

**NUFFIELD
COUNCIL ^{ON}
BIOETHICS**

**After the Great East Japan
Earthquake: a review of
community engagement activities
and initiatives**

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Summary

Communities took a strong role in leading various initiatives after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident at Fukushima. Initiatives ranged from practical exercises such as starting a programme of beach clearing work, to more creative activities like forming knitting circles and teaching the tea ceremony to school children.

Most examples of these initiatives highlight the leading role of women – particularly older women. In the literature identified, the breadth of older women's engagement activities was wider than those of men and young members of affected communities.

The role of organisations was also key, particularly in their engagement work with young community members after the disaster. Organisations provided creative activities such as those involving music, art, theatre, and comedy; and also provided spaces – such as playgrounds, cafés, and community clubs – to give adults and children places to relax, talk, play, contribute to rebuilding plans, and to support others.

The benefits of these initiatives, activities, and programmes include improvements to community cohesion, positive impact on mental wellbeing, and pride and satisfaction among community members.

Problems or issues that occurred as a result of initiatives were not explored at length in the literature. Those that did highlighted problems such as sections of the community being ignored, tensions between local and national governments (although this encouraged community members to take action themselves), and the initiatives taking place in a situation where resources and services were overstretched – therefore limiting their reach.

Background

- 1 The Great East Japan Earthquake (GEJE), tsunami, and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident was a compound¹ of disasters which occurred in March 2011 in the Tohoku region of Japan. This series of events has since been referred to by their date – the 3/11 disasters – and also by simply referencing 'Fukushima'.

Aims of this review

- 2 This review aims to consider a wide range of literature that explains and explores how communities were engaged after the GEJE occurred. It addresses four key questions:
 - [How did communities affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake initiate, control, participate, and respond after the disaster?](#)

¹ United Nations University (2016) *Fukushima global communication programme: final report*, available at: https://collections.unu.edu/eserv/UNU:5758/FGC_Final_Report_EN.pdf, at page 2.

- [What did organisations do in order to engage communities affected by GEJE?](#)
- [What benefits have been identified from post-GEJE community initiatives?](#)
- [What problems arose in post-GEJE community engagement efforts?](#)

Review methods

- 3 Keywords relating to GEJE were identified and used to construct search terms that formed the basis for this rapid review. The search terms were entered into Google (in order to gather grey literature), and Google Scholar. Snowballing references identified by initial search results yielded further sources from academic journals and grey literature. Abstracts of search results were assessed for relevance and, where pertinent to the aims of this review, each result's own references were followed up. Grey literature – which comprises a large part of this review – was identified through Boolean searching via Google, in addition to papers already known to the author. Searches were undertaken from 2011 to the present day / time of writing.

How did communities affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake initiate, control, participate, and respond after the disaster?

“After the accident in Fukushima, citizen-led initiatives have matured and continue to develop.”²

- 4 This section focuses on how communities expressed their agency after the disaster. Initiatives are divided into general initiatives launched by communities as a whole and those set up by older people.

General community-driven initiatives

- 5 Some initiatives driven by communities were of a very practical nature. For example, residents living in Suetsugi village produced their own maps of radioactive contamination and used them to avoid / reduce their own exposure;³ and in Nagasuka community members launched their own beach cleaning project. This project was “initiated by community leaders in response to the needs and wishes of the local community”. In interviews with five community leaders and 15 volunteers who were involved with the project, the will of community members proactively taking charge of the task was highlighted.

“When realising that the government had different priorities for disaster recovery [i.e., not the beach recovery project], the attitude of the community leaders was not to wait for official plans to be put into operation but to find a bottom-up

² European Joint Programme for the Integration of Radiation Protection Research (2018) *Report on key challenges, best practices and recommendations for stakeholder engagement*, available at: http://www.engage-concert.eu/-/media/Files/ENGAGE/publications/deliverables/D9_82_Report_on_key_challenges-best_practices_and_-recomm_stakeholder_engagement_submitted29082018.pdf.

³ *ibid.*

solution and do things themselves with the resources available in the community.”⁴

- 6 The project sought to ‘reclaim’ the beach as a place where people could have fun and take part in community activities. A community leader interviewed about the project observed: “we did it to fulfil the dreams of our local children because if such dreams come true, the community becomes more united and resilient in its attempt to build back.”
- 7 Other environmentally focused initiatives include the community-led ‘Blue Tourism’ project. The name took inspiration from the colour of the waters around Minamisanriku and was the idea of a group of fishermen living in the area. It aimed to respond to the disaster through tourism, counteracting the “environmental, social and economic hardship” experienced after the disaster.⁵
- 8 Communities also acted to fulfil basic needs, including sharing food with others. The observations of a local businessman in Minamisanriku highlight the role of this community-led initiative.

“There were more than 1,000 cakes in the fridges at the time of the disaster. The next morning I took them to the rescue center. When I saw people hurrying to help with the recovery work, carrying a piece of cake with them as they had no time to stop and eat, I felt deeply connected to my community.”

- 9 The same paper that reported these observations also suggests that “the social connectedness and sharing of food and other basic provisions helped in some way to ameliorate the sense of social isolation, and was partly instrumental in coping with the psychological sense of loss and the natural grief for the death of loved ones.”⁶
- 10 Efforts to revitalise the fishing industry in affected areas of Japan also saw community members taking charge of ‘what happened next’. For example, Yoshimasa Koizumi – a fisherman who moved to Katsurashima from Tokyo a day before the tsunami struck – sought to rebuild the area’s fishing industry a month after the disaster. After his new boat and fishing equipment were destroyed by the tsunami, Mr Koizumi set up Uminoko Saisei (Children of the Sea), a cooperative project for people working in the fishing industry.⁷
- 11 A more creative example of community action took place three years after the disaster, when an artist set used art to address “social issues left in the aftermath of the Tohoku disaster”, including considering how best to use a local gallery for survivors of the disaster. “He decided to help artists, architects and other creators based in the afflicted areas use the gallery to share information about their activities, convey their projects to Tokyo and pass them down to future

⁴ Lin Y, Kelemen M, and Tresidder R (2018) Post-disaster tourism: building resilience through community-led approaches in the aftermath of the 2011 disasters in Japan *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* **26(10)**: 1766-83.

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Goulding C, Kelemen M, and Kiyomiya T (2018) Community based response to the Japanese tsunami: a bottom-up approach *European Journal of Operational Research* **268(3)**: 887-903.

⁷ CNN (28 February 2012) *Fisherman’s battle to revive tsunami-devastated industry*, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/26/world/asia/rebuilding-japan-urato-islands/index.html>.

generations.”⁸ Emotional responses to the disaster were also captured by residents of Minamisanriku who wrote haikus to express their feelings after the tsunami.

“I lost everything in the tsunami, but I still have myself.”

“The tsunami did not take everything, I still have my identity.”⁹

Initiatives set up by older people

12 Older people living in affected areas took control of several initiatives in their communities. Most of the examples identified were organised by older women. In Shichigahama, for example – where approximately 1,000 homes were destroyed by the tsunami – older people formed a knitting circle called ‘Yarn Alive’ to provide support for themselves and their peers. The following excerpt provides a positive account of the effect the knitting group had on its members.

““It cheers me up so much that I don’t even feel lonely at night, I just feel like knitting some more,” reported one member whose home and store were washed away by the tsunami. Later, when the same resident missed a club meeting to attend an athletic event, her fellow knitters called to check up on her. Informal insurance means that network members provide necessary resources at a time when standard suppliers of those resources – such as the government, private sector companies, and so forth – are unable to do so.”¹⁰

13 Further examples of older people’s active role in engagement initiatives after the disaster were elicited through conversations with 20 women from the city of Ishinomaki, some of which took place over tea. One of the women interviewed – who was in her 60s – described how older people in her community had been encouraged to interact through gatherings that she had helped to organise.

“I have been opening my house that had been repaired after the disaster, to the community to organizing a gathering of elderly from the neighborhood. Through these gatherings, I hear about when the disaster hit and find myself learning something new for the first time. For example, how our cat was doing. I realized the importance of interaction with neighbors including checking on each other by saying something.”¹¹

14 Two other women, both in their 70s, provided further accounts for the same series of interviews.

“I’m volunteering to teach tea ceremony for the tea ceremony club at a school. After the disaster, young students quickly came to help me. I felt generous hearts that money couldn’t buy and repayment for my volunteer work. You can recover fast by changing the way you think and handle matters, valuing meeting with

⁸ Japan Disasters Digital Archive (31 March 2014) *Artist, folklorist use power of art to tackle issues in post-quake society*, available at: <http://jdarchive.org/en/item/1963155>.

⁹ Goulding C, Kelemen M, and Kiyomiya T (2018) Community based response to the Japanese tsunami: a bottom-up approach *European Journal of Operational Research* **268(3)**: 887-903, at page 895.

¹⁰ Aldrich DP (2015) Social capital in post disaster recovery: strong networks and communities create a resilient East Asian community, in *Resilience and recovery in Asian disasters: community ties, market mechanisms, and governance*, Aldrich DP, Oum S, and Sawada Y (Editors) (Tokyo: Springer Japan), at page 23.

¹¹ Chiba N (2015) *Voices of women from the city of Ishinomaki, Miyagi prefecture*, available at: https://jda-drupal.s3.amazonaws.com/3_11women_2210.pdf.

people and holding yourself firm. During these three years, I felt there was a difference in speed of recovery in people based on the difference in the way they lived their lives. I returned home from a shelter on the fourth day, determined to rebuild my apartment building and applied for a loan. There are things you can do only because you experienced the Tsunami such as contributing to the community.”¹²

“As I’ve been teaching picture letters (drawing pictures on postcards, letters, etc. that you send to people), I started receiving them from my group members all over Japan. And, I distributed picture letters of Japanese round fans that I received to the shelters. When I took some picture fans to a community center, I was asked to teach “picture letters” by the victims. Brushes, paint, postcards, palettes were all donated and I started to teach including children. The relationship, connected with a heart not with goods, may last longer. I want to continue passing on what happened with the disaster so that it won’t fade with time. Some people who came to my picture letter class wanted to talk more than drawing. Some people saw flowers after three years and started to talk about hope and tomorrow.”¹³

15 Separately, another group of older women affected by the disaster decided to make dolls “because they had never had dolls when growing up during the early part of the last century... they recounted their childhood... their adulthood... and how they survived the tsunami (stranded on roofs for days, after which they were rescued by volunteer fire fighters).”¹⁴

16 In addition to older women’s contributions to community initiatives, younger women’s mobilisation after the disaster includes the production of ‘Disaster Risk Reduction Notes’ by mothers affected by the disaster.

“After printing this booklet, the mothers then went on speaking tours to introduce it to other mothers, greatly developing their speaking abilities. They are now members of community committees and have become full-fledged women leaders who want to pass on their experiences so the next generation of women will be empowered.”¹⁵

What did organisations do in order to engage communities affected by GEJE?

Arts-based initiatives

17 Several engagement activities launched by organisations after the disaster were arts-based. These included Arts for Hope, which worked with survivors of the disaster with the aim of providing mental health care through arts and creative activities. The initiative worked in association with medical, art, and education experts, and youth groups and used the arts as a ‘communication tool’ to “provide [a] safe place and time to the quake survivors to regain emotional balance.” The project aimed to “provide a place where victims can gather together in order to

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ Goulding C, Kelemen M, and Kiyomiya T (2018) Community based response to the Japanese tsunami: a bottom-up approach *European Journal of Operational Research* **268(3)**: 887-903.

¹⁵ Japan Women’s Network for Disaster Risk Reduction and Japan Association for Women’s Education (2015) *Gender equality and disaster risk reduction: women as a force for change*, available at: http://jwndrr.org/main/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Report_qatar_final.pdf.

encourage and support communication.”¹⁶ Another arts programme, the Tohoku Theater Project, used theatre “to create safe environments for open dialogue about the difficult issues facing communities from Tohoku.” The programme was developed in partnership with local organisations and theatre groups “to tailor the intervention to the particular needs of the participating community groups.”¹⁷

- 18 An arts initiative set up by the Okuma Board of Education focused on children’s perspectives by setting up a panel for comedy-based education for schools in the area. Children affected by the nuclear disaster and living as evacuees were taught ‘manzai’ – a Japanese style of stand-up comedy – and wrote scripts and performed in front of one another. One of the aims of the initiative was to reduce children’s anxieties. The head of the Board notes: “Many children feel exhausted at home... They appreciate what adults are doing to help them, but they are also evacuees. These children work very hard, trying to live up to adults’ expectations.”¹⁸
- 19 Music initiatives that focused on young people included charitable concerts staged by the Berlin Philharmonic to fund a children’s orchestra in Soma, 45km north of the Fukushima nuclear plant.¹⁹
- 20 Researchers also set up two cultural animation workshops attended by over 100 community members and business leaders from Minamisanriku. The workshops sought to explore the impact of the tsunami on those affected and included exercises designed “to resonate with the needs of the Minamisanriku community”. Participants were encouraged to adorn a bare tree with their stories and poems. The researchers note the positive effect of this engagement approach.

“Through object making and storytelling, participants were able to make sense of the past, the present and future. It became obvious that, for many, the immediate past was still painful, but most of them were able to accept the present and look to the future with a sense of hope. In this regard, art making and the creation of meaningful objects helped to express internalized or taboo thoughts, and reduced feelings of alienation and despair.”²⁰

- 21 The importance of storytelling was one of the suggestions from workshop participants from the Urato Islands who were asked for proposals to address three key aims after the disaster: preventing further population loss; creating mechanisms to attract people from outside the islands; and to maintain the environment to continue living on the islands. The participants suggested “making the story of the islanders visible... pass down experiences from the earthquake

¹⁶ Arts for Hope (2011) *Providing support for 'Arts for Hope': disaster relief for the Great East Japan Earthquake*, available at: http://artsforhope.info/en/pdf/info_AFH_2011june.pdf.

¹⁷ Global Mental Health Program (2011) *Tohoku Theater Project*, available at: <https://www.cugmhp.org/research/tohoku-theater-project/>.

¹⁸ Japan Disasters Digital Archive (23 May 2017) *In Fukushima, children are being taught to laugh out loud*, available at: <http://jdarchive.org/en/item/2228684>.

¹⁹ Japan Disasters Digital Archive (18 September 2012) *German musicians help youth orchestra in Fukushima*, available at: <http://jdarchive.org/en/item/1517374>.

²⁰ Goulding C, Kelemen M, and Kiyomiya T (2018) Community based response to the Japanese tsunami: a bottom-up approach *European Journal of Operational Research* **268(3)**: 887-903.

and tsunami”.²¹ Neighbourhood storytelling networks also took place in locations as far away as Tokyo, which – although 250km from the Fukushima plant – was also subject to the fear of nuclear radiation after the disaster (leading to some residents choosing to evacuate).²²

Non-arts focused initiatives

22 Organisations also engaged affected communities through initiatives outside of the arts. This included the Safecast project, which brought about a focus on ‘citizen science’ among community members affected by the disaster. Members volunteered “in data collection, technical measurement, and analysis in fields such as technical measurement, and analysis in fields such as ecology, biodiversity, and astronomy.”²³ They also included Kobe University’s Lost Home Project which created models of towns and villages damaged by the tsunami. The models were first used to form part of an exhibition, but for the second phase of the project – which took place in summer 2012 – the models became “tools for active community engagement that were touched, painted and tagged with personal annotations by the survivors.” The project is explained as an exercise in collective memory.

“In a series of workshops the dispersed evacuees of the affected communities were invited to come together for the first time and systematically share their memories. In that way many personal experiences and stories about local and historical events were added to the models in the form of small labels. In some workshops more than 2000 so-called “memory-flags” turned the white, somehow lifeless architecture models into cheerful, colorful representations of collective memory.”²⁴

23 Direct Relief funded the Japan International Volunteer Center to support six community spaces to help encourage communication and social activities among people living in Minamisōma, Fukushima, an area severely damaged by the tsunami. These activities included psychological support sessions with volunteer psychiatrists who held information sessions “about avoiding depression and staying emotionally and mentally healthy.”²⁵ Direct Relief also funded a ‘playground of hope’ project for communities in Tokoku, which built “playgrounds and community spaces in needy communities throughout Japan... [to] help disaster-

²¹ International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (2013) *Second community dialogue seminar in Japan’s tsunami affected Tohoku region*, available at: <https://satoyama-initiative.org/2nd-community-dialogue-seminar-held-in-japans-tsunami-affected-tohoku-region/>.

²² Jung J-Y, Toriumi K, and Mizukoshi S (2013) Neighborhood storytelling networks, internet connectedness, and civic participation after the Great East Japan Earthquake *Asian Journal of Communication* **23(6)**: 637-57.

²³ Aldrich DP (2012) *Post-crisis Japanese nuclear policy: from top-down directives to bottom-up activism*, available at: <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/api103.pdf>, at page 7.

²⁴ Dimmer C, and Lindenberg J (2014) Mapping social innovation and strengthening community resilience: bottom-up recovery initiatives and community spaces in post-disaster Ishinomaki, Japan: [Conference paper].

²⁵ Direct Relief (2015) *Community activities in Minami Soma, Fukushima 2014*, available at: <https://www.directrelief.org/2012/09/jvc-grant-summary/#MinamiSoma2014>. The damage to the city is explored in Independent (9 March 2016) *Minamisoma: the long road to recovery for the city that was all but swept away by 2011 tsunami*, available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/minamisoma-the-long-road-to-recovery-for-the-city-that-was-all-but-swept-away-by-2011-tsunami-a6921761.html>.

affected communities rebuild by constructing these spaces in areas that experienced significant damage.”²⁶ A similar initiative was established by the Japanese Red Cross Society (JRCS): the Smile Park in Fukushima in February 2012 provided a space “where parents can let their children play freely without being anxious about radiation”. JRCS also organised summer camps to allow children from disaster-hit prefectures to have a break in “the beautiful natural surroundings of Hokkaido”, with the aim of providing “children with time and space to recover from the after-effects of the disaster and create opportunities for them to learn from one another.”²⁷ Save the Children also worked with young people who were affected by the disaster and established Children’s Community Building Clubs. The Clubs encouraged children to “develop their own versions of the recovery plans they would like to see for their own towns.” The plans were subsequently presented by the children to Japan’s Minister for Reconstruction.²⁸ Save the Children also carried out a survey to gauge children’s willingness to participate in recovery initiatives for their communities. The survey found that 70% of children wanted to participate; 32.5% specifically indicated that they wanted to take part in community events.²⁹

24 Older people were also the focus of organisations’ initiatives outside of the arts. HelpAge International, for example, set up the Ibasho Café in Ofunato – an area of Japan significantly damaged by the tsunami. The café was built following 18 months’ consultation with older people living in the area and aimed to improve older people’s wellbeing, building on “people’s strengths not their physical weaknesses.” The café provided a space for older people “to connect with each other and pass on their experience and knowledge to other generations.”³⁰ World Vision also facilitated the establishment of a tea salon for older people called Azumare (translation: ‘let’s get together’) in Minami Sanriku. The space was open each day and was able to host around 100 people per day. It provided “an informal, relaxing space for survivors to gather, share their stories and provide support for each

²⁶ Direct Relief (2014) *Recovery continues three years after the Japan earthquake and tsunami*, available at: <https://www.directrelief.org/2014/03/recovery-continues-three-years-after-japan-earthquake-tsunami/>.

²⁷ Japanese Red Cross Society (2013) *Japan: earthquake and tsunami - 24 month report*, available at: http://www.jrc.or.jp/vcms_lf/Ops_Update_24monthReport_Final.pdf.

²⁸ Save the Children (Japan) (1 October 2012) *Children want to participate in post-tsunami recovery process: Save the Children surveys 15,000 children from tsunami affected areas*, available at: http://www.savechildren.or.jp/jpnem/eng/pdf/news/20121001_PressRelease.pdf. See also: Save the Children (Japan) (2013) *Action: speaking out from Tohoku - building better communities through the participation of children*, available at: http://www.savechildren.or.jp/jpnem/eng/pdf/spotlight/action_eng_201304.pdf. Similar work was undertaken by World Vision, which gathered feedback from children on how they young people might contribute to the rebuilding of their town: World Vision (2012) *Japan earthquake and tsunami: one year anniversary report*, available at: <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Japan-1-year-report.pdf>.

²⁹ Save the Children (Japan) (2012) *Results of 'hear our voice 7: attitude survey on children's participation 2012' prompt report*, available at: http://www.savechildren.or.jp/jpnem/eng/pdf/spotlight/120928_CCFC.pdf.

³⁰ HelpAge International (16 March 2015) *Ibasho Café: a space for older people*, available at: <https://www.helpage.org/blogs/jane-scobie-35/ibasho-caf-a-space-for-older-people-831/>.

other.” The salon was run by the town’s Social Welfare Council with support from World Vision and other organisations.³¹

- 25 Physical exercise formed the bases of a JRC project which encouraged older people to try Nordic walking. Older people living in Iwate, Fukushima were rehoused in prefabricated homes, and were faced with an ‘unsettled’ lifestyle with a lack of physical exercise. The project, suggests JRCS, promoted “health through exercise and [built] a stronger sense of community.”³²
- 26 Initiatives aimed at communities as a whole – as opposed to those focused on specific age groups – included community spaces established by the International Medical Corps. IMC worked with other organisations (Japan Volunteer Center, Shapla Neer, and The People) so that evacuees from the disaster could meet and talk to others who had been evacuated. The centres also offered psychological support to survivors and information about resources available to them. People who came to the community spaces were also able to take part in recreational workshops and activities.³³
- 27 The Japanese Government also established a programme to train ‘radiation risk communicators’ (RRCs) after the disaster. A note on the scheme states that the RRCs were intended “to educate regular citizens about radiation risks... the RRCs program aimed to improve risk communication in relation to radiation threats by creating a cadre of citizens who were knowledgeable about radiation risks in food. The idea was that these trained RRCs could then transmit the correct information to the general public.”³⁴

What benefits have been identified from post-GEJE community initiatives?

- 28 A range of benefits have been identified around community engagement initiatives after GEJE. Before addressing each example of benefit in turn, one general comment is worth noting:

“The Fukushima disaster also shows us that yet again, the most effective humanitarian response happens when there is a partnership with affected communities and coordination with relevant authorities. Thus, local, national and international actors all must play an essential role in scaling up preparedness, response and recovery activities.”³⁵

³¹ World Vision (2012) *Japan earthquake and tsunami: one year anniversary report*, available at: <https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/Japan-1-year-report.pdf>.

³² Japanese Red Cross Society (2013) *Japan: earthquake and tsunami - 24 month report*, available at: http://www.jrc.or.jp/vcms_lf/Ops_Update_24monthReport_Final.pdf.

³³ International Medical Corps (2011) *Japan earthquake and tsunami: our response*, available at: <https://internationalmedicalcorps.org/emergency-response/japan-earthquake-tsunami/>.

³⁴ Kimura AH (2018) Fukushima ETHOS: post-disaster risk communication, affect, and shifting risks *Science as Culture* **27(1)**: 98-117.

³⁵ OCHA (2016) *Fukushima: five years on*, available at: <https://www.unocha.org/story/fukushima-five-years>.

Improved community cohesion

29 Improvements to community cohesion were observed in several accounts of engagement efforts after the disaster.

“Japan’s tragedy has taken lives, destroyed homes and communities, and slowed an already underperforming economy. But it has also awakened a civil society that for decades has been seen as weak and nonparticipatory. Citizens have stepped forward to engage in community-based science, challenge the information and explanations given to them by government officials and other authorities, and protest existing policies. At the crossroads of energy and politics, Japanese citizens have the chance to take the path they make themselves and to determine their own future.”³⁶

30 Yoshimasa Koizumi – the fisherman who launched the Children of the Sea initiative (see paragraph [10](#)) – noted that the tsunami made it easier to fit into a new community (he moved from Tokyo to Katsurishima a day before the tsunami struck) whose lifelong residents “are often quite insular.” He states:

“A positive thing was that it made everyone come together. I was an outsider and many were kind to me.”³⁷

31 Community members from the Urato Islands who took part in a workshop organised by Tohoku University and the UN University of Advanced Studies in April 2013 were noted to have “appreciated the opportunity to express and exchange each other’s thoughts and ideas, which they normally keep within themselves.”³⁸

32 Improved interaction between community members and visitors to affected areas after the disaster has also been highlighted in an assessment of Blue Tourism (see paragraph [7](#)).

“Blue Tourism created a positive interaction between the visitors/tourists and the local community as service providers. Consequently, visitors become interactive participants within the project, sharing experiences, stories and taking positive supportive actions; in short one could witness a transformative healing process which helped to build disaster resilience via a bottom-up, sustainable form of tourism.”³⁹

33 Community leaders who helped to mobilise community members to take part in the Nagasuka Beach Recovery Project (see paragraph [5](#)) played a key role in contributing to a cohesive response to realise the aims of the project, particularly in a situation where “unlike conventional projects, careful planning of stakeholder

³⁶ Aldrich DP (2012) *Post-crisis Japanese nuclear policy: from top-down directives to bottom-up activism*, available at: <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/api103.pdf>, at page 10.

³⁷ CNN (28 February 2012) *Fisherman’s battle to revive tsunami-devastated industry*, available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/02/26/world/asia/rebuilding-japan-urato-islands/index.html>.

³⁸ International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (2013) *Second community dialogue seminar in Japan’s tsunami affected Tohoku region*, available at: <https://satoyama-initiative.org/2nd-community-dialogue-seminar-held-in-japans-tsunami-affected-tohoku-region/>.

³⁹ Lin Y, Kelemen M, and Tresidder R (2018) Post-disaster tourism: building resilience through community-led approaches in the aftermath of the 2011 disasters in Japan *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* **26(10)**: 1766-83.

engagement was not always practical due to the urgency and uncertain nature of the project.”

“... the community leaders’ determination and their active role in identifying stakeholders inspired many people to take part in the cleaning operation and to work hard. One of the local volunteers said about community leaders: “...they supported us in the wake of the earthquake... they were concerned about us so we should now work even harder to deserve their concern” (Volunteer 2). This indicates the positive impact community leaders have had on the morale and work ethics of the local community.”⁴⁰

34 The beach project also had a positive impact on young people’s involvement in their community:

“the beach cleaning project gave local children and young people a sense of pride and ownership of a local amenity that they valued while also facilitating new social bonds and allowing friendships to blossom thus strengthening the human fabric of the local community and its ties with the outside world.”⁴¹

35 Cohesion between generations affected by the disaster was also highlighted by a volunteer storyteller who worked with young members of their community.

“I became a volunteer story-teller as I do not want people to forget our tragedy. [...] It might not be in harmony with the reconstruction of the new town, but this is an important site for sharing the disaster experience and building an emotional connection with the younger generation. I want to pass down the lessons learned from this tragedy to young people but also show them how people work to rebuild their lives after the disaster and the progress we made”.⁴²

36 The same study also notes:

“This project has regenerated connections with the traditional civic society of fisherman and reinforced traditional community ties and a sense of belonging to the place. Building on place-based practices of fishing and cooking and on traditional knowledge about the sea, the community enhanced its own resilience”.⁴³

37 Finally, older people who went to the Ibasho Café (see paragraph [24](#)) noted that the venue “acts as a hub that is restoring the fabric of a community still badly damaged by the disaster”.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Lin Y, Kelemen M, and Kiyomiya T (2017) The role of community leadership in disaster recovery projects: tsunami lessons from Japan *International Journal of Project Management* **35(5)**: 913-24.

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² Lin Y, Kelemen M, and Tresidder R (2018) Post-disaster tourism: building resilience through community-led approaches in the aftermath of the 2011 disasters in Japan *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* **26(10)**: 1766-83.

⁴³ *ibid.*

⁴⁴ The World Bank (2015) *Elders leading the way to resilience*, available at: <http://www.ibasho.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/150318Elders-Leading-the-Way-to-Resilience-Conference-Version.pdf>.

Mental health / wellbeing benefit

38 Benefits to participants' mental health and wellbeing have been observed in several instances, including for young people who took part in an arts project (see paragraph [17](#)).

"Since the earthquake, this child has lost his habitual facial expression because of the mental and emotional shock he suffered from. But for the first time, he has regained his usual facial expression."⁴⁵

39 A related point was made in interviews with 20 community members and leaders, where an older person commented on the importance of having company:

"I come here [a disused village hall] every day at the same time, and it's like having a regular job which keeps me busy. Being with other people gives me a sense of belonging and lifts my mood for the better. If I was on my own, I would worry too much about myself, my family, and about my house which was lost in the tsunami."⁴⁶

40 Blue Tourism (see paragraph [5](#)) has been observed to have similar positive effects.

"Blue Tourism is more than just a means to provide a financial and economic impact; rather its real value lies in its transformational impact on the wellbeing of human beings (both visitors and fishermen)."⁴⁷

Pride and satisfaction among participating community members

41 Feelings of pride and satisfaction after being involved in post-disaster community initiatives were noted particularly by participants in beach recovery projects.

"Participation gives me a sense of achievement, if I do not do anything, I will worry too much about my future, my family, my children... this gives me a sense of fullness and changes my mood... the leaders gave us hope and the opportunity to prove that we can do it".

"In addition to building a passionate and committed voluntary work force, the beach cleaning project gave local children and young people a sense of pride and ownership of a local amenity that they valued. It also facilitated the formation of new social bonds and learning exchanges, which strengthened the social fabric of both the community itself as well as links with the outside world."⁴⁸

42 Young people who took part in Save the Children's Community Building Club (see paragraph [23](#)) also indicated their pride in taking part in the club.

⁴⁵ Arts for Hope (2011) *Providing support for 'Arts for Hope': disaster relief for the Great East Japan Earthquake*, available at: http://artsforhope.info/en/pdf/info_AFH_2011june.pdf.

⁴⁶ Goulding C, Kelemen M, and Kiyomiya T (2018) Community based response to the Japanese tsunami: a bottom-up approach *European Journal of Operational Research* **268(3)**: 887-903.

⁴⁷ Lin Y, Kelemen M, and Tresidder R (2018) Post-disaster tourism: building resilience through community-led approaches in the aftermath of the 2011 disasters in Japan *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* **26(10)**: 1766-83.

⁴⁸ Goulding C, Kelemen M, and Kiyomiya T (2018) Community based response to the Japanese tsunami: a bottom-up approach *European Journal of Operational Research* **268(3)**: 887-903.

“[The Club] taught me that there are actually a lot of children who care for our community just like I do. From my experience at the club, I learned how to express my opinion and execute it. When I do well, it always gives me joy. I used to think that the recovery is an adult’s job, but my perception has completely changed! We participate. We have opinions and passion, too. When we speak out, people listen to us.”⁴⁹

What problems arose in post-GEJE community engagement efforts?

43 Relatively few problems relating to CE initiatives after the disaster were discussed in the literature. This is not to say that problems may not have occurred: rather they did not form core points of discussion in the papers identified.

44 One problem that was elicited strongly in assessments of the various initiatives discussed above relates to how certain members of the community were ignored in engagement efforts. One paper notes, for example, that women were excluded from playing an active role in responding to the disaster, instead being treated as ‘victims’ in need of help, whose “role is assumed to be housework and childminding only”.⁵⁰ In the context of discussing the Nagasuka Beach Recovery Project (see paragraph 5), one community leader also observed:

“Young people’s voices are not paid much attention and are disregarded by the senior hierarchy. The government mind set is that these things are not for the young people to decide upon...”⁵¹

Tensions between local action and national government

45 One problem which led to community members acting was a slowness of response from governmental sources, as highlighted by community members who led the Blue Tourism scheme. This scheme “was motivated by the fishermen’s recognition that government’s reconstruction would be a long and slow process and that the immersion in the darkness of disaster and death would not make life any better, and therefore, there was a need to move on and take things into their own hands.”⁵²

46 One study suggests that engagement and empowerment of people affected by the disaster was not “adequately developed in Fukushima initially. Too often, national and local authorities have decided to do things to local residents or to do things for local residents, rather than to do things with them.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Save the Children (Japan) (2013) *Action: speaking out from Tohoku - building better communities through the participation of children*, available at: http://www.savechildren.or.jp/jpnem/eng/pdf/spotlight/action_eng_201304.pdf.

⁵⁰ Japan Women’s Network for Disaster Risk Reduction and Japan Association for Women’s Education (2015) *Gender equality and disaster risk reduction: women as a force for change*, available at: http://jwndrr.org/main/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Report_qatar_final.pdf.

⁵¹ Lin Y, Kelemen M, and Kiyomiya T (2017) The role of community leadership in disaster recovery projects: tsunami lessons from Japan *International Journal of Project Management* **35(5)**: 913-24.

⁵² Lin Y, Kelemen M, and Tresidder R (2018) Post-disaster tourism: building resilience through community-led approaches in the aftermath of the 2011 disasters in Japan *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* **26(10)**: 1766-83.

⁵³ Reich MR, and Goto A (2015) Towards long-term responses in Fukushima *The Lancet* **386(9992)**: 498-500.

Overstretched services and resources

47 As part of a study which aimed to review psychosocial services for people affected by the disaster, including outreach services and group interventions for evacuees, the authors note that “the number of staff working with the affected population of Fukushima is insufficient, a situation that has resulted in staff burnout”.⁵⁴

Limited opportunities for involvement

48 Not everyone who wanted to be involved had the opportunity to do so. Results of the Save the Children survey of young people (paragraph [23](#)) suggest that even though a high proportion of children surveyed said that they wanted to be involved community-based recovery, less than 12% of those (70%) who had indicated a willingness had actually taken part in such initiatives.⁵⁵ Two accounts from young people who took part comment further on this point.

“I may be too young but I, as well as other people around me, want to participate in the recovery. We may not be able to achieve something big, but we can at least start with contributing little by little. The adults don’t know how the children perceive the recovery or how we are feeling. If the adults and children cooperate with each other, the possibilities are infinite. So, I want the adults to start by trusting us enough to involve us in the recovery process. I hate it when people say, “I can’t do it because I am still a child.” So I want both adults and children to work together for the recovery.”

“Please do not get the children involved in the politics of the adults. Our opinions should be heard, and the adults should not use the disaster as an excuse to act selfishly. I will do anything, so please let the children participate.”

Concluding remarks

49 This review will contribute to the Nuffield Council’s report on research in global health emergencies, and particularly the report’s sections on community agency and community experience following natural disasters. The report will be published in early 2020.

⁵⁴ Maeda M, and Oe M (2017) Mental health consequences and social issues after the Fukushima disaster *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health* **29 (supplement 2)**: 36S-46S.

⁵⁵ Save the Children (Japan) (2012) *Results of 'hear our voice 7: attitude survey on children's participation 2012' prompt report*, available at: http://www.savechildren.or.jp/jpnem/eng/pdf/spotlight/120928_CCFC.pdf.