



Initial Input of the Government of Japan for the World Humanitarian Summit

July 2015

Cross-border issues such as humanitarian crises and natural disasters have a direct negative impact on the peace, stability and prosperity of the world. Currently, several multiple large-scale humanitarian crises have brought the world's total number of refugees and internally displaced persons to nearly 60 million, the highest it has been since World War II. The protracted nature of these crises imposes particular burdens to refugee-hosting countries, especially if they are also developing countries.

In the course of its modern history, Japan overcame a range of challenges and realized a period of high economic growth and the establishment of a peaceful stable society with limited economic disparity. Japan has taken advantage of its unique development experiences and has applied them to its development cooperation to Asian and other countries to support their economic growth. Japan, as a responsible major player in the world, will continue to contribute actively and exert strong leadership in addressing urgent humanitarian concerns. In so doing, Japan seeks to bring together the expertise and skills of diverse actors including private companies and NGOs.

Human security – a concept that pursues the right of every individual to live happily and in dignity, free from fear and want, through their protection and empowerment – is the guiding principle and foundation of Japan's humanitarian assistance. Japanese assistance focuses on individuals – especially the most vulnerable individuals in society such as children, women, refugees and internally-displaced persons – and provides cooperation for their protection and empowerment so as to ensure human security.

Peace, stability and security are prerequisites for development. Accordingly, Japan will comprehensively address a wide range of factors causing conflict and instability, including poverty. It will also provide seamless assistance from conflict prevention, emergency humanitarian assistance in the conflict situation, and promotion of conflict termination to emergency humanitarian assistance and assistance for recovery, reconstruction, and development in the post-conflict stage. In natural disasters and other emergencies, Japan will provide prompt assistance taking into account longer-term recovery and reconstruction.

I – Japan’s basic position towards the World Humanitarian Summit

1. Based on the above philosophy, Japan strongly supports the World Humanitarian Summit to be held in Istanbul in May next year, and has taken a leading role in the preparatory process from the very beginning by co-hosting the second regional consultation with Indonesia and OCHA in Tokyo in July last year. As a country that has itself experienced and overcome numerous natural disasters, as well as one that actively provides humanitarian assistance to all parts of the world, Japan would like to share its knowledge and experiences to contribute to the success of the Summit.

2. Japan hopes to see the elements of (1) disaster risk reduction, (2) protection, humanitarian access and empowerment of women, (3) capacity building, (4) innovation and (5) collaboration with wide-ranging partners including humanitarian and development actors, be discussed at the summit. Through the collaboration of wide-ranging partners, the Summit is expected to raise the potential of various partners and communities and send a positive message to promote their participation in humanitarian action.

II – Elements of Japan’s Input for the World Humanitarian Summit

1. Disaster Risk Reduction

A wide range of efforts are necessary to make a society as a whole more resilient to natural disasters, which includes preparing against their inevitable occurrence in order to mitigate and minimize the damages incurred. In this connection, Japan hosted the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai last March. With the participation of 187 Member States, the conference saw the adoptions by consensus of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Sendai Declaration. These two outcome documents were unanimously endorsed last month at the UN General Assembly. As presented in the Sendai Cooperation Initiative for Disaster Risk Reduction as well as in the Sendai Framework, Japan attaches particular importance to prior investment in disaster risk reduction from a long-term perspective, the implementation of “Build Back Better”, and collaboration between central governments and various actors. In particular, it is important, when faced with recurring crises, to not simply return to the same situation that existed prior to a disaster, but to overcome vulnerabilities based on the lessons learned from each previous disaster and to reconstruct toward a more disaster-resilient society; this is the core essence of “Build Back Better”.

The recent earthquake in Nepal was the first major incident since the adoption of the Sendai Framework, and we believe that working toward Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal and building greater resilience against future disasters based on the notion of “Build Back Better” are highly worthwhile.

Following up on the Sendai Framework, Japan has proposed that from now on the 5th of November be designated as “World Tsunami Day” in order to raise awareness of the enormous threat and potential for damage posed by tsunamis and the importance of implementing early warning systems.

It is vital that countries and regions alike take both “hard” structural measures – such as infrastructural reinforcements, and “soft” non-structural measures – such as mainstreaming disaster risk reduction in their development policies and project planning, introducing disaster risk education and building communities resilient to disasters. For example, as we saw in the case of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, thanks to routine evacuation drills and widespread education about disaster risk reduction, many elementary and junior high school students were able to safely evacuate before the tsunami struck and many lives were saved. This proves that educating and preparing people can be an extremely effective and inexpensive way to reduce casualties from natural disasters.

2. Protection, humanitarian access and empowerment of women

Based on the concept of human security, and in order to provide effective measures and to create sustainable mechanisms for the protection of people, it is vital to promote a community’s efforts toward self-reliance as well as to protect the dignity of vulnerable individuals. Capacity building for disaster-affected governments and local communities is also necessary. At the regional consultation in Tokyo in July 2014, participants collectively acknowledged the need to recognize that, in order to truly achieve economic and social recovery in disaster-affected areas, humanitarian assistance must not be seen merely as a form of goodwill or charity, but also as an investment in empowering people so that they are able to live with dignity. This type of thinking is important for improving the quality of humanitarian assistance.

In order to facilitate the immediate delivery of necessary assistance and to ensure humanitarian access and the security of humanitarian workers, it is essential to work on building trust with local stakeholders through dialogue and developing an effective communication strategy, complying with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

As the empowerment of women is fundamental in ensuring human security, it is important to incorporate gender perspectives into all stages of humanitarian assistance, including project planning, implementation and monitoring. In this regard, we should place sufficient focus on empowerment of women throughout the World Humanitarian Summit process. Japan has been working on the empowerment of women in Japan and around the world through holding the World Assembly for Women (WAW!) symposiums in Tokyo.

3. Capacity Building

In order to reduce the number of prolonged or recurrent crises, it is indispensable to build the capacities of affected governments and communities. Japan has long devoted much effort to developing human resources, and provides mid- and long-term assistance to this end, including technical cooperation for community capacity building and the training of officials.

As an example of regional cooperation, Japan introduced communications equipment to the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) to improve the ease of information sharing between the AHA Centre and ASEAN countries. Japan is also assisting with the construction of a system to provide emergency stockpiles and to manage and transport these supplies, which contribute to strengthening the capacity of the AHA Centre. Such assistance for regional mechanisms is useful in terms of promoting efficiency of humanitarian assistance.

4. Innovation

During humanitarian crises, it is essential that, though every affected individual faces vulnerabilities, the specific situations and needs of women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable segments of society be taken into consideration and that their active involvement be ensured at each stage of humanitarian assistance such as planning, implementation and monitoring. Making use of technological innovation is one way to understand the various needs of affected people and to ensure their participation. For example, in response to the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in West Africa, Japan, at the request of the Government of Guinea, provided fast-acting Ebola testing kits co-developed by a Japanese university and a Japanese company. This is a good example of an innovative idea making use of academic and private-sector expertise.

5. Collaboration with wide-ranging partners, including humanitarian and development actors

(1) Better collaboration between humanitarian and development actors

To prevent protracted and reoccurring crises, it is vital to promote further collaboration between humanitarian and development actors from the earliest stages of a crisis. This will contribute to resolving the root causes of crises and to improving the effectiveness of both humanitarian and development efforts so as to achieve better results. In this context, Japan actively supports the work of the Solutions Alliance, a concrete example of a collaborative project between humanitarian and development agencies, to find durable solutions to protracted refugee issues. Japan also provides Yen loans to contribute to the fiscal stabilization of Jordan as well as to the improvement of infrastructure in local communities in Turkey facing the increasing burdens of the high influx of Syrian refugees.

(2) Collaboration among local governments and between local government and the private sector

In Japan, each local government plays a leading role in disaster response. In order to receive smooth support from other local governments and the private sector in times of disaster, some local governments have concluded extensive advance agreements for mutual support with other local governments and companies. Based on such agreements, for example, when a disaster-affected local government does not have enough capacity to cope with the local evacuation and relief measures, other local governments can swiftly send support staff and goods at the request of the disaster-affected local government. In addition, food manufacturers and transport companies would respectively supply and deliver essential items such as food and drinking water to the disaster-affected local government, and constructing companies would conduct emergency rehabilitation. These are some good examples of collaborative efforts between local government and private sectors.

(3) Public-private partnership

It is meaningful to develop technologies and methods that address shared issues on disaster risk reduction through cooperation among various actors in industry, government and academia, in order to make use of different and beneficial capacities of different sectors, such as the academic knowledge on the hand and industrial technologies and services on the other. For example, a collaborative effort to alleviate the impact of natural disasters and promote preparedness by using space-based technology, such as earth observation satellite data, could be formed among a wide range of partners, including those from the aero-space industry and organizations both regional and local from the Disaster Risk Reduction community

(4) Broadening the donor base and promoting private-sector participation in humanitarian action

While the need for humanitarian assistance is growing due to the multiple large-scale humanitarian crises currently occurring simultaneously, and further due to these crises becoming protracted, the financial and human resources of the international community for humanitarian assistance are limited. With this in mind, it is necessary to make the financial base for humanitarian intervention more wide-ranging and diverse. For example, it is crucially important to encourage the participation of and contribution by emerging donors. It would be valuable also to increase the number of humanitarian partners by increasing private-sector engagement. Since the World Humanitarian Summit adopts a multi-stakeholder approach, it should serve as an opportunity to further promote the participation of new partners, including emerging donors and the private sector.