The provision of care for disaster victims by the Cash for Work (CFW) program: Evaluation and lessons from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami disasters in Tagajo city

Shingo Nagamatsu

ABSTRACT

During the disaster recovery process following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, the government of Japan introduced an emergency job-creation project as a disaster countermeasure, a policy scheme quite similar to the CFW program. In many cities, providing care for those disaster victims living in temporary housing has been undertaken by the victims themselves as paid staffs. We investigated the effect of the program in Tagajo city by the interview and questionnaire survey to the staffs and the residents in temporary housings respectively. We obtained the result that 1) the staff encounters some inherent difficulties in such a scheme, such as too much emotional involvement. However, they feel their work is worthwhile, as they get to see victims become independent and self-sufficient, 2) residents who feel a familiarity with the staff have a weak but significant sign of posttraumatic growth.

Introduction

During the disaster recovery process following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, the government of Japan introduced an emergency job-creation project as a disaster countermeasure, a policy scheme quite similar to the Cash for Work (CFW) program (Nagamatsu and Betterncourt, 2011). This paper aims to evaluate the CFW program in Tagajo city, in which the disaster victims provides the care for the victims living in temporary housing as paid work.

According to the existing literature of CFW, this program can be expected to have several advantages (Mercy Corps, 2007; GTZ, 2009). First, since the program can provide disaster victims with opportunities for obtaining income and they can contribute to empowering other victims, they are supposed to be financially independent, self-supporting, and be proud of themselves.

Second, CFW programs are expected to encourage disaster victims to participate and unite together in recovery efforts. When disaster victims become directly involved in the reconstruction of the areas in which they had lived, it is believed that the community itself is strengthened (Mercy Corps, 2007). In Tagajo context, the project is expected to have a positive impact on the supported victims as well, to feel an emotional attachment with the supporters since they have a similar experiences and hardships due to the disaster, for example.

This paper tries to quantitatively capture the advantages expected above and figure out the

1 Associate Professor, Faculty of Safety Science, Kansai University
challenges for future disasters. For those purpose, we employed following two methods. First, we conducted a questionnaire survey to measure the GHQ30 (General Health Questionnaire) and PTGI-J (Post Traumatic Growth Indicator Japan) of the victims who lives in the temporary houses. We regard the output of the survey can to evaluator of the program from consumer side. Second, we conducted the interview survey to the working victims, asking both pleasures and hardship they face. Summary of the answer to the interviews regards the measurement of the program from supplier side.

**Brief Description of the Tagajo city and its CFW project**

Tagajo city is located on the center of Miyagi prefecture. Sendai city is located on the north border, Rifu on the east, Siogama on the north, and the Hichigahama on the west. Many industrial bases are located in the Sendai port area. Many people are inhibited there due to an easy access to Sendai downtown. Total population is 62,513, and household is 25,398. The population density is 3,157 per square kilometer, the 115th highest of all municipalities of Japan. Tsunami had runs up the Sunaoshi river, and the southern area of the city is inundated as much as 1/3 of the total city area (Figure 1). Human loss by the disaster was 188, as much as 0.30% of total population. As for the housing damage, 1,746 units was totally collapsed, 1,634 was severely collapsed, 2,096 half collapsed, and 6,108 partially collapsed.

![Figure 1 Tagajo city and its inundated area](image)

In response to the housing damage, Tagajo city government provided 373 temporary housing units. 317 families are lived in as of February 3, 2014. The houses are built together into five villages, and each village has several supporting staffs, hired by private company in service sector. All these staffs are unemployed victims, although the extent of damage they had suffered differs. Total number of the supporting staff was 22, as of September 2013. Their primary work is confirming safety of the residents every morning, visiting and calling individual housing unit. Moreover, they are expected to administrate the common facilities of the village (i.e. meeting rooms), to correspond to the inquiry from external organizations, and to listen to the complaint and problem of the residents.
Questionnaire survey: method and its result

We intended to find the mental impact on the residential victims by the supporting service provided by the victims as staffs. Our hypothesis is that the residents who are well supported by the staffs are mentally healthier, and have more posttraumatic growth than those who are not. To test the hypothesis, we ask the GHQ 30(General Health Questionnaire) and PTGI-J (Post Traumatic Growth Indicator Japan) to the residents.

Our findings are as follows. The care for disaster victims (residents) by victims (supporting staffs) under Cash for Work (CFW) program is not expected to recover the GHQ30 of the residents directly. However, because the daily stress and mental health has a strong correlation, the care can be expected to recover the GHQ30 indirectly through the reduction of the daily stress. On the other hand, those who feel the intimacy to the supporting staffs has direct positive impact on the PTGI-J.

Interview survey: method and its result

We conducted an interview survey further to find the evaluation of the supporting service by the staffs themselves. We itemized the answers, and all items are structured by KJ method. The results is as follows.

1) Difficulties:
   • The supporting staffs feel the difficulty to maintain a good relationship with the residents, such that they sometimes have unreasonable requests from the residents.
   • On the other hand, some staffs answered that residents became jealous to their situations, partly because some of the staffs are far less damaged by disaster than residents, and have job opportunities.
   • Coordination with the Tagajo city government is also indicated as a major challenge, because the city government cannot command the staff directly due to the legal requirement of the labor law.

2) Advantages of the being victim as a supporting staff:
   • Lack of the biased view against the residents
   • Holding common experiences as a victim

3) Disadvantages:
   • Lack of Special knowledge about caring
   • Too much emotional involvement.

4) The most pleased thing:
   • Being appreciated by the residents.
   • Being intimately with the residents, such as called by name and being said “thank you”
   • Being encouraged by the residents

Conclusion

Those result shows that the CFW can be effective tool for promoting recovery, creating the effective interaction among disaster victims.
References


