

World Bosai Forum/IDRC @Sendai 2017  
 Consensus-building for Reconstructing Disaster Resilient Societies:  
 Diversity and Gender Perspectives from Japan and the World

## Resilience and Reconstruction Gaps of Migrant Women in the Great East Japan Earthquake

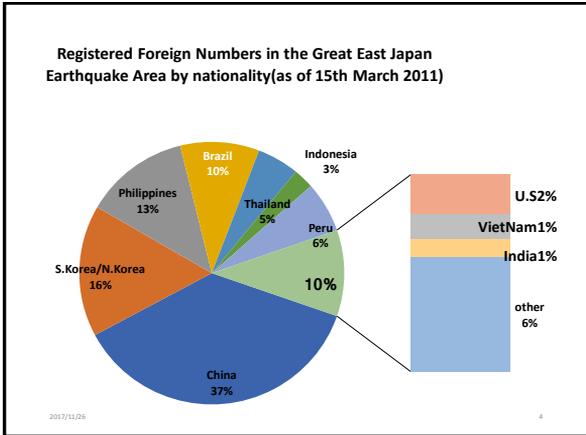
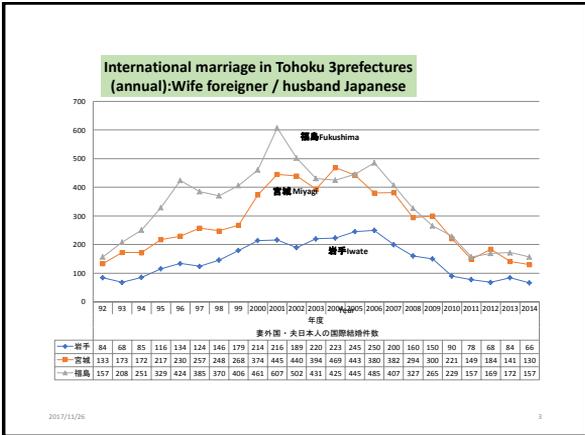
Sunhee Lee  
 Tohoku Uni. (in Sendai)

1

### 1 . Marriage migrant women in Tohoku before the disaster

- Foreign residents in Tohoku
- ① The percentages of foreign nationals in Miyagi, Fukushima, and Iwate, is significantly low compared to the national average
- ② Foreign residents of Tohoku are concentrated in the city of Sendai and are widely scattered in rural fishing and farming villages.
- ⇒ Tohoku has a relatively small foreign population, and it has also been dispersed.
- ③ Many settled foreigners in coastal of the northeastern Japan are trainees and marriage migrant women
- : After 1985, local government conducted international arranged marriage as a solution to low fertility and shortages of wives and reproductive labour.

2



Many marriage migrant women, especially from China and Korea

- (1) using their Japanese names
- (2) isolating themselves from their ethnic networks

↓

**“Strategic invisibilization”**  
 (Lee 2011)

- WHY?
- To avoid sanctions and prejudice resulting from negative stereotypes existing about marriage migrant women in this Tohoku area

5

### 2 . New Movements among migrant Women in Disaster Area

- Due to their invisibility, they simply remained isolated/vulnerable
- The first support for foreigners was began that supporters met a Filipino woman who working to volunteer at a disaster shelter in Minami Sanriku.
- Foreigner support groups and ethnic networks began searching for foreigners, including marriage migrant women, and provided them with specific financial, material, and emotional support.

6

- Began to express their own needs and embraced the disaster as an opportunity to appeal as citizens of their local communities.

#### ① Organization of ethnic communities

- ② Many migrant women obtained licenses for working as home helpers by supporting from NPOs and NGOs

\* The main beneficiaries of this activity were mainly Filipino women.

2017/11/26

7

- This process is similar to the one through which the Vietnamese community became "visible" in Hurricane Katrina as a model resilient community through the media and as such obtained various forms of public empathy and support (Leong et al. 2007).



2017/11/26

8

### Employment support in the areas affected by the disaster

Japanese language class and Computer class in Ishinomaki

(2012.11)



2017/11/26

The graduation ceremony of training courses for level 2 home helpers in Minamisanriku-cho

(2012.5.28)



- Significant change occurred for many migrant women in the disaster area following the 3.11 earthquake, resulting in an increase in the number of these women who played an active role in society.

- In some cases, these women became points of contact for external support organizations, church networks, and volunteers providing relief goods, thereby developing their social network(s).

2017/11/26

10

### 3. Gaps of social participation of migrant women and reconstruction

- However, in many cases migrant women still struggle with expressing their needs.

- What is this gap?
- This gap is in large parts the result of their social capital
- Japanese language proficiency and the relationship with other Japanese
- Many married migrant women study Japanese in the course of their daily lives.

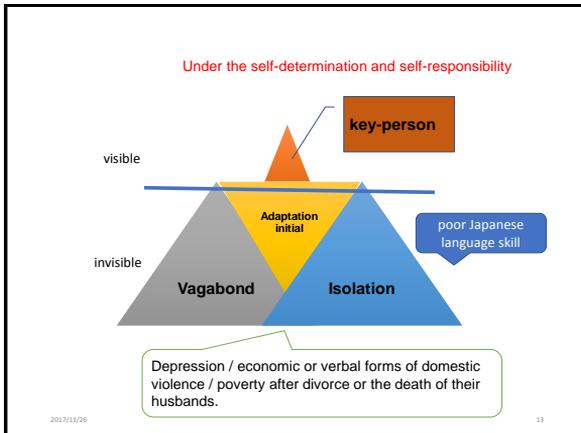
2017/11/26

11

- The second resource is the strength of relationships with other Japanese.
- That relationships with Japanese people are the precondition for assimilation into Japanese society.



2017/11/26



#### 4. Conclusion

##### --Migrant Women's Perspective and Citizenship of immigrants in Japan

- As Japan lacks an official migration system
- foreign migrants are not granted citizenship.
- Promoting their self-determination and self-responsibility in disaster contexts is often emphasized in the discussion of social agency and resilience-thinking, but this logic often causes the individualization of social issues and responsibilization of the victims.
- For marriage migrant women, it must be considered first to eliminate the current situation of lack of social capital and social prejudice / discrimination.

2017/11/26

14

- There is a clear power imbalance resulting from multiple forms of systematic oppression including classism, racism and sexism, so these marriage migrant women cannot easily claim their rights even just to be visible.

- Need to Multicultural Citizenship

- Right to study Japanese/ to facilitate an equal relationship within the family /to establish a trust relationship with the community

2017/11/26

15

- Rethinking citizenship in Japan may not only contribute to migrants but to excluded or marginalized people in Japan society

- Thank you very much for your attention

2017/11/26

16