

Chapter 16

Collaboration Structure for the Resurrection of Iitate Village, Fukushima: A Case Study of a Nonprofitable Organization

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Abstract Iitate village in Fukushima was evacuated after the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident due to the high concentration of radioactive contamination. To revive the serious disaster area, residents, universities, research institutions, experts, and volunteers have collaborated through the nonprofitable organization “Resurrection of Fukushima.” The organization is functioning effectively and smoothly based on the members’ background, personal connections, and experiences.

Keywords Fukushima Iitate village • Collaboration • Volunteer • Nonprofitable organization (NPO)

16.1 Introduction

Iitate village in Fukushima was evacuated after the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident in 2011. High concentrations of radioactive cesium were scattered throughout the village and now the residents from the area are looking to revive the village.

In June 2011, some senior volunteers and researchers started up a NPO (nonprofitable organization) to reconstruct the village in cooperation with the residents. It began with just a few people, but now it involves residents, universities, research institutions, experts, and volunteers.

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This chapter examines the NPO “Resurrection of Fukushima” and reveals the structure of the collaboration system among residents, universities, research institutions, experts, and volunteers. In addition, the chapter focuses on the cooperation of the NPO and a group “Madei club,” which consists of volunteers empathizing with the activity of the NPO and are working as staff of the Graduate School of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Tokyo.

These cooperative frameworks are proposed as a realistic structure of collaboration among residents, universities, research institutions, experts, and volunteers.

16.2 NPO: Resurrection of Fukushima

The NPO was established in June 2011 by senior volunteers who live in Tokyo. The number of members was 261 on December 17, 2014. The members have various backgrounds such as retired office workers, active researchers, residents, and retired government officials. The core members of this NPO are elderly, around 70 years old (Fig. 16.1). The main activities are various field practice, which include measuring soil and air radioactivity; monitoring radiation, weather, and soil; developing decontamination methods; and trialing new industries for industrial reconstruction. The results from these practices are presented on the website ([Resurrection of Fukushima](#)).

Fig. 16.1 Core members have a meeting



16.3 Collaboration Style of the Various Members

16.3.1 Collaboration Between Residents, Universities, and Research Institutions

Figure 16.2 shows the conceptual view of the collaboration in projects organized by “Resurrection of Fukushima.” It has various professionals like researcher, medical worker, farmer, educator, journalists, and also the residents of the village. The NPO has connections with residents, universities, and research institutions, and it associates with them and plays a role to accelerate projects.

Case 1 Some members of this NPO are retired researchers. They form partnerships with research institutions easily by using their human network that they have built through their research. As a result, the NPO can ask the University of Tokyo and KEK (High Energy Accelerator Research Organization) to analyze the experimental samples containing radioactive materials (Arai et al. 2013).

Case 2 The members can use their expertise and technology to boost the ideas proposed by residents’ ideas that are based on their local knowledge and lives. Specifically, they use experts at universities and research institutions to plan and conduct experiments that obtain data and evidence for realizing the residents’ ideas.

Case 3 Some members are retired government officials who can deal with administrative procedures and issues, and thus enable projects to proceed smoothly.

These cases illustrate that the NPO supports the cooperation between residents, universities, and research institutions, and that they use the various backgrounds, human networks, experiences, and the expertise of various members.

Fig. 16.2 Collaboration structure





Fig. 16.3 Poster of the “Madei club”

16.3.2 *Cooperation with a Volunteer Group from the University of Tokyo*

Samples collected in Iitate by NPO members are analyzed by researchers at the University of Tokyo. Each sample is packed into a small bottle for the analysis of radioactivity, which is time and labor consuming. To solve this problem, the group of volunteers in the “Madei club” assist with sampling and packing (Fig. 16.3). The volunteer group was established by staff at the university. The “Madei” is a local dialect word which means “heartful” in Iitate village. The volunteers sympathize with the activity of the NPO and want to do something for the village people. They volunteer during their lunch breaks and after their official work.

This is a significant case that illustrates the vast levels of cooperation within this project. This structure also enables volunteers who do not have a particular skill to support the NPO projects through the activities of the “Madei club”.

16.4 The Motive for Activity

The motivation for action in this NPO is different for each person, particularly because the people have different backgrounds (Arai et al. 2013). Table 16.1 shows a classification of some common motives collected by interview. The motives include those which are related to helping people in Fukushima, such as “companionship” and “the sense of mission that our generation should take responsibility for the accident”. Other motives that are important for participation include those related to enjoying the activities with “Resurrection of Fukushima” such as “fun to make new friends and meet new people”.

Table 16.1 Classification of the motivations for participation

Motive	The voice of the member
Companionship	“I take part in the efforts because the victims and I are from the same hometown. I want to feel I can do something for them”
Feeling of pride in using the most advanced technology for decontamination	“I’m proud that our method of decontamination is the most advanced” “I feel that we are getting good results from decontamination”
Pleasure that their volunteer work matches with local people’s demands	“I think there are many people that feel happy to work for other people’s lives. Being helpful for other people’s demands is a very important reason for participating in this volunteer organization”
A sense of mission that our generation should take responsibility for the accident	“I think it’s difficult for young people to work for the reconstruction for their entire life, because they have many things they want to do. Old people have the responsibility for this problem and should deal with it”
Fun to make new friends and meet with new people	“It’s fun to meet new people and make new friends. Something fun or interesting is an important factor for continuing our activity. Local people are also having fun participating”
To know the real situation	“To know what people really think in Fukushima, it’s necessary to go there”

Table 16.2 Perspectives of the students who visited Iitate village and participate in “Resurrection of Fukushima”

Impression for	The voice of the visitor
“Resurrection of Fukushima”	“Resurrection of Fukushima is a necessary platform for everyone who wants to help the village” “Everyone is so lively and energetic (despite being old). I can’t lose!”
Iitate village	“My initial image of the village was like a village without people. But there was such collaboration between people inside and outside” “Iitate looks like a ghost town. Everything is intact but deserted. It’s a beautiful town, so it’s a shame!” “I was shocked when I heard that some evacuated people were discriminated against because of unfounded fear of radiation”
What we should do	“The first step of support is to know and interact with local people” “What we should do is to visit and see the real situation” “It is important to tell the right insight and technology” “Our responsibility is to tell everyone the current situation of the village and activities of the NPO” “The studies of my major contributed with the reconstruction in the village. I work hard and I want to help them”

16.5 Perspectives of Visitors

Every year many people visit the village and participate in “Resurrection of Fukushima” to know the real situation in the contaminated area and to see the NPO activities (Arai et al. 2013; Osada 2013). In particular, many of the university students who cooperate with the NPO have visited. Table 16.2 presents the perspectives on the village and on the NPO from the students of University of Tokyo, Mie University, and Saga University.

16.6 Conclusion

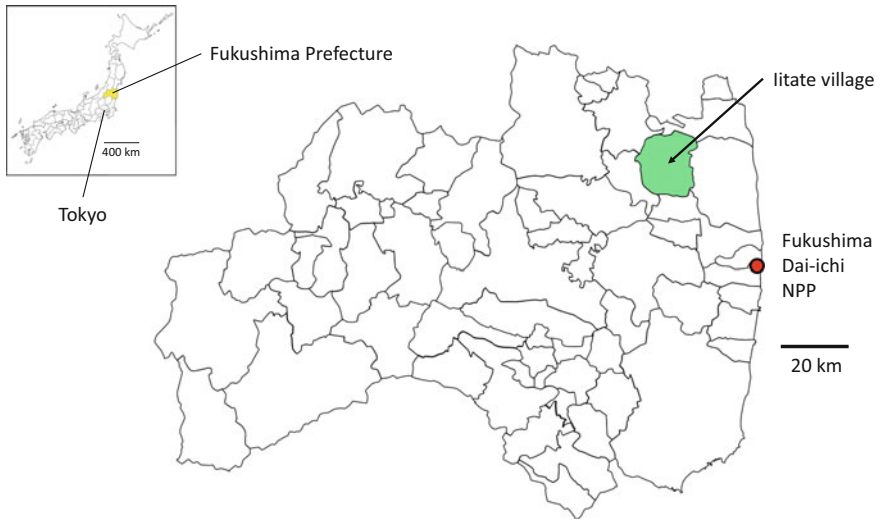
While residents, universities, research institutions, and volunteers share the goal to reconstruct the disaster area, each member tends to act separately and the task of cooperating with each other is difficult. In these cases, however, the various members can cooperate smoothly through the NPO “Resurrection of Fukushima”. The most important key for collaboration is the connection of people. The group of people who have various backgrounds, experiences, human networks, and motivations is the most suitable mediator to connect separate members.

The disaster area looks like a “ghost town”, because the terrible disaster deprived the town of many important things. However, a new style of cooperation in research and in practice with researchers, volunteers, and local residents has arisen from such a situation. The style will become a seed for new agricultural sciences in the future.

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Supplemental Materials



Location of Iitate village

Photos of Activities in Iitate Village



Soil sampling under snow by collaboration of different generations (Feb. 17, 2013)



Soil cutting work by “Madei club” members who are working in University of Tokyo (Feb. 24, 2015)



Decontamination by forced drainage of puddling muddy water by collaboration of a local farmer and NPO members. (May 18, 2013)



Handshake by local farmers, NPO and university after harvesting rice on decontaminated paddy field (Oct. 6, 2013)



The NPO representative, Mr. Tao, is reporting the result of survey in Residents briefing (Apr. 12, 2015)



The NPO representative, Mr. Tao, is explaining its activity in a paddy field after harvesting in Iitate for young generation (Oct. 27, 2013)

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