

Preface

Community-based risk reduction is widely considered to be important, and several disasters have shown the effectiveness of community responses. Community-based disaster-related activities are termed differently over time. Over more than 100 years ago, before the existence of most states, people or communities were taking care of themselves through collective actions during disasters. After the formation of the state, government-based disaster risk-reduction programs started but failed to fully serve the needs of the people and communities. Over the last 20–30 years, we have been talking again about the need for community-based disaster risk reduction.

Japan is traditionally a disaster-prone country. In older days, Japan used to have a strong community-based approach to cope with disasters. In several places, these practices are still carried out. However, over time, Japan has changed to a strong government-based approach in disaster risk reduction. Several aspects of the infrastructure were developed to protect people and communities from disasters. Innovative research has been done on earthquake risk reduction, especially on high-rise buildings and other structures. However, in 1995, in the Kobe earthquake, more than 6,400 people lost their lives, and it was observed that people and communities were the first responders in the post-disaster scenario. This event changed the scenario of disaster risk reduction in Japan, and innovations in community-based approaches are increasingly being recognized and encouraged.

This book is an attempt to analyze some of the innovative practices of community-based risk reduction in Japan. The book is divided into three parts. Part I describes the evolutionary trend of community practices in Japan. Part II sets forth some of the key issues and sectors where community-based risk reduction has been prominent. Part III provides some case studies from urban and rural areas of Japan, citing various innovative approaches.

This book is intended for researchers and students in higher education in disaster risk reduction. It is hoped that they will find the book useful.

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