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## Collection Development on Women's Earthquake Disaster Experiences and Support Activities in Japan

**Reiko Aoki**

National Women's Education Center, Saitama, Japan

E-mail address: vyn03653@nifty.com



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### Abstract:

*Japan is known as a country prone to natural disasters. Many people were impacted by the tsunami and nuclear power plant accident following the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011. Under the harsh conditions of evacuation shelters, various forms of discrimination experienced by women in daily life surfaced, exposing societal distortions such as gendered division of labor and sexual violence/harassment. Despite such circumstances, women's voices were seldom heard. Women relief workers were keenly aware of the need for policies to support vulnerable groups and women's leadership. Disaster recovery and reduction measures must be revised to fully reflect the experiences of women. To this end, efforts must be made to collect records of women's experiences and to pass these on to subsequent generations. Up to now, the experiences and activities of women have remained hidden. Records of disasters develop slowly over long periods of time. In some cases, it is only decades after a painful experience that a woman can start talking about it. In this presentation, I examine past collection of records on disasters and women and discuss archival systems to facilitate use of such records. Specifically, I discuss:*

- 1. Classification of records related to disaster and gender, evacuation center management that takes into consideration the needs of vulnerable groups, use of surveys and consultations to identify the needs of women in disaster-affected areas, policy recommendations for disaster reduction and recovery, and methods for creating collections.*
- 2. Case studies of earthquake disaster archives, examples of survivors in different disaster-affected areas sharing their experiences, and examples of support activities by women's groups aimed at recording women's experiences.*
- 3. Use of the National Women's Education Center (NVEC) Archive of Women's Disaster Recovery Support and dissemination in coordination with the National Diet Library and a system for the sharing of information.*

**Keywords:** disaster, women, gender, diversity, collection

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Figure 2 Comparison of damage scales of three major earthquakes

**Chart 9-8: Reference #2:  
Comparison to the Great Kanto Earthquake and the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake:**

	Great Kanto Earthquake <sup>24</sup>	Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake <sup>25</sup>	Great East Japan Earthquake
Earthquake Designation	Taisho Kanto Earthquake	Southern Hyogo Prefecture Earthquake	Tohoku Region Pacific Coast Earthquake
Date of Occurrence	September 1, 1923 (Saturday)	January 17, 1995 (Tuesday)	March 11, 2011 (Friday)
Time of Occurrence	11:58am	5:46am	2:46pm
Epicenter	Northwestern Sagami Bay	Northern Awaji	Sanriku Coast
Earthquake Depth	—	16km	24km
Magnitude	M7.9	M6.9	M9.0
Greatest Vibration Intensity	7 (Odawara, Miura Peninsula, etc.)	7 (Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture)	7 (Kurihara City, Miyagi Prefecture)
Fatalities	105,385 人	6,434 people	15,854 people
Missing		3 people	3,155 people
Building Damage (Complete/Partial)	160,306 structures	639,686 structures	1,074,974 structures
Destruction by Fire	212,353 structures	7,574 cases	281 structures
Disaster Characteristics	Occurred during lunchtime; Twin earthquakes; Combined disaster due to building collapses and fire	Occurred at dawn; Disaster caused by tremors; Casualties due to building collapse	Disaster due to large tsunami; Nuclear power plant accident

<sup>24</sup> From the Headquarters for Disaster Control, Disaster Prevention Department's "First Special Collection of Lessons Learned in the 80 Years since the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923," *Activities of Fire Departments*, Issue 390, September, Heisei 15 (2003) (<http://www.fdma.go.jp/ugoki/h1509/03.pdf>), Kajima Established "Special Edition: Understanding the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, study 1," *Kajima Monthly Report Digest*, September 2003 ([http://www.kajima.co.jp/news/digest/sep\\_2003/tokushu/toku01.htm](http://www.kajima.co.jp/news/digest/sep_2003/tokushu/toku01.htm)). According to the Kajima press release "According to the Kajima Kobori Research Complex's Research Results, the Scientific Chronology of the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 is revised for the first time in 80 Years," 2005/09/09 (<http://www.kajima.co.jp/news/press/200509/9a1fo-j.htm>)

<sup>25</sup> From the Fire Defense Agency's "Osaka/Kobe Great Earthquake of 1995 (Final Report), May 19<sup>th</sup>, Heisei 18 (2006) (<http://www.fdma.go.jp/data/010604191452374961.pdf>)

The tsunami and nuclear power plant accident that followed the Great East Japan Earthquake, which struck in March of 2011, left many victims in its wake. Those who lost their loved ones and houses face the prospect of prolonged living under harsh evacuation conditions in affected areas.

Under the difficult circumstances of everyday life as evacuees, various forms of gender-based discrimination faced by women affected by the disaster rose to the surface. Societal distortions such as gendered division of labor, violence, and sexual harassment had become blatantly obvious. However, the voices of women in disaster-affected areas were rarely heard. Women providing relief in disaster-affected areas were keenly aware of the pressing need for policies supporting various groups of vulnerable individuals and leadership by women.

The power of women, based on full utilization of their experiences, is needed to change our approach to disaster recovery and disaster prevention. The experiences and activities of women who were unable to speak out in the seven years since the disaster still remain hidden. Records of the disaster are unique in that they are assembled slowly over time. I have heard of women who are just now starting to talk about painful experiences that took place twenty years ago. Records of such experiences need to be collected and passed on to subsequent generations.

In this presentation, focusing on the records of the Great East Japan Earthquake, I examine systems for developing collections of and utilizing the disaster records of women's activities in disasters.

## **1. Archiving and creating collections of records generated through activities by women**

The records of the three major earthquakes from the Taisho period to the present (the Great Kanto Earthquake, Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and Great East Japan Earthquake) each have their own characteristics that reflect the historic background, political system, region, and recording media used. In this paper, in addition to providing an overview of these characteristics, I discuss records of disaster-related experiences and relief activities, particularly on those of women, and the process of archiving and assembling collections of records writing by women.

### **1-1. Great Kanto Earthquake (1923)**

The Great Kanto Earthquake struck a wide area centered around Tokyo and Yokohama, causing devastating fires whose impact was particularly severe in densely populated areas. Official records of the period up to the rehabilitation of large urban areas exist. In addition to these official documents, individual recollections were left in the form of photographs and articles in major newspapers as well as magazine articles written by writers, poets, and scientists. Unfortunately, many museums housing records and documents were subsequently destroyed by fire, in many cases during World War II. Today, some 95 years after the fires of 1923, records are being stored in facilities such as the National Archives of Japan<sup>1</sup> and the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.archives.go.jp/>

Disaster Management Library<sup>2</sup> and, in recent years, efforts have begun to digitize these historical photographs and movies. The day that the Great Kanto Earthquake struck causing untold devastation, September 1, has been designated Disaster Prevention Day and is the day on which disaster prevention training is carried out around the country.

### **1-1-1. The Great Kanto Earthquake and records by women**

Although various personal records in the form of diaries, collections of personal experiences, and records of students' experiences can be found in special issues of women's magazines at the time, many of the articles in these women's magazines were written by men. The only examples of published records written by women were those written by female authors. However, it is a known fact that numerous women's organizations, women's centers, and other networks as well as female students were recruited and played a leading role in aid activities immediately following the disaster. The activities of 134 women from 16 women's organizations, which entailed visiting homes with young children and listening to the needs of families living as evacuees while handing out milk, is described in a book titled *Onna-tachi-ga tachiagatta: Kanto Daishin-to Tokyo Rengo Fujinkai* [The Women Who Stood Up: the Great Kanto Earthquake and the Tokyo Federation of Women's Organizations] (Miyako Orii, Women's Historical Research Society editor, Domesu Publishers Inc., 2017.3).

The various women's organizations that began aid activities after the Great Kanto Earthquake and thereafter continued to carry out activities in their respective areas joined to form a united front, namely the Tokyo Federation of Women's Organizations. The book chronicles the struggles of the women who not only distributed milk but also washed and repaired articles of clothing, quilted futons, and worked tirelessly to rebuild people's everyday lives. During each visit to a house to deliver milk, the women filled out disaster victim cards, which they used to report unsanitary conditions following the disaster to the relevant authorities. These cards and records of relief activities are currently archived at the Fusae Ichikawa Center for Women and Governance.<sup>3</sup> These cards served as base documents for subsequent household surveys and welfare surveys and led to the birth of gender statistics by women.

This experience of working together to provide disaster relief led women's groups to formally organize and to form networks of women's groups and is seen as having led to the movement to abolish licensed prostitution, women's suffrage, and other efforts to open the door to women's participation in politics. It is the determined eye of the editor, honed by years of research on women's history, that led to the discovery of the documents connecting the activities of women after the earthquake disaster 95 years ago to today. This is an example in which previously hidden activity records were uncovered, opening up the potential for these records to be used to support activities to prevent or reduce the impact of future earthquake disasters.

### **1-2 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (1995)**

In 1995, the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake struck a city in the midst of rapid economic growth that Japan had finally achieved some 50 years after recovering from World War II. Although the Internet and information and communications technology (ICT) were still in their infancy, images from the affected area could be relayed in real time via television. The

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.city-net.or.jp/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ichikawa-fusae.or.jp/>

information shared between evacuation shelters, disaster victims, and government offices consisted of information that could be communicated via landline phones or paper.

Relief activities after the Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake was the starting point for volunteerism in Japan. Records of relief activities carried out by volunteers from around the country were stored by nongovernmental organizations. Activities of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Disaster Materials Collection (hereinafter “Disaster Materials Collection” in the Kobe University Library<sup>4</sup> began three months after the disaster, in April of 1995. The Disaster Materials Collection began by collecting books and set as its goal the continuous and exhaustive collection of pamphlets, posters, summaries, reprints, newsletters, and all materials related to the disaster. Since then, the Disaster Materials Collection has become one model for collecting disaster-related materials. At the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake, the Disaster Materials Collection also took on a new role to create a network of librarians in the Hanshin and Tohoku regions.

In 2002, the Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution<sup>5</sup> was established with the following mission: “Our mission is to mold a culture of disaster awareness, enhance local capacity for disaster management, support the development of disaster management policies, and contribute to creating civic collaboration on safety and security as well as a society with reduced disaster related risks. We do this by passing on experiences from the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and making the lessons learned available for the future. We are informing the world both today and posterity about creating a society less at risk from disasters, the importance of life, and how wonderful peaceful coexistence is.”

The Institution uses textual (paper) documents as well as various exhibits, including ‘objects’ to relay disaster experiences to visitors in an easy-to-understand way. Also equipped with facilities for hands-on learning and disaster prevention training, it serves as a large-scale information hub for communicating disaster experiences and providing disaster prevention information to the public.

### **1-2-1 Women’s records of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake**

The UN World Conference on Women (Beijing Conference) was held in the same year as the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake (1995). The Beijing Conference listed 12 critical areas requiring urgent action to ensure greater equality for women. Ten years since the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985), legal steps including the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women were being advanced in Japan and gender equality centers were being established around the country to serve as hubs for policy implementation with the goal of achieving a gender equal society. It was in the context of growing awareness of women’s rights and gender equality and burgeoning activity by women’s organizations that the earthquake occurred.

Immediately after the earthquake, Women’s Net Kobe—an organization that had been working to create a network to protect the rights of women and children and to create a gender-equal society—set up the Women’s Net Kobe<sup>6</sup> and began handing out relief supplies and providing “phone consultations for women.” The organization created a platform for

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/eqb/e-index.html>, <http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/eqb/e-guide.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.dri.ne.jp/en>

<sup>6</sup> <http://wn-kobe.or.jp/>

women to speak up through a series of Women's Aid Lectures titled "Women Speak about the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake." By listening to the stories of each and every individual and consultations, the organization was able to get a handle on the stress and state of violence against women in evacuee shelters.

Although the group called for zero tolerance for sexual violence, it was unable to increase people's awareness of the sexual violence occurring in evacuation shelters and was even attacked by the media. However, there is a record of the group's presentation to the international community regarding disasters and sexual violence at a workshop at the Beijing Conference. The painful experiences of these women in the disaster area led to measures aimed at protecting victims of sexual violence after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

In 1996, as an example of something positive that women living a disaster-affected area could do, the organization published a book titled *Women Talk about the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake* (Masai 1996) containing a record of the hardships unique to women seen by women. The book compiled the disaster experiences of nearly 80 women divided into seven chapters according to theme (daily living, work, women/men/family/singles, mind and body, old age, housing/politics/rights, and media).

The chapter headings themselves leave the reader with a sense of the extent to which women in disaster-affected zones faced hardships in all areas of life. Although the records are of individuals' experiences, in the personal narratives, one can see manifestations of underlying strains in society.

Although the term "diversity" was not yet used at the time, the records indicate that support for single-parent households, persons with disabilities, families with very young children, and foreigners was insufficient. Under such difficult circumstances, why do further hardship and gender inequality occur? The book is a valuable archive, assembled with the hope that, by telling and sharing their personal stories, women will be empowered to change their lives and society. There are also support organizations that connect women in disaster-affected areas with women around the county and publish newsletters to encourage the exchange of information.

In 2005, the Women's Net Kobe published a collection titled *From Disaster and Women to Participation of Women in Disaster Prevention and Reconstruction*. As can be gleaned from the title, the book points out the need for women to participate in local disaster prevention and recovery planning and also contains materials from victims of the Chuetsu Earthquake (2004) and victims of disasters in other countries. The book, published ten years after the disaster, presents new challenges, this time aimed at recovery.

The Hyogo Prefectural Gender Equality Promotion Center<sup>7</sup> located in Kobe was among the first organizations to start consultations for women, and its library has disseminated information regarding the role and activities of women in disasters and has proactively collected materials related to the earthquake disaster. In 2011, following the Great East Japan Earthquake, in an effort to highlight materials related to earthquake disasters that are written from the perspective of gender equality, the organization created the "Even Earthquake Disaster Library," which presents information in easy-to-understand formats.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.hyogo-even.jp/library.html>

In addition to books, public documents, magazines, visual material, and newspaper clippings, the library exhibits various materials including files sent to evacuation shelters at the time of the disaster and a series of newspaper articles related to emotional care written by consultants. The library has also created an earthquake database of materials in its possession, which it has made available to the public. The library has assigned unique keywords (of which there are 50 types) to each of the approximately 800 database items.

Disaster-related materials falling under a wide range of themes located in the Disaster Materials Collection and the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake Memorial Disaster Reduction and Human Renovation Institution are cross-searchable. As of May, 2018, the Hyogo Prefectural Library<sup>8</sup> has 58,226 items in its collection. Of the 247,874 disaster-related materials accumulated over more than two decades, only a small number are identified when “women” or “gender” are used as a search term.

The 880 items in the Even Library that can be searched from the perspective of gender equality represents a system that allows for continuous preservation of records and brings the activities of women during disasters out from the shadows and into the foreground.

### **1-3 Chuetsu Earthquake (2005)**

The Chuetsu Earthquake, which struck in October of 2004, was devastating to local industry and people’s lives. Based on concern that the destruction of historical buildings would also mean disruption of the transmission of local culture, there was an awareness of that both the recovery of the local community and cultural restoration would require the “transmission and use of historical records.”

Various organizations, under the lead of the Historical Archive Section at Nagaoka City Central Library,<sup>9</sup> adopted a two-pronged approach of “rescuing historical materials” and “collecting earthquake disaster-related materials.” In 2014, the library established the Nagaoka-shi Saigai Fukkou Bunko [Nagaoka Disaster Recovery Collection]. Both the vision and plans for recovery developed by the Niigata Prefectural government explicitly mention the importance of preserving records of the disaster, including enlisting the help of organizations with expertise in archiving. The Nagaoka Disaster Recovery Collection provided useful materials to evacuation shelters after the Kumamoto Earthquake that occurred in 2016.

As an example of using the disaster-affected/Chuetsu area itself as a repository for disaster-related information, Niigata Prefecture created a “Chuetsu Memorial Walking Tour”<sup>10</sup> that guides visitors to four facilities and three parks, where they trace the history of the earthquake disaster and the recovery, including an exhibit on life in an evacuation shelter. Even today, the tour attracts many visitors.

#### **1-3-1 Women’s records of the Chuetsu Earthquake**

Even in the midst of the chaos after the earthquake, efforts were made to record people’s unembellished experience of the disaster before memories faded. Numerous recollections,

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.lib.kobe-u.ac.jp/eqb/e-guide.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://kataritsugumono.jp/index.php?app=pdfbook&mode=list>

<sup>10</sup> <http://c-marugoto.jp/activities/>



booklets, and newsletters were sent to the Nagaoka City Gender Equality Center “Will Nagaoka.”

An Association to Promote Contributions by Women to Recovery from the Chuestu Earthquake was established. The Association subsequently asked 33 organizations registered with Will Nagaoka to conduct a survey of materials, lead to the commemorative publication of *We Will Not Forget: Contribution by Women to the Recovery* in 2010, five years after the earthquake. The strong appeal expressed in the title “We Will Not Forget” was well received by those working to preserve records of the disaster from the perspective of women.

Women talking about their experiences is often the starting point for creating and keeping records. Accordingly, in organizations responsible for passing down memories of the disaster, women play an active role in “talking departments” whose goal is to ensure that experiences of the disaster are not forgotten. In 2014, after the Great East Japan Earthquake, a book commemorating the 10th anniversary of the Chuetsu Earthquake titled *The Power that We Have Acquired and the Power That Will Lead Us to the Future: New Challenges on the Horizon 10 Years After the Chuetsu Earthquake* was published detailing local disaster prevention efforts. Women’s organizations have also played an important role in connecting records of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the Great East Japan Earthquake with those of the Kumamoto Earthquakes. The book shines a spotlight on the strong motivation and actions aimed at preserving and disseminating records.

## **2 Great East Japan Earthquake (2011)**

The Great East Japan Earthquake that struck on March 11, 2011 caused a massive tsunami that devastated a large swath of the coastal region, leaving many victims in its wake. The nuclear power plant accident that occurred after the earthquake forced many residents living near the site (680,000) to evacuate to different parts of the country.

Principle 1 of the Seven Principles for the Reconstruction Framework adopted shortly after the earthquake in May of 2011 by the Reconstruction Design Council states, “For us, the surviving, there is no other starting point for the path to recovery than to remember and honor the many lives that have been lost. Accordingly, we shall record the disaster for eternity, including through the creation of memorial forests and monuments, and we shall have the disaster scientifically analyzed by a broad range of scholars to draw lessons that will be shared with the world and passed down to posterity.” The Basic Guidelines for Reconstruction in Response to the Great East Japan Earthquake contains similar language regarding the preservation of records: “Japan should record and preserve the lessons of what it has learned from the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters by first creating a core facility and then establishing solid links between that facility and entities such as local governments and universities. Furthermore, a structure for preservation and disclosure of records should be developed, utilizing public-private consortiums. Moreover, Japan must promptly gather information materials and tsunami heritage information and develop a system to allow anyone, whether they be in Japan or abroad, to access, store, and use this information in an integrated manner. In doing so, Japan must also work at digitizing related materials, videos, and other data to promote the establishment of a field museum that uses new information technology. “

Accordingly, numerous archives were established in 2011, including the Great East Japan Earthquake Archive (HINAGIKU)<sup>11</sup> available at the National Diet Library portal site, 311 archives maintained by the Harvard University Edwin O. Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies<sup>12</sup> and the National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Resilience,<sup>13</sup> the Michinoku Shinron den maintained by the International Research Institute of Disaster Science<sup>14</sup> (formerly the Research Group on Disaster Prevention and Management), the Great East Japan Photographic Archive Project hosted by Yahoo!Japan, and the Sendai Mediatheque Center<sup>15</sup> for Remembering 3.11 (recorder311).

Despite being damaged by the earthquake, public libraries in the disaster-affected area have established disaster collections that take in personal records of individuals affected by the earthquake and experiences in evacuation shelters. The Fukushima Prefectural Library<sup>16</sup> has been particularly proactive about collecting materials related to the nuclear power plant accident, and the Miyagi Prefectural Library<sup>17</sup> has made it a principle to collect all local government records at the time of the disaster.

With the permeation of ICT such as the Internet and cell phones, a vast amount of digital materials has been disseminated in the seven years since the earthquake, including not only public records but, also, records maintained by individuals or collections of materials published online. The rapid advance of technology has enabled the digitization and the search of materials across multiple platforms (i.e. cross-searching). In addition to web-based and paper-based records, buildings and objects (e.g. the Earthquake Museum in Ishinomaki City) in disaster-affected areas have been preserved as memorials or placed in exhibits dedicated to showing the history of the tsunami disaster (e.g. Rias Ark Museum of Art).

There is a growing tendency to keep records of everything from relief activities to earthquake response manuals and guidelines and disaster prevention activities. Librarians, archivists, and curators are already working to not only utilize past disaster experiences to prevent future disasters but, also, to create an earthquake record archive system to pass down information to future generations.

## **2-1 The Great East Japan Earthquake and records by women**

Following the Great East Japan Earthquake, women possessing the gender-equality perspective that emerged after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake immediately began support activities. First, a network of women's organizations was established to collect and deliver relief supplies and began operating throughout the country. However, such a gender perspective did not exist in local relief activities aimed at supporting life in evacuation shelters. In cases of prolonged stays in evacuation shelter, aid workers expressed their hopes and pointed out the need for shelter management taking into consideration the needs of women and other vulnerable groups, encapsulated in the sentiment that "when it comes to

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<sup>11</sup> <http://kn.ndl.go.jp/?language=en#/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://jdarchive.org/en/about/about-archive>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.bosai.go.jp/e/about/>, <https://www.facebook.com/311archives>

<sup>14</sup> <http://irides.tohoku.ac.jp/eng/outline/index.html>

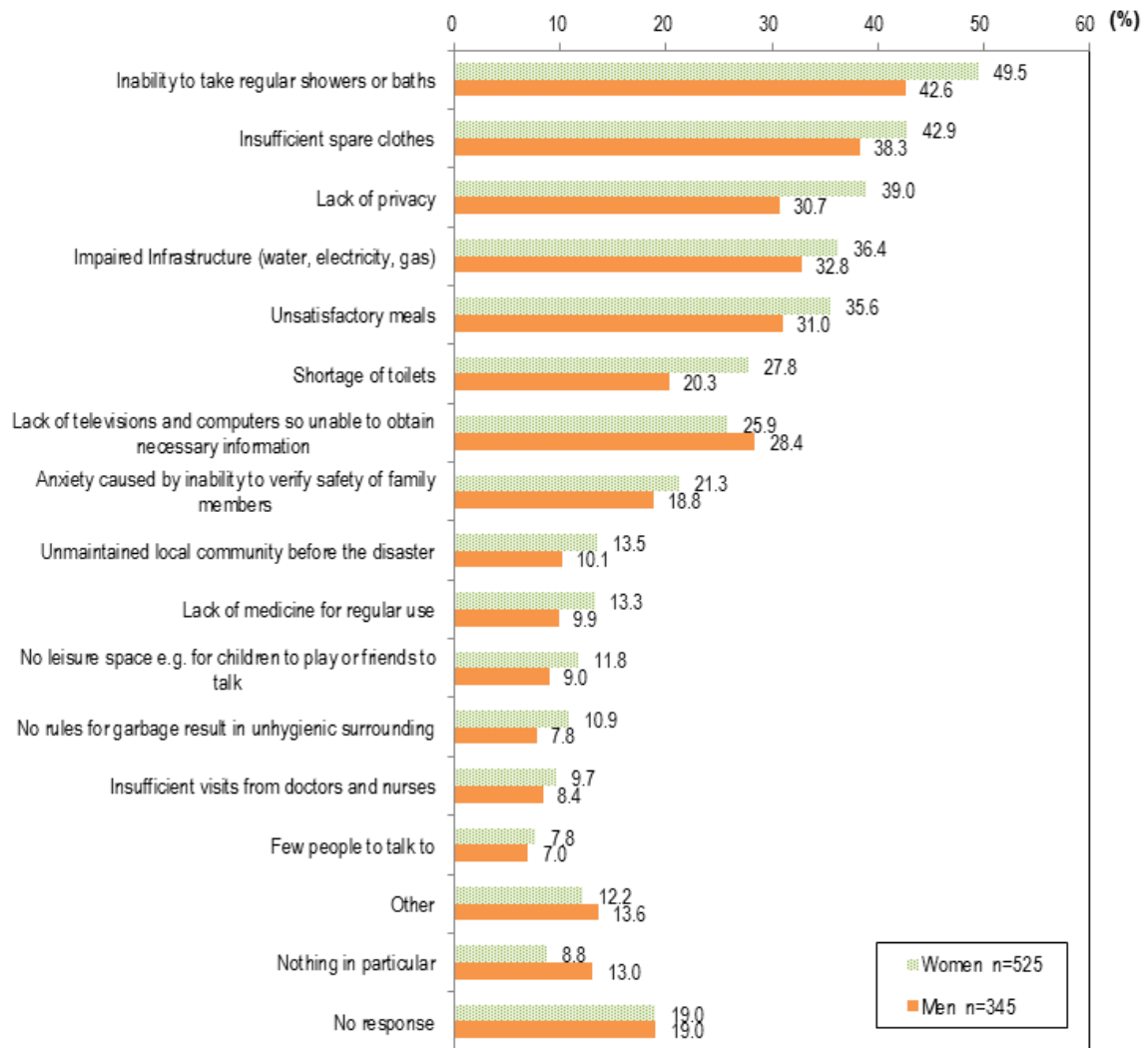
<sup>15</sup> <http://recorder311.smt.jp/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.library.fks.ed.jp/ippan/fukkolib/fukkolib.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://kioku.library.pref.miyagi.jp/>

disaster, both women and men are affected the same way.” That said, the establishment of “women’s spaces in evacuation shelters” is a concrete example of women’s voices being reflected and the issue of “disaster and gender” being addressed.

Figure 3: Problems Encountered during Residence at Evacuation Sites Immediately after the Disaster (by gender, multiple answers possible)



- (Notes)
1. Figures for men and women calculated by the Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office, based on 'Survey on Tsunami Evacuation' (2011) conducted jointly by the Cabinet Office, Fire and Disaster Management Agency, and Japan Meteorological Agency.
  2. 870 people (525 women, 345 men) who were evacuated from coastal areas to other prefectural locations in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures were surveyed. The survey was conducted by interview during field visits to temporary housing and evacuation sites.
  3. The survey was conducted between early and late July 2011.

Source: Cabinet Office, Government of Japan (2012), *Disaster Prevention and Reconstruction from a Gender Equal Society Perspective- Lessons from the Great East Japan Earthquake -*, From the “White Paper on Gender Equality 2012” Summary (p. 5).

It is said that the inequalities and disparities in everyday life emerge in times of crisis. Just as women’s positions are not recognized in everyday life, life in disaster-affected areas was

controlled by men. The issue of “disaster and gender” was a symbolic challenge for the evacuees and the aid workers alike in the struggle to achieve recovery. Numerous requests for gender-equal participation in on-site disaster relief and the development of disaster countermeasures and recovery policy were submitted to governmental agencies by women’s groups. In addition to surveys to identify the needs of women in disaster-affected areas, consultation activities to identify issues needing to be addressed, and reports on fact-finding investigations, symposia related to the issue of disaster and gender were held across the country. These symposia also included reports on the current state of affairs and efforts in the aforementioned areas.

The sheer quantity records of activities by women over the last seven years, preserved not only in books published by women but in a variety of media, far exceeds that of any previous disaster. However, given the massive size of the area affected by this disaster, only a small number of books on activities of women’s groups have been published. Furthermore, as these books are not sold in stores, they are not readily available even to public libraries and disaster collections unless they have a proactive policy for collecting such materials and established connections with women’s groups. If public libraries and disaster collections do not carefully assign keywords and classify materials, a large number of materials will be left out of searches.

Although gender equality centers are proactively collecting materials, it would appear that the majority of materials related to “disaster and gender” that have been published over the last seven years are possessed by individuals or are only distributed within the membership of women’s organization networks and, thus, remain hidden from the public. Each of these materials is valuable to future support activities and recovery efforts by women and, thus, should be shared by society as a whole. To achieve this end, it is necessary to work cooperatively with different organizations to identify the characteristics (content and media) of materials collected over the seven years and to develop guidelines for collection of materials in the future. In the next section, as an example of a national entity undertaking such an effort, I will discuss the state of the National Women’s Education Center collection, which despite not being called a “disaster collection,” represents a collection of materials from the Great East Japan Earthquake assembled from a gender perspective.

### **2-1-1 Collection at the National Women’s Education Center (NVEC) Information Center for Women’s Education**

The NVEC Information Center for Women’s Education,<sup>18</sup> which was established in 1977 according to the National Plan of Action for Women, is a library specializing in women, households, and family aimed at achieving a gender-equal society. The library’s collection includes 100,000 books published both in Japanese and overseas, books published by women’s organizations, and books published by research institutes, approximately 4,000 magazines, and 380,000 newspaper clippings from 1977 to present.

#### **(1) NVEC Women’s and Disaster Archives (web)**

(1) In 2014, the NVEC established the NVEC Women’s and Disaster Archives.<sup>19</sup> The mission is to coordinate gender equality centers and organizations around the country to create an archive of disaster recovery and support activities recorded from women’s

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nvec.jp/facility/center.html>

<sup>19</sup> [http://w-archive.nvec.jp/il/meta\\_pub/G0000337wd](http://w-archive.nvec.jp/il/meta_pub/G0000337wd)

perspectives. The archive continuously collects records of recovery support activities carried out by women’s organizations and institutions aimed at revitalizing local communities, which are then made available online. At present, gender equality centers, especially those in disaster-affected areas, and women’s organizations engaged in disaster relief are participating in the archive.

This archive is linked to the National Diet Library Great East Japan Earthquake Archive (nickname: HINAGIKU) website. The mission of HINAGIKU is to provide materials for recovery projects in disaster-affected areas, future disaster prevention and reduction efforts, as well as academic research and education under the guiding concept of “transmitting records and lessons of the Great East Japan Earthquake to subsequent generations.” It allows for the comprehensive searching of sounds, videos, images, and web information related to the Great East Japan Earthquake. Furthermore, the website is published in Japanese, English, Chinese, and Korean.

Among the 47 organizations (as of 1 June, 2018) providing data to HINAGIKU, the NVEC Women’s and Disaster Archives is an example of an organization capable of providing data that would be identified by keyword searches using “women” or “gender.” A search of this metadatabase using the keyword “gender” generates 458 items. A search using “East Japan & Woman” yields 2287 items. A search using “East Japan and gender” yields 80 items.

(2) The Information Center for Women’s Education Disaster Collection primarily collects books and booklets containing records of earthquake disasters and women and makes these available to the public.

Table 1: National Women’s Education Center, Information Center for Women’s Education Disaster and recovery-related materials (as of June 1, 2016)

Access key word	Disaster & Women	Great East Japan Earthquake	Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake
Books	266	255	46
Articles	445	622	69
Local governments’ publication	12	12	9
Japanese newspaper clippings	697	5838	458
Total	1420	6727	582

## 2-1-2 OVERVIEW OF MATERIALS HELD IN THE EARTHQUAKE COLLECTION

Although the data in the collections are separated by medium, the publishers and content vary widely. Below is an overview of the main collections of records related to the Great East Japan Earthquake that are currently being compiled.

(1) Personal experiences, narratives

(2) Record of earthquake-related activities of organizations

The records provide insight into the state of the disaster, support activities, support recipients, and the recovery process. Policy recommendations, demands, and statements with a gender perspective are valuable records of women raising their voices to affect social change.

(3) Documents of the national and local governments

This includes laws and regulations related to earthquake disasters, policies including plans for disaster prevention and recovery, and basic materials regarding the state of the disaster.

(4) Research and surveys from different organizations and various projects.

Many survey reports have been published by nongovernmental organizations regarding the needs of women in evacuation shelters and disaster-affected region, sexual violence against women and children, employment of single mothers, etc.

(5) Articles in magazines, academic journals, newspapers, and newsletters.

(6) Records that show the disaster through images, material that depict the disaster.

Photographs and photo books, depictions of one's hometown before the disaster in embroidery, and new activities of expressing memories using various media.

(7) Materials from the 2015 UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction.

(8) Materials related to disaster reduction and prevention.

Disaster prevention plans, training programs written from the standpoint of gender, disaster prevention manuals for diverse audiences including foreigners, LGBT, etc.

The producers and content of materials related to the Great East Japan Earthquake collected by the NVEC over a period of 7 years have been diverse and need to be even more diverse if they are to be useful in terms of disaster recovery and disaster prevention. That said, the most important elements of disaster collections are the voices of the survivors themselves. Survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake, including the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident are still in trying to return to their everyday lives.

Organizations that have provided support to disaster-affected areas over the long term point out that, even if construction of buildings and breakwaters is moving forward, a return to normal family life and the sense of loss and sadness at having lost one's family and life in the the earthquake or tsunami still remains, even after seven years. It is reported that many unspeakable experiences and activities of women are still hidden. It takes time for disaster records to accumulate. Next, I introduce joint efforts by survivors and supporter providers to proactively create opportunities for women talk about their experiences and to leave records as a new activity for creating collections.

### **3 CREATING RECORDS: A CASE STUDY**

#### **3-1 NPO Equal Net Sendai: TSUTAERU CAFÉ—AN OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN TO BE HEARD**

NPO Equal Net Sendai<sup>20</sup> is an organization based in Sendai-shi whose goal is to realize a society in which both men and women can live freely and comfortably by reexamining all aspects of life from the perspective of gender equality. To this end, it has been working to create a network to increase people's understanding of gender equality while maintaining loose connections with many people. The organization has approximately 70 members.

Being located in an area with high risk of a major earthquake and having learned of the hardship faced by women after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, the organization conducted a survey of approximately 1,100 individuals in 2008. The survey revealed the struggles faced by women responsible for caring for elderly relatives, children, and persons

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<sup>20</sup> <https://equal-net.jimdo.com/>

with disabilities. Since then, the organization has submitted “recommendations regarding disaster prevention and recovery as seen from women’s perspectives” and has continued to advocate for the need to include gender perspectives in disaster prevention and recovery.

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, which also affected Sendai-shi, struck on March 11, 2011, members of the group have carried out various activities to support women, including creating a volunteer network whereby volunteers visit evacuation shelters and take home laundry, which they wash in their own homes before returning, and setting up a hair salon for the residents of temporary housing. In 2012, the organization again conducted a survey targeting approximately 3,000 individuals as a first step to resolving the myriad problems facing women as a result of the Great East Japan Earthquake. As a result, 1,512 in Miyagi Prefecture were able to leave a record of their experiences, thinking, and actions as related to the earthquake disaster.

From among the respondents of the 2012 survey, the organization interviewed 40 women with diverse backgrounds (public health nurses, registered nurses, teachers, single mothers, sexual minorities, persons with disabilities) regarding their 3.11 experiences. According to an NPO Equal Net Sendai member who conducted some of these interviews, many of the women did not describe themselves as “vulnerable” victims of the earthquake but, rather, related how they continued to work to provide support to others even while facing numerous hardships themselves. However, at the time of the second interview five years after the earthquake, some women reported having to repeatedly go in and out of hospital for various ailments, while others that may have had the outward appearance of having recovered but also had the air that they struggled day by day while carrying some burden. Each individual’s feelings were complex and unfathomable. What should one do with feelings that do not fade even with the passage of time? Many reported that they were still in the midst of a maelstrom. The interviews give a sense of changes over time and the difficulty of leaving personal records.

A present, NPO Equal Net Sendai is engaging in a process together with residents to move forward towards recovery through an event known as the TSUTAERU [Let’s Communicate] CAFÉ. The goal is to face the difficulties of relating personal experiences. To this end, the organization has created a setting for people to get together and talk. It is providing an opportunity for individuals who, with the passage of time, finally feel that they want to talk about their experiences. By listening to these stories, the audience and those telling their stories are gradually able to share their experiences and to leave a record. Besides periodically conducting surveys and interviews, the organization offers courses to nurture women disaster prevention leaders and other educational opportunities related to disaster recovery while incorporating the ideas of women who have told their stories.

### **3-2 PHOTOVOICE PROJECT, INC.: MY VOICE THROUGH ONE PHOTOGRAPH**

The Photovoice Project, Inc.<sup>21</sup> was launched in June of 2011, with the goal of recording and disseminating the experiences of women affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake. The project has created Photovoice Meeting Groups in various locations throughout the Tohoku region whose members take and discuss photos of the disasters and life after the disaster from various perspectives, including that of individuals, community residents, and women. With

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<sup>21</sup> <http://photovoice.jp/>

the passage of time, the meetings have turned into opportunities for survivors to verbalize, relate, and share experiences that they had previously kept hidden.

At a typical meeting, the members focus on a single photograph of one of the members, listen to the experiences of the individual who took the photograph, taking ample time to discuss and craft a message to society. The sympathy expressed by fellow members at meetings has led to mutual understanding and exchange. The photographs and message together constitute records, which are presented in exhibits and/or meetings open to the public. Exhibits are opportunities for the photographers to communicate their message to both individuals attending the exhibit and to society at large.

The booklet titled *Photovoice Collection* contains photographs and messages of different members freely arranged by each member on their own page to reflect their thinking. The booklet allows disaster survivors to communicate their experiences as seen from their own perspective at a deeper level and to a broader audience. The continuous recording and dissemination of disaster- and recovery-related experiences keeps memories of the earthquake from fading. The project also supports members' efforts to voice their views on how improve disaster prevention, reduction, response, and recovery.

### **3-3 EMBROIDERY TAKATA MATSUBARA PROJECT: CONNECTED LANDSCAPES OF MEMORY**

Along the coast of the Rikuzentakata City, there was a pine grove with 70,000 trees. The grove, beloved by the residents, was a treasure connecting to the landscape of memory. The pine grove was completely destroyed by the tsunami that followed the Great East Japan Earthquake. Inspired by a workshop on expressing memories of the disaster through embroidery by free embroidery artist Hiroko Amano, a quilt depicting the pine grove on squares of fabric was assembled in 2014.

A total of 741 squares were sent in not only by residents of Rikuzentakata but, also, people all over Japan and around the world. The squares were stitched together by 120 individuals into a massive quilt-like tapestry, leading to the hosting of exhibits and workshops in various locations throughout Japan. In the workshops, participants talked about their experiences while depicting landscapes with needle and thread. The project enabled survivors to share their memories of the disaster, recorded in the form of embroidery, with people throughout Japan.



Figure 4 Embroidery made by a woman in the affected area



### **3-4 SEXUALITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK ESTO: FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DIVERSE SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND IDENTITY**

The Sexualities and Human Rights Network ESTO<sup>22</sup> is working to create a network to promote the exchange of people and information to achieve a society in which all individuals are respected regardless of their sexual orientation or identity. In October of 2017, ESTO published the *Disaster Prevention Guidebook for Sexually Diverse Individuals*.

Japanese society is behind the curve in terms of its understanding of sexual minorities. Although the need for support in disaster-affected areas for vulnerable individuals—i.e. elderly individuals, sick individuals, foreigners, persons with disabilities, etc.—has long been discussed, support activities for sexual minorities have only recently begun.

In small communities, sexually diverse individuals often feel they need to hide their true sexual orientation or identity at all costs for fear that they may lose their jobs or residence or that they or their families and friends may be ostracized and excluded from the society. The booklet provides concrete examples of difficulties faced by sexual minorities in evacuation shelters, including the fact that the baths and toilets are divided by men and women, gender has to be indicated on certificates of residence, and sex hormones may be difficult to obtain. In addition, the booklet provides explanations of terminology related to sexual diversity.

In terms of requests to local governments, ESTO asks for the installation of gender-free toilets and individual showers, separation of relief supplies by size rather than gender, training for consultation, and sufficient consideration for sexual minorities not only in special guidelines for such minorities but, rather, in the general guidelines for disaster prevention.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://estonet.info/>

Maintaining a diverse perspective becomes especially difficult during times of crisis. There needs to be a manual used by everyone, not only the individuals in question, that addresses what kind of support needs to be provided to whom. The booklet, which also contains a section titled the “Voices of the LGBT” is a valuable record for communicating the experiences of sexually diverse individuals.

### **3-5 JAPAN WOMEN’S NETWORK FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (JWNDRR): SOCIAL REVOLUTION BY WOMEN**

The Japan Women’s Network for Disaster Risk Reduction (JWNDRR)<sup>23</sup> was established after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. Initially, the organization’s goal was to send volunteers to observe evacuation shelters in Fukushima and Miyagi Prefectures. In the evacuation shelter, various types of discrimination that women experience in everyday life were exposed. In male-centric evacuation shelters, the views of women, individuals with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups were not taken seriously. Witnessing these circumstances, Akiko Domoto, who was a politician at the time (later became the director of JWNDRR), feared that the voices of such survivors would not reach the central government. Domoto enlisted the help of highly-capable women in various disciplines to convene the 6.11 Symposium on Disaster, Recovery, and Gender Equality with the goal of listening to the voices of women in disaster-affected areas and to submit policy recommendation deemed necessary from the standpoint of gender equality to be incorporated into the government’s recovery policies.

Each year, the subsequently established JWNDRR holds a symposium on June 11 to listen to the voices of women in disaster-affected areas and to carry out lobbying activities calling for government to incorporate gender and diversity perspectives in recovery policies while identifying challenges in disaster-affected areas. Since 2014, the JWNDRR has been expending substantial effort to develop a training program to cultivate women as empowered leaders in disaster-affected areas and in recovery efforts and not simply targets of protection.

JWNDRR participated in preparations for the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Japan in March of 2015 by carrying out lobbying efforts on behalf of the conference. With regard to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 adopted at the conference, JWNDRR contributed opinions to discussions by the Women Major Group on the need for women’s participation in all aspects of disaster risk reduction in order to address the various risk factors related to disaster.

JWNDRR’s participation in the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction has enabled the organization to expand its network internationally and to obtain information from other countries. The organization has subsequently hosted international symposia with other organizations. A record of the organization’s lobbying efforts, both domestic and international, has been left in the form of letters-of-request, opinion letters, and other documents submitted to the Prime Minister and the government. These documents also serve as a record of the process by which gender perspectives are being incorporated into Japanese disaster policy.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://jwndrr.org/>

#### **4 In Conclusion: With the Aim of Collaboration**

I surveyed the records of past and present disasters from the Great Kanto Earthquake to the Great East Japan Earthquake. Regardless of the disaster, women provided support, particularly support for the daily lives of people living in evacuation shelters immediately after an earthquake with the overall aim of recovery. In the Great Kanto Earthquake, which occurred 95 years ago, there was no official system for collecting records of people's experiences; thus, few official records of women's activities and experiences of the disaster remain. A few records of the activities women's organizations have been preserved. From these few examples, one can see the activities and compassion of these women, which remain the same even today in times of crises, and one senses the importance of preserving records. Still more must be done to collect materials while tracing the footsteps of women.

Since the Great East Japan Earthquake, along with the evolution of ICT, substantial advances have been made in systems for archiving disaster records. Various efforts are being made including the establishment of disaster materials collections within libraries and memorials as well as the construction of digital archives. In addition to preserving records, it is necessary to carry on the spirit of the activities of women with human rights and gender perspectives that emerged after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. In the case of past earthquake disasters, there is a need to unearth records of women that were not written down and to create collections to bring the experiences of women that previously could not be articulated from a human rights and gender perspective to light. We need to shift away from creating passive collections that await the arrival of meager records to creating proactive collections with clear targets. I propose the following based on analysis of established collections and new activities for creating records that were introduced in this paper:

##### **4-1 Collecting and creating records of individuals affected by disasters**

(1) The most important items when creating a collection are records of survivors' experiences. It is essential to imagine the circumstances of the survivors who are caught between their desire to talk about their experiences and the anguish that may resurface as a result of relating those experiences and to proactively support women's efforts to "relate" or "write down" their experiences. By writing or recording their experiences, personal recollections become public recollections, which are endowed with the power to inspire other activities.

(2) The importance of gender perspectives in disaster recovery and prevention policies  
Women's disaster experiences, women's participation in proposing social change and decision-making, and integrated disaster prevention, reduction, and recovery efforts are transmitted by records and ensure that the same mistakes are not made. Records from a gender perspective that asks whether women's rights are being protected are the foundation for robust recovery and community development.

##### **(3) Consideration for diverse groups**

The need to provide different support for individuals with different backgrounds was pointed out for the first time by survivors of the Great East Japan Earthquake and individuals who provided support to these survivors. One of the next challenges will be to collect and preserve records that show an understanding of the diversity of survivors who include individuals who

faced hardship and destitution even before the disaster, individuals of different gender, age, and nationality, and individual suffering from physical and mental ailments.

(4) Bringing disaster processes to light

The road from disaster to recovery is long. The circumstances and actual conditions must be analyzed and evaluated at each stage. Statistical materials and policy-related materials such as disaster prevention plans that enable confirmation of policy processes are needed.

4-2 Creation of archiving and dissemination systems

(1) Gender equality centers and women's libraries exist in various locations throughout Japan. Creation of a network for collecting disaster records such as disaster prevention plans from all communities regardless of size.

(2) Proactive provision of materials related to women to disaster materials collections, libraries, public records offices, and reference libraries.

(3) Increasing the visibility of women's disaster archive collections.

It is necessary to propose gender-related keywords and categories to increase the visibility of women's disasters collections among the large number of disaster materials collections.

4-3 International and regional linkages

With the increasing frequency of disaster resulting from climate change, disaster prevention and reduction have become issues of global concern. There are examples of disaster-affected countries that have adopted trailblazing policies that incorporate gender perspectives. Thus, the sharing of information is essential. At the same time, disaster-prone regions within a given country have their own unique cultures and customs and, in some cases, ancient folk wisdom on how to cope with disasters woven into everyday life. Such memories and records must also be preserved.

Creating a disaster collection that will be useful to future generations takes time. However, Japan is unique in that it is a country in which a wide range of disasters, including landslides and tornadoes, occur on a fairly short cycle. We must join with various stakeholders and work quickly to collect, preserve, and accumulate records that will lead us to a better future.

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