange Meeting on the Nationwide Construction of Social Organizations and Experiences of Administrative Affairs, instead of “civil organizations,” the name “social organizations” started to be used. The government designated that “social organizations” were “social groups”² “non-enterprise units³,” and “foundations⁴” that had registered at each level of the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Based on the directives of the State Council of Ordinance No.250, “Social Organizations Registration Management Ordinance” and Ordinance No.251 “Non-Enterprise Units Registration Management Provisional Ordinance,”

¹ “Phoenix New Media” reported that on August 12, 2009, “Mother House, whose volunteer team has continued the longest in the disaster-affected areas, has closed”
http://news.ifeng.com/society/2/200908/0812_344_1297180.shtml, [date of access: December 9, 2012 12]

² “Registration of Social Organizations,” revised in 1998, designates that “social organizations” are non-profit social organizations that are formed from the free will of China’s citizens to carry out activities that achieve the shared requirements of its members and while referring to its articles of incorporation.” The scope of social organizations is wide, and includes, “associations,” “societies,” “federations,” “research societies,” “recreational societies,” “promotion associations,” and “chamber of commerce.”

³ The “Non-Enterprise Units Management Provisional Ordinance” enacted in 1998 stipulates that “non-enterprise units” are “social organizations that are enterprises’ business units, social organizations, other social organizations with societal influence, and individual citizens that use and establish state-owned assets and are engaged in non-profit and social-service activities.” Mainly it includes organizations such as private schools and hospitals, private-sector homes for the elderly, research institutes, culture and sports centers, vocational training facilities, and regional service centers.

A “unit” signifies an “affiliated place of work,” and the unit system, to explain it simply, is a social-control system for human management in urban areas within the system of public ownership. (王 et al. 2002: 171-172).

⁴ The “Foundations Management Ordinance” enacted in 2004 stipulates that “foundations” are non-profit corporations established based on regulations with the objective of carrying out public interest projects using goods donated by individuals, corporations, or general organizations. According to Li, (2007: 286), they are legally classified as “foundation corporations.” Legally, they are only permitted to carry out fund raising activities and the funds that they raise are allocated to the expenses for the projects they manage. They are described as corporations having characteristics similar to so-called incorporated foundations.

that were promulgated on October 25, 1998, and Ordinance No.400 “Foundations Management Ordinance” that was promulgated on March 8, 2004, social groups, non-enterprise units, and foundations that correctly registered with and were administered and supervised by the government sector were designated to be “lawful NGOs (legal NGOs).”

In China, NGOs are broadly classified into three types: “registered NGOs (legal NGOs),” “grass-roots NGOs,” and “residents’ organizations” (Li 2009: 4-5). In addition, there is sometimes the classification of “international NGO” or “overseas NGO” (Zhu et al. 2009: 3).

Grass-roots NGOs in China are considered to be those “NGOs that have grown naturally, they were not ‘planted’ and then developed” (Li, 2008: 10), and “Organizations that were voluntarily established so that citizens may take action to address some sort of social problem or public problem” (Li, 2011:9). Currently, grass-roots NGOs in China include “commerce and industry registered organizations” registered as companies; “community public interest organizations” as the public interest organizations active in communities; “farming village non-profit organizations” of various mutual aid organizations within farming villages; “attached organizations,” which are not independent but are attached to existing organizations; and “business units,” which were state-managed organizations that have been privatized and provide social services in the planned economy.

While on the one hand China has achieved rapid economic growth through its reforms and openness policy, on the other hand various social problems have materialized within it, such as greater income inequality and environment problems. It is in this sort of environment that NGOs have become active. NGOs have become one of the main groups conducting social activities in China and it is considered that they have benefited from the country’s period of strong development and economic growth. However, Chinese society is being transformed and the construction of systems is not keeping pace with the changes to society’s basic values. Therefore, due to flaws in the philosophies of the NGOs themselves and the stagnation of government reforms, it has been noted that they face a variety of problems, including fund raising, their ability to carry out activities, and internal management (Wang et al. 2002: 43).

The environmental NGO Friends of Nature was established in China in 1994 by a professor at the Academy for Chinese Culture in Beijing, and it is considered to be the starting point in the history of the country’s grass-root NGOs (Li, 2008: 4). The Fourth World Conference on Woman in Beijing in 1995 was held and for the first time, the existence of China’s NGOs came to be known. (Wang et al. 2002: 30)

It is extremely difficult to register as an NGO in China. For example, Article 3 and Article 5 of the “Non-Enterprise Units Registration Management Provisional Ordinance” (promulgated October 25, 1998, as the State Council Directive No.251) prescribes that it is necessary to have a review by the “ministry with jurisdiction over operations” and registration by an “registration management institution” (the Ministry of Civil Affairs in the State Council and the departments of civil affairs at the level of each region above the provincial level). Article 11 stipulates that

“There can be only one organization per field per administrative sector.” So establishing multiple organizations in the same region that are working in the same field is prohibited. The registration of organizations is also used for the objectives of clarifying the management of the industry categories of economic agents under a planned economy, avoiding competition, and securing the benefits of each group. So in the large majority of cases, “the ministry with jurisdiction over operations” cannot be expected to bear responsibility for the registration and they do not actively engage in registrations. Therefore, it is difficult for voluntary civil organizations to find the “ministry with jurisdiction over operations.” So it is problematic for grass-root NGOs to become legal organizations and many of them are, in actual terms, excluded from registration (Li, 2010: 2-3). Currently, researchers estimate there are around 1.5 million grass-roots NGOs. The majority of these are concentrated in places such as Beijing and Yunnan Province and are active in areas including women’s issues, environment protection, and poverty. It was following the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 that they began to demonstrate that they could play a role in disaster relief (Deng, 2010: 12).

Since 2010, various regions throughout China have carried out administrative reforms for the registration of civil organizations and an improved policy environment has been created in order to develop civil organizations, such as lowering the conditions required for registering with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. However, the government must continue to establish and maintain this system so that grass-roots NGOs can further develop. But many difficulties remain for the grass-roots NGOs to address, such as “self study,” “having a sense of mission,” “leading industry,” “establishing an appropriate management structure,” “winning the trust of society,” and “securing human resources.”

In 1989, after the establishment of the China International Disaster Mitigation 10 Year Committee, the central government comprehensively lead measures for disasters and came to play the role of the coordinating mechanism. Within the State Council structural reforms of 2003, the Ministry of Civil Affairs came to have jurisdiction over disaster-relief projects. Then after the outbreak of SARS in 2003, a system for disaster relief was quickly put in place. In May 2009, according to the “Disaster Mitigation Action in China” promulgated by the Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, in order to serve as China’s disaster emergency management system, it was established that, “While the government will take the lead and manage according to the category and level of the disaster, this management will be mainly conducted on location.” So in this context, the roles to be played by citizens’ groups, social organizations, and volunteers came to be valued.

Deng (2009: 26-29) identified the following four points to be the merits of China’s disaster relief management system. 1) It is disaster relief system whose core is strong leaders and these leaders attach importance to disaster relief; 2) It is run by a powerful government with a strong ability to mobilize people; 3) Military forces lead by China’s Communist Party are the main means of providing disaster relief; and 4) It can be adapted to policy and rapid responses are

possible. But in terms of its problems, the system is lacking with regards to the methods of participation of civil organizations and volunteers. In 2008 after the Sichuan Great Earthquake, there were many limitations imposed on the activities of civil organizations and volunteers and there was no cooperation between the government-led disaster relief and the disaster relief provided by civil organizations (excluding with the Red Cross and some charitable associations). A system for receiving donations was also not fully in place.

3. Previous research on disaster-relief activities

After an earthquake, the “paradise” phenomenon in which everyone becomes altruistic in a tense situation can be observed (Solnit, R. 2009: translated by Sonoko Takatsuki, 2010: 10-11, 21). But this phenomenon does not last for long. Atsumi (2001) considered there to be a “collective improvisation game” after a disaster, in which temporarily the norms that pertain to society became distant; or in other words, in which the normal order is temporarily suspended. Atsumi considered that the “disaster volunteers play a collective improvisation game by creating a local bubble of norms” and pointed out that, “Within a situation in which fixed scenarios do not exist and membership is in a state of flux, it is important to use existing knowledge and technologies and develop activities while skilfully taking the “space” between the individual parts and the whole.” Therefore, disaster volunteers are considered to connect within the disaster area as a chain of unilateral and one-sided support actions. Returning the vector to the first area through this chain has been named the “relay of disaster-affected areas.” Atsumi advocated it as a principle for the activities of disaster NGOs so that they may “draw closer” to the victims (2012b: 9-10). In research on the disaster-affected areas following the Hanshin Awaji Great Earthquake of 1995, Otani pointed to the major role played by volunteers in the dynamics of community building within the temporary housing (Otani, 2006: 178-179).

The “disaster-mitigation cycle” shown in Figure 1 indicates the roles played by disaster-relief NGOs that change over time.

In the “disaster-mitigation cycle” after an earthquake, the volunteers’ roles are clearly described according to each respective stage, including “emergency response,” “restoration and recovery,” “damage mitigation measures,” and “regionally independent economies and regional cultural rights.” In other words, there are “disaster relief volunteers,” “recovery volunteers” “prevention volunteers,” and “co-creation volunteers.” After the earthquake, if the volunteers and disaster-related NGOs act upon considering what they can do at each of these stages from emergency response to restoration and recovery, then it becomes more certain that disaster-mitigation effects will be generated (Murai, 2008: 212-213).

The recovery includes not only hard, infrastructure aspects, but also internal aspects of providing the victims with mental support. Many people became aware of the importance of providing mental support for the victims following the Hanshin Awaji Great Earthquake of 1995.

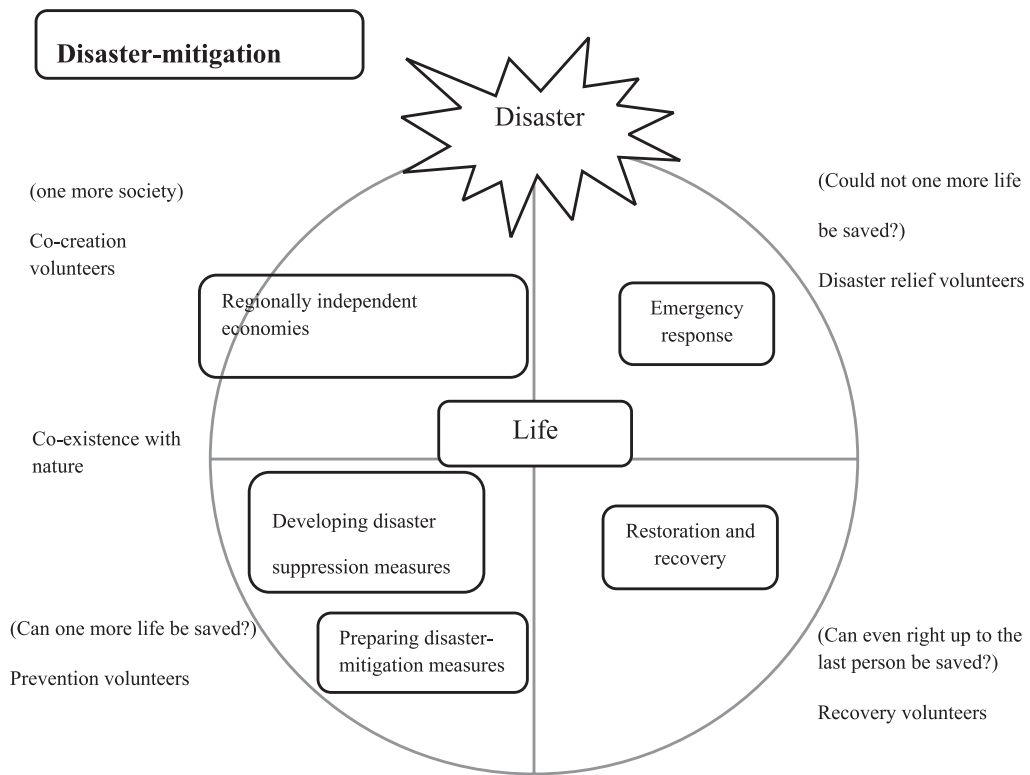


FIGURE 1. The disaster-mitigation cycle

Source: Created while referring to the Disaster Management Cycle (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2003), column in Disaster Management Cycle” by Masakiyo Murai (Murai, Masakiyo, 2008: 212)

According to “Mental Support After a Disaster” by the Japanese Red Cross Society (2004: 4), “What is required in terms of mental support after a disaster is mental support not only for the disaster victims, but also for those aiding the victims.”

According to the “Guidelines for Administrative Divisions to Provide Mental Support for Disaster Victims” (2012: 1) released by Japan’s Cabinet Office, “mental support” following a disaster is classified into three stages, depending on the characteristics of the care needed by the disaster victims. 1) Care to give a psychological sense of security to the disaster victims in general and to promote their recovery, such as through general support and providing them with information; 2) Care for disasters victims who need to be monitored continuously even if they are not considered to require psychiatric treatment, such as those who have lost their families or who live alone; and 3) Care for disaster victims who require psychiatric treatment because of the disaster and also for disaster victims who were receiving psychiatric treatment prior to the disaster. The following diagram expresses the three stages of mental support.

After the earthquake, as no methods of resolution had been decided on, in order to save lives and restore the lives of the disaster victims in a flexible and responsive manner, it was

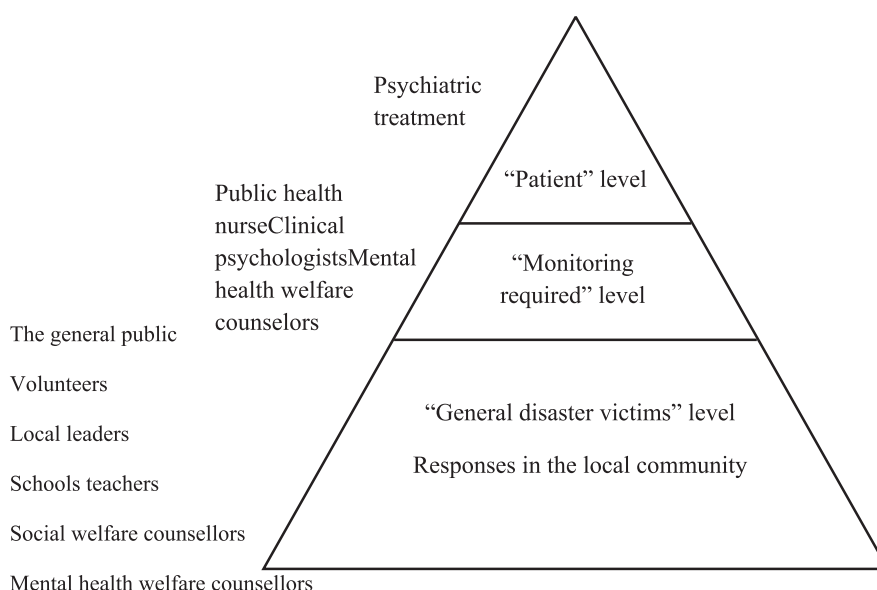


FIGURE 2. The three stages of mental support

Source: "Guidelines for Administrative Divisions to Provide Mental Support for Disaster Victims" The Cabinet Office, March 2012

necessary for the disaster volunteers to remain close to the victims over the long term. Together with the passage of time, the volunteers' roles inevitably changed to reflect the needs of the disaster-affected areas.

4. The Wenchuan Earthquake in Sichuan, May 12, 2008

The epicenter of the 2008 Sichuan Great Earthquake was below the town of Yingxiu, Wenchuan, which is 75km southwest of Chengdu City in Sichuan Province. The earthquake killed 68,712 people, with a further 17,923 people missing and 91,177 people injured. The economic loss reached 854.2 billion yuan (about 11 trillion yen). Many children lost their lives due to the destruction of elementary and junior school buildings (Miyairi, 2011: 935-942). In the area in and around the Sichuan basin during the 20th century, in 1933 there occurred the magnitude 7.5 Diexi Earthquake and in 1976 the magnitude 7.2 Songpan Earthquake in Sichuan Province. However, it has been noted that due to the lack of frequency of their occurrence and reporting on them, neither people's experiences nor suffering due to the earthquakes have been shared (Otani, 2009: 24). For the post-earthquake recoveries, in the short term physical and financial resources were invested in a concentrated manner and maintaining the economic infrastructure and reconstructing the industrial foundation were made priorities. Previous research has considered China's unique method of disaster recovery of "pairing support," the necessity of diverse and detailed recovery measures, and responses to the problem of disparities

in the recovery (Miyairi, 2011: 947-956).

After the Sichuan Great Earthquake, there was a lack of specialists among the people and within the organizations that provided support in the disaster-affected areas, and the majority were volunteers without any specialist knowledge. Further, there were instances where their “eagerness had bad consequences” that caused the victims even greater psychological harm, and also of the volunteers themselves becoming psychologically damaged through their experiences in the disaster-affected areas. Many more volunteers with specialist skills were needed in the disaster-affected areas (Yang et al. 2008: 138-140.) It was also reported that the lack of consistency in the counselling caused confusion and that the volunteers could not communicate with local people as they did not understand the local Sichuan dialect. In addition, it was noted that the Chinese government was late in providing mental support for the people who had suffered psychological injuries due to the earthquake (Otani, 2012: 39-58).

China has been establishing a legal system for NGOs’ participation in disaster relief. On June 8, 2008, the State Council promulgated the Wenchuan Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Ordinance. In principle, it stipulates “The integration of recovery by the disaster affected areas’ own efforts, national support, and pairing support,” and “The combining of government-initiated measures and social participation.” On September 19, 2008, the State Council announced the “National Wenchuan Earthquake Recovery and Reconstruction Comprehensive Plan.” In December 2008, in the 11th Meeting of the Standing Committee in the Sixth National People’s Congress, the “Law of the People’s Republic of China on Protecting Against and Mitigating Earthquake Disasters” was revised for the first time in 11 years. The revised law prescribes that, “After an earthquake, based on the leadership of the State Council, fundamentally every level of regional civil administrations will be responsible for the work of protecting against and mitigating earthquakes as the administrators of each region. Also, the participation of volunteers shall be encouraged.”

After the 2008 Sichuan Great Earthquake, 300 NGOs and three million volunteers participated in the disaster-relief activities. However, during the recovery period following this earthquake, a large number of NGOs entered the disaster-affected area in a disorderly manner and then after that, one after another a number of NGOs withdrew from it. Cooperation with the government was “polarized” and the NGOs continued to face a large number of problems, such as internal management and funding their activities (Liu2011: 41-43). ChenYing and Sugiman et al. (2010: 150) noted that too simple a division of roles was established in the disaster-affected areas, of “disaster victims equals passively receiving assistance only” and “the government and support groups equals actively providing assistance only,” and so the problem arose of the need to cultivate some sort of active participation of the disaster victims.

According to Phoenix Weekly, as of June 9, 2011, approximately 114 NGOs continued to be active in the disaster-affected areas, such as in community support, special support for disaster victims, mental support, and protecting the ecological environment. The following five

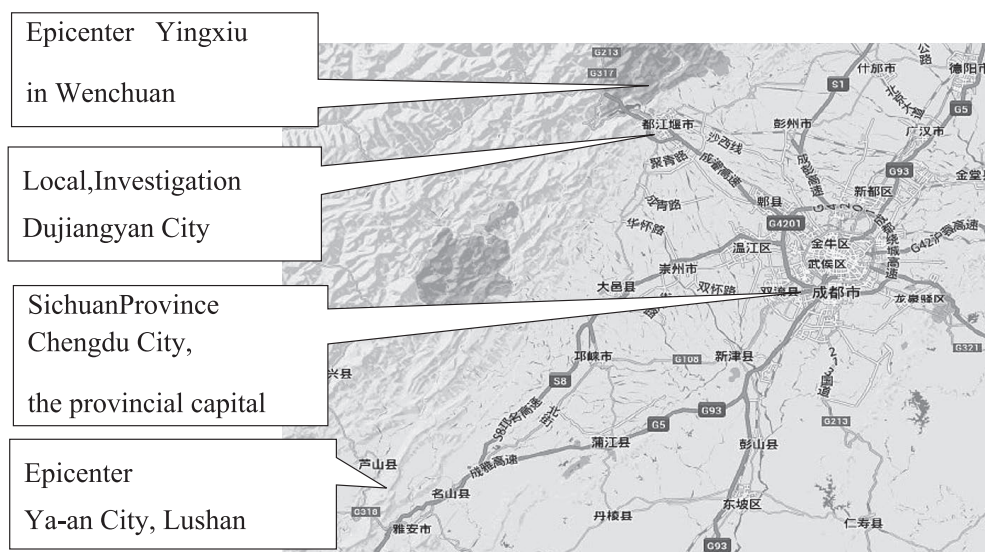


FIGURE 3. The locations of Chengdu City, the provincial capital of Sichuan Province; Yingxiu in Wenchuan, the earthquake's epicentre; and Dujiangyan City, the site of the local investigation
Source: Google Map <https://maps.google.co.jp/> [date of access: August 30, 2013]

problems were identified for their activities. 1) The dilemma of human relations and that NGOs exist in the gap between the disaster victims and the government, 2) the problem of funding in order to implement projects, 3) the difficulty in cooperating with foundations, 4) the problem of the lack of human resources, and 5) the problem of people's livelihoods.

5. The activities of the grass-roots NGO Mother House in the Sichuan Great Earthquake and the activities of the NGO Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center derived from it

The grass-roots NGO Mother House and the NGO Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center, which was established with the same constituent members, have eight permanent members. They are a group of extremely young people aged in their later twenties to early thirties. The majority came to Sichuan Province as volunteers from other regions after the Sichuan Great Earthquake and many of the members specialize in mental support. About 400 volunteers participate irregularly.

The activities carried out by Mother House and Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center can mainly be divided into two stages, depending on where the activities took place and their content. The first stage is the emergency-response period, from May 19, 2008, to September 2008. The predecessor of Mother House, the Nationwide Psychological Assistance Federation, carried out these activities, developing them within the temporary housing. In the second stage, the restoration and recovery period, the activities were carried out by Mother House and Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center. Mother House carried out its

activities within the temporary housing from September 2008 to September 2009. Then from September 2009 up to the present time, it has continued its activities in a rented office. Also, from April 25, 2011, up to the present time, Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center has developed its activities in an office provided by the government.

Stage 1: The activities of the Nationwide Psychological Assistance Federation in the emergency-response period,

The Nationwide Psychological Assistance Federation was an NGO that was the predecessor to Mother House. The period of this NGO's activities was from May 19, 2008, until September 2008. On May 19th, it erected tents as temporary housing for the disaster victims in the grounds of a university in Dujiangyan City, near the epicenter of Yingxiu. With the environment of continuing confusion in the disaster-affected areas, it became the first NGO to provide psychological assistance for the 6,000 people living in the temporary housing of tents.

Many children aged between 7 and 13 lost their lives in the earthquake due to the destruction of elementary and junior high school buildings. Their mothers were in their thirties and forties. These mothers, who had lost their precious "only child," did not have anyone to talk to, including psychological counsellors. On seeing these mothers, the members of this NGO immediately began providing mental support for "mothers that had lost their child" and for children. The organization's roughly 13 members preferentially provided "emergency"⁵ and "simple"⁶ emergency psychological assistance.

"The Tianfu Sunshine Tent School" was launched on May 23rd..Its objectives were to give the children a sense of safety by providing "an environment they were used to," "orderly activities," and "activities in groups in which they had a sense of belonging." The tent school had 158 children and 18 teachers. On June 15, 2008, a survey was conducted on the children's



PHOTOGRAPH 1: The office of the Nationwide Psychological Assistance Federation
Source: July 2008 Mother House



PHOTOGRAPH 2: The Tianfu Sunshine Tent School built by the Nationwide Psychological Assistance Federation
Source: July 2008 Mother House

⁵ Cases where emergency care is required.

⁶ Cases that can be dealt with (cured) immediately.

mental health and from this survey, it was understood that the school had reduced the stress that many of the children felt due to the earthquake. It continued its activities until all of the schools had been reopened, which was in July 2009. It also helped to provide daily commodities to more than 8,000 disaster victims and support for the daily lives. Within the activities the members carried out on location, it became clear to them that there were some aspects they could not deal with only using the European style of mental support that they had studied.

Stage 2: Activities in the restoration and recovery period

At this stage, the issue became searching for appropriate methods of mental support for “mothers who had lost their only child,” and other disaster victims.

Activities carried out by Mother House in the temporary housing (from September 2008 to September 2009)

Between September 2008 and September 2009 in the temporary housing, based on the philosophy of “for the dignity and happiness of the mothers,” it provided psychological assistance to “the mothers who had lost their only child.”

As was mentioned above, it is difficult for NGOs to register in China. Mother House was unable to register, as it was unable to find the ministry with jurisdiction over its operations. As an alternative, in September 2008 it registered with the Bureau of Commerce and Industry as a social enterprise and launched its activities as a grass-roots NGO registered as a corporation.

In addition to the Tianfu Sunshine Tent School established in the temporary housing, Mother House constructed a series of venues where people could receive mental support and interact with others, such as the Psychological Counselling Room and the Relaxation Room.

Next, “The re-pregnancy project” was begun so that mothers could create new families. It was thought that interest in “a new life” would help to heal the emotional wounds that the mothers had suffered. About 230 “mothers who had lost their only child” aged from 35 to 45 years came to Mother House periodically to receive mental support.

Care was taken so that mothers and children who had lost their homes in the earthquake would perceive the tents provided by Mother House to ultimately be places to lead ordinary lives, such as in a typical home. To make it easier for the parents to talk, it prepared a schedule that included events such as music therapy, sessions to freely talk about experiences, and watching movies related to pregnancy. In February 2009, Mother House decided that it would provide psychological support in the disaster-affected areas for the long term.

The objectives of its activities at this time were as follows. 1) Eradicate the symptoms of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) among the mothers and partially eliminate the disorder; 2) Support them during their time of sadness after the loss of their child and try to help them recover a calm psychological state; 3) Cooperate with the mothers to help them build new relations at home and in society; 4) Help them reconstruct their lives; 5) Help them acquire the psychological and physiological common sense they need as mothers and to avoid a second

level of harm due to “blind” actions because of a lack of knowledge; and 6) Help them to build a bond with their newly born child.

So that Mother House could fully utilize the various roles being played by a variety of people, including children volunteers, disaster victim volunteers, student volunteers, psychologists, and university teachers, it did not provide one-sided support as the supporting side, but instead prioritized training the disaster victims to be active participants in activities and to become the agents of these activities.

5.1. Activities at Mother House rented office⁷ (June 2009 to the present)

In the “restoration and recovery stage,” results are not immediately seen in the same way as they are during the “emergency response stage.” In this new stage, Mother House responded to the comments of the disaster victims that, “We can feel safe as you are constantly next to us” and further subdivided its activities and began to execute five plans. These were the A plan (safety plan), which included courses such as Mothers’ Hall; the B plan, of disseminating scientific knowledge about pregnancy and psychological support (health plan); the C plan, of mental support for mothers who lost their child (re-pregnancy plan); the D plan (plan to join hands), to support the children in farming villages in the disaster-affected area; and the E plan (plan to return home), to look for the children still missing following the earthquake. Currently, the E plan is no longer being implemented.

The C plan (re-pregnancy plan) became the central plan in its activities. Of the 200 mothers, more than 180 of them have since had a baby. The D plan (the plan to join hands) was launched in October 2011. In this plan, children in elementary schools in cities up to the 6th grade⁸ would pair with children in farming villages in the disaster-affected areas who were one year younger than them, and the older children would donate clothes, stationery, and other items



PHOTOGRAPH 3: The Mother House re-pregnancy plan
Source: October 2009, Mother House

⁷ As living at the refugee shelters was completed with the end of the first stage, they moved to a rented office.

⁸ The reason it was established only up to the 6th grade was that it was found it was difficult to pair-up students once they became junior high school students, because they grow quickly. Those in charge of the “Plan to join hands” considered that when the students became a little bigger, they tended not to want to wear another person’s clothes for self-esteem reasons.

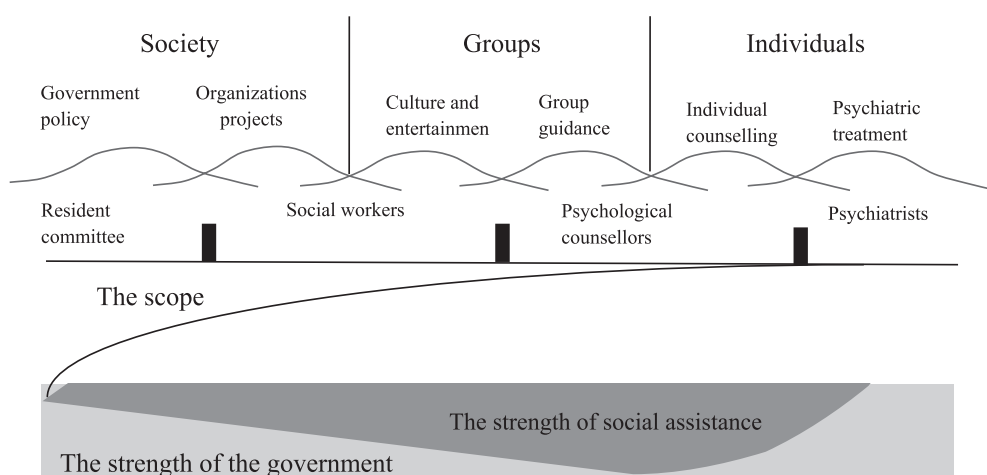


FIGURE 4. Model for psychological assistance systematically provided after the May 12 Sichuan Great Earthquake.

Source: from Mother House, August 2012

to the younger children. This project was run in cooperation with three elementary schools in Chengdu and by September 2012, it has joined 4,000 pairs of students from these schools and students in 29 elementary schools in the farming villages.

The major results achieved in this period formed a model of mental support for Mother House for the one year after an earthquake. This model was created through practical measures based on advice from specialists and was named the “Model of psychological assistance systematically provided after the May 12 Sichuan Great Earthquake.” In principle, 1) Activities are not carried out by one person or through one specialism. Activities must be carried out jointly by “a residents’ committee⁹,” “social workers,” “psychological counsellors,” and “psychiatrists.” 2) Assessments of the medical conditions of disaster victims are not to be duplicated. The assessment of the disaster victims carried out once is to be utilized for each respective usage. Systematic planning is to be performed and assessment materials appropriate to each individual are to be used. 3) Assessments are to be carried out incrementally and classified systematically. Different methods of mental support are to be used for each respective disaster victim. In this

⁹ According to “People’s Republic of China Resident Committees Organization Law,” “community resident committees” are autonomous organizations comprised of members of the general public. They have six duties.

1. To publicize the constitution, laws, regulations, and the national policy; to protect residents’ legal rights and interests; to educate residents on their responsibilities based on law; to protect public goods; and to develop activities in various forms in order to construct a socialist spirit and civilization
2. To carry out public duties and the public-interest projects of residents in residential communities.
3. To mediate in civil disputes
4. To cooperate to maintain public security in society
5. To cooperate with the people’s government or its branch offices and to carry out projects related to the interests of residents, such as for sanitation, planned pregnancy, assistance for civilian workers in the military, and youth education.
6. To reflects residents’ opinions to the people’s government or its branch offices and submit requests, proposals, etc.

method of providing mental support, these various elements are coordinated by “members of the residents’ committee,” “social workers,” “psychological counsellors,” and “psychiatrists.”

Care for volunteers was also emphasized. The period in which volunteers were allowed to be active was limited to six to eight weeks. This was because if they continued longer than this, they might experience symptoms of “burn out”¹⁰. “Mother House can be said to have become practitioners who shifted their volunteer activities from “theory” to “practice,” from “voluntarism,” “to “specialism,” “and from “intuition “ to “reason.”

5.2. The Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center carries out its activities from a government office (2011 April 25, 2011, to the present day)

Through raising society’s level of confidence in it, the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center succeeded in directly registering as a legal NGO in the Ministry of Civil Affairs without having a “ministry with jurisdiction over operations.” Because the role played by Mother House was recognized by society, the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center became one of very small number of directly registered organizations that is completely unconnected to the government. With its overall philosophy of “Making acting in the public interest a habit,” its objective is to spread across China this philosophy of acting “in the public interest.”

The Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center mainly carries out two activities; day-learning support (volunteer activities for students, even if lasting only one day) and three-sided support for infants in the disaster-affected area. “after 80”¹¹ and “after 90”¹² students



PHOTOGRAPH 4: University student volunteers at the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center

Source: 2011 August Mother House



PHOTOGRAPH 5: An exchange event attended by volunteers and people affiliated to the government at the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center

Source: taken by the authors in August 2012

¹⁰ Under conditions of extreme stress, a person may fall into a state of extreme exhaustion because all their capabilities and ability to adapt have been used up. The person may flee from work, seek to drown their sorrows in alcohol, or alternatively become completely absorbed in work. The person may also become mean to or sneer at colleagues and disaster victims. “Mental Support During Disasters” (2004: 29).

¹¹ Children born in the 1980s

¹² Children born in the 1990s

from four universities participate in volunteer activities during weekends and the universities' winter and summer holidays. The targets of the "three-sided support plan," which was launched in February 2009, are children aged 4 to 16 years (graduates from junior high schools) in the disaster-affected areas. Specifically, it targets the following children for support: 1) children who were orphaned or who lost one parent in the earthquake; 2) children who were living in poverty before the earthquake; and 3) children for who life has become difficult due to the earthquake. Because the latter children are not orphans, they tend to be missed as the targets of assistance, but they became the intended recipients of assistance with the implementation of the "three-sided support plan."

The time limit of the "three-sided support plan" is five years. The children receiving support are not adopted, but continue their lives according to their original family register. The volunteers support the family members and relatives who look after them. Presently, 150 children regularly receive support based on the three-sided support plan. The project has expanded the scope of the children it targets to include children with disabilities in ordinary homes. In addition, it runs a "public interest salon" and a classroom for training volunteers for public interest organizations. In these ways, it has enabled many more people to participate in activities to support those in the disaster-affected areas and it has widened the circle of support for these areas.

5.3. Considerations of their activities

After the Sichuan Great Earthquake, Mother House and the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center that emerged from it prioritized creating plans according to each post-disaster recovery stage and the needs of the disaster victims and carried out their activities while responding flexibly to circumstances. They brought together people with specialisms and responded using various techniques to improve the situation and resolve issues.

In the "emergency response stage," it "discovered problems from a variety of viewpoints," and through coordinating with the government, a network of mental support specialists, and local people such as teachers at nearby schools, it selected the recipients of its support at an early stage. During the "restoration and recovery stage," Mother House became established as a grass-roots NGO and it developed its activities based on the concept of "for the dignity and happiness of mothers." Through its practical activities, it formed a method of providing mental support that was suitable for actual locations, such as through its "Model of psychological support after an earthquake provided through systematic cooperation." It drew out problems from a variety of viewpoints and can be said to have played a role in creating mechanisms for responses that were tailored to the problem. Through its various activities, the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center began working to spread the idea of "acting in the public interest" across China. As a result, it succeeded in addressing permanent themes that went beyond the framework of "disasters" and expanded the area of its activities.

6. The Sichuan Lushan Earthquake, April 20th, 2013

The earthquake of April 20, 2013, affected 2.18 million people. Among them, 196 were killed, 2 went missing, and 14,785 were injured. The central government utilized its experiences from the 2008 Sichuan Great Earthquake and took charge from a unified command center and can be said to have succeeding in constructing an effective system of disaster relief. Compared to the 2008 Sichuan Great Earthquake, information was exchanged more actively in the disaster-affected areas and it was possible to ascertain the situation on the same day as the earthquake, thanks to the detailed information on the disaster conditions. Due to the problem of the frequent aftershocks that meant many roads could not be used, on April 21 the State Council announced that “Organizations without permission cannot enter the disaster-affected areas” and that “People not involved with providing emergency disaster relief and volunteers shall demonstrate self restraint about entering the disaster-affected areas at the current stage.” It also called on members of the mass media to exhibit self restraint about entering the disaster-affected areas in the first 72 hours after the earthquake, when saving lives was the priority.

6.1. *The conditions of the NGOs' activities*

After the April 20th Earthquake, important roles were played by the many NGOs that had continued their recovery activities in the area after the 2008 earthquake. The April 20 Alliance for Disaster Relief Action was established by a Chengdu public interest organization on the same day as the earthquake and many foundations and public interest organizations participated in it. The majority of them were NGOs active in the disaster-affected areas after the earthquake of May 12, 2008. The Earthquake Resistance and Disaster Relief Command and Social Management Service Department of Ya-an City in Sichuan Province established the “Ya-an City Earthquake Resistance and Disaster Relief Social Organizations and Volunteer Service Center” on May 12, 2013. Its objectives included to serve as a reception desk for the activities of social organizations and volunteers; to collect information; to recruit, train, and dispatch human resources; and to prepare social resources. By May 14th, 259 organizations were participating in it. It registered 3,944 volunteers, and among them, 1,0932 volunteers were active in the disaster-affected areas. Through the establishment of this Center, it became easier for the NGOs and volunteers to participate in the disaster-relief activities.

6.2. *Disaster-relief activities after the April 20th Earthquake of 2013*

After the April 20th Earthquake, the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center formed the April 20th Social Worker and Mental Support Group. On the evening of April 20th, it prepared the April 20th Intervention Plan for Systematic Cooperation for Social Worker Mental Support. It set “resident self-help” as the motto of its disaster-relief activities and it established a plan divided into stages of four time periods in order to progress these activities.

These were the emergency disaster relief stage of the first 72 hours after the earthquake (April 20 to April 23), the emergency evacuation stage of two weeks after the earthquake (April 24 to May 3), the shelter of evacuees stage of three months after the earthquake (May 4 to July 20), and the restoration and recovery stage of the three years after the earthquake (starting July 21). Below, the authors arrange its activities based on the details they ascertained through a survey conducted in June 2013.

Stage 1 Activities April 20, 2013, to April 23, 2013 (emergency response stage of the first 72 hours following the earthquake)

The NGO focused its efforts into “preparing resources” for the disaster recovery and within 72 hours after the earthquake, it had recruited more than 2,000 psychologist and social worker volunteers. Moreover, depending on the situations in the disaster-affected areas, it did not enter these areas in the first 72 hours. At the same time, it immediately began cooperating with two companies, three foundations, four universities, five government-affiliated organizations, and six public interest organizations.

Stage 2 Activities April 24, 2013, to May 3, 2013 (emergency response stage of the two weeks after the earthquake)

During this stage, based on an awareness of the need to cooperate with the government, it followed the government’s lead when conducting activities and actively exchanged information with other public interest organizations. It also focused its energies into training local volunteers in order to promote “resident self-help.” On April 24, it received the government’s permission



PHOTOGRAPH 6: Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center Building a wooden classroom

Source: 2013 April 25 Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center



PHOTOGRAPH 7: Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center Volunteers arrange disaster-relief resources

Source: taken by the authors in June 2013

to set up a temporary base called the Social Worker Mental Support Station in Lingguan Junior High School. The student volunteers created the Children's Cube, a temporary wooden school room that they themselves designed, and the Babies' Cube, as a center for activities for babies and infants aged from 0 to 6 years. From April 26, 192 students of Lingguan Junior High School and 92 children aged from 3 to 6 years used the facilities sequentially for classes. In parallel to this in another tent, mental support was provided to the students of the temporary school. The Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center appealed to be allowed to carry out activities for at least three months in the disaster-affected areas. Moreover, it actively contributed articles to newspapers on how to correctly provide disaster relief in disaster-affected areas.

Stage 3 Activities May 4, 2013, to July 20, 2013 (the three months after the earthquake)

In this stage, it provided mental support to more than 100 people. It formally started teaching at a kindergarten, accepting four kindergarten teachers onto its volunteer team, and providing classes at the kindergarten. At the university, it provided a three-day training courses for 120 social workers and specialists in psychological assistance.

The idea of "resident self-help" became extremely powerful in this period. The NGO steadily implemented support activities in coordination with the local government, schools, residents, student volunteers, and other volunteers in the April 20th Earthquake disaster-affected areas. As the disaster-affected areas were deep in the mountains with high humidity, many members experienced health problems while living in the tents. But in late May, it was able to establish a base in the "Ya-an City Earthquake Resistance and Disaster Relief Social Organizations and Volunteers Service Center" in Ya-an City.

Experience of the Sichuan's Lushan Earthquake of April 20, 2013, as seen from the Wenchuan Earthquake of May 12, 2008

In 2013, the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center can be said to have utilized



PHOTOGRAPH 8: Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center Training at the university
Source: May 5, 2013 Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center



PHOTOGRAPH 9: Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center. A teacher giving a kindergarten class in the wooden classroom
Source: May 10, 2013, the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center

its experience of the 2008 Sichuan Great Earthquake and created appropriate plans according to each of the recovery periods. From its experience of the Sichuan Great Earthquake, the NGO's members particularly focused their energies into strengthening relations in many fields. Specifically, they prioritized four relations: 1) relations with local government; 2) relations with those they targeted for assistance; 3) relations with other organizations; and 4) relations within its organization. It also attached importance to relations with the government, positioning it as a "co-operator." It built a relation of trust with the government by actively reporting to it on its activities. In turn, it received information from the government that enabled it to appropriately secure bases and the other parties for its support. By providing mental support to the leading members of the government in the disaster-affect areas, it succeeded in appealing to leading members of the government about the importance and effectiveness of providing long-term mental support in these areas.

The Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center placed importance on the specialism of its members, and after the April 20th Earthquake, it created a team of cooperating "social workers" and "psychology-related specialists." It used the period of 72 hours immediately after the earthquake, during which time it could not enter the disaster-affected areas, to train its staff. After entering the disaster-affected areas, it developed its activities in cooperation with "local leaders," "social workers," and "psychological counsellors." Through activities such as "building the temporary tent school," after the earthquake it provided the children with "an environment they were used to in which they could feel safe, "an environment in which they had a sense of belonging, " and "an order that they were used to." It also sent articles to newspapers in order to actively appeal to the relevant parties (to be allowed to carry out its activities long term) based on its experiences in disaster-affected areas. Subsequently, it determined the range of the organization's activities. However, it left to medical facilities the task of providing victims with psychological treatment and the diagnosis and treatment of serious mental impairment. Just as after the Sichuan Great Earthquake, its approach of conducting support activities over the long term became a major driving force in the disaster relief efforts.

In its relations with other organizations, from an early stage it actively contacted other organizations, including foundations, public interest groups, and universities. It drew on the power of the mass media to appeal to society about the role to be played by the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center, and by raising its societal influence, it was able in the short term to more easily collect further social resources, such as goods, funds, and people. By continuing to carry out activities that raised the level of trust society placed in it, it can be said that the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center succeeded in building good relations with the government, foundations, and other groups.

7. Conclusion

The provision of support is to create a situation in which the disaster victims become independent; or in other words, a situation in which they no longer need support. In terms of the problems to be addressed in the future, in order to realize a true recovery and “resident self-help” in the disaster-affected areas, it will be necessary to continue over the long term the support activities in the disaster-affected areas following the May 12th Sichuan Great Earthquake and April 20th Earthquake.

What is important to achieve this is to secure specialist human resources that are able to provide support over the long term. Due to the widening of the support area, it is considered that currently, there is a lack of specialists in each respective field and that specialists in the field of disaster support are needed. The formation of a network of human resources, including local people, and the training of them are vital. In the April 20th Earthquake disaster-affected areas, the victims of the May 12th Sichuan Great Earthquake also played a role in providing support. This occurrence is extremely significant as it built a bridge between the disaster-affected areas. In other words, it can be said that a “relay of disaster-affected areas” was seen to emerge in the April 20th Earthquake disaster-affected areas. This connection between people contributes to the formation of a network of specialist human resources and strengthens long term activities of NGOs and volunteers dealing with disaster recovery in the future.

With regards to the problem of funding, in Mother House and the Chengdu One-Day for Social Work Service Center, due to concerns about the lack of funding activities, an idea is to “prioritize which activities should be continued in order to be useful in the disaster-affected areas and in communities.” If activities are conducted according to needs in disaster-affected areas, it is thought that this will naturally result in funds and human resources being collected. However, a major problem for all NGOs is how to stably secure funding in order to continue their activities over the long term.

After the 2008 Sichuan Great Earthquake, the NGOs engaged in disaster recovery grew by solidifying the content of their activities. After building favorable relations with the government, they extended the circle of support beyond the disaster-affected areas and the region. By cooperating well with the government, foundations, related organizations, volunteers, and disaster victims, they were able to play roles in accordance with the disaster-mitigation cycle.

When we think of the disaster victims as the standard, it can be said that NGOs in disaster-affected areas have come to be able to wield significant power by continuously providing long-term support while remaining close to the disaster victims. It goes without saying that in the future, they will need to continue such long-term activities, while at the same time they must also conduct local surveys on the sort of details discussed in this paper.

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