

A Study on Reconstruction Process from The Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake 2004

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The Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake caused extensive damage to roads and rivers, primarily because the region is one of the most landslide-prone in Japan and also because it had been hit by heavy rainfall from typhoon 23 for several days immediately before the earthquake. Municipalities in intermediate mountainous regions proved to be particularly vulnerable as they were isolated when rivers and roads were blocked, forcing many residents to temporarily evacuate their familiar surroundings and take refuge in evacuation centers. Recovery was expected to be a prolonged process as many homes and facilities were seriously damaged. The earthquake also accelerated depopulation and the overall aging of the population, issues that had been present from well before the earthquake, and the prospect of entire communities vanishing has become even more real in people's minds.

Today, five years after the earthquake, most roads have been repaired and preventive work has been performed at locations that were affected by landslides. Agricultural land, such as paddies and fields on which residents depended for their livelihood, has also been restored. However, actions that are considered essential for sustaining these villages have only now started to take shape if at all. The Chuetsu Earthquake contrasted with the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake of 1995 in that it was an intermediate mountainous region disaster. As such, while recovery efforts were related closely to disaster recovery efforts for intermediate mountainous areas in general, it is important to study the conditions of this particular disaster to gain insight since 70% of the land in Japan is found on similar terrain. The objective of this paper is to examine the current situation and explore modes of support that would be crucial for enabling self-sustainable recovery efforts in affected villages.

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