

**Interview Research on Immigrant Single Mothers
Affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes**

Kumustaka -Association for Living Together with Migrants

About Kumustaka

Kumustaka- Association for Living Together with Migrants was founded in September of 1985 with its base in *Tetori* Catholic Church. It was originally founded as a non-governmental organization *Tainichi Azia Josei No Mondai Wo Kangaeru Kai* (Association for Considering Issues of Migrant Asian Women) to help struggling Asian migrant women. Due to the increasing diversity of problems and nationalities coming to us for help, our name was changed to the current one in March of 2013, and our office moved to Shinichiro Sudo Administrative Scrivener Office. *Kumusta ka* means “how are you?” in Tagalog, the official language of the Philippines. Since then, Kumustaka has been supporting immigrants and migrants regardless of nationality or gender, and is striving towards the promotion of a multicultural society. We provide independent living support and consultation services regarding human rights, including legal consultations. We organize public symposiums and film screenings related to immigrant, migrant, and refugee issues. We also provide suggestions to and make requests of government bodies, including the prefecture and local municipalities, to solve issues concerning immigrants and foreign nationals.

The 2016 Kumamoto Earthquakes

1. The Kumamoto Earthquakes and the Resulting Damage

According to the Japan Meteorological Agency, as of April 14, 2017 there have been 4,296 earthquakes in total since the first main quake on April 14. Two earthquakes with an intensity of 7 occurred on April 14 and 16, followed by 5 earthquakes with an intensity of 6, 17 earthquakes with an intensity of 5, 117 earthquakes with an intensity of 4, 410 earthquakes with an intensity of 3, 1,168 earthquakes with an intensity of 2, and 2,577 earthquakes with an intensity of 1.

Casualties of the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquakes calculated by Kumamoto Prefecture include 227 deaths in total, consisting of 50 direct deaths, 172 indirect deaths (death from indirect causes, such as becoming seriously ill triggered by the disaster), and 5 deaths due to the secondary disaster of heavy rain. Another 2,699 people were injured. Following the major earthquakes, there were 6 solitary deaths in temporary housings. The number of damaged buildings and residences has reached to 191,593. A total of 4,303 temporary dwellings have been provided. Additionally, 14,600 *minashi*

(quasi-)temporary dwellings - private apartments rented by the government- are being planned, with 15,928 applications received so far. As of the end of April, 2017, the number of people living in temporarily housing and *minashi* temporary housing has reached 47,168. The numbers of casualties, including indirect deaths, and damaged housing continue to increase as the government continues to process applications from victims of the Kumamoto Earthquakes.

2. Features of the Kumamoto Earthquakes and their Impact on Immigrants and Foreign Nationals

The Kumamoto Earthquakes were characterized by a number of features. First, there were nonstop constant earthquakes for a long period of time following the two main earthquakes with an intensity of 7, which occurred in the evening of April 14, and again in the late-night of April 16. Second, a great number of evacuees were forced to spend more than a month in shelters and/or outdoors due to the slow recovery of utility services and the fear of staying inside buildings. Third, there were a wide range of devastated areas with differing circumstances extended over a range of 100 square kilometers within Kumamoto prefecture, including Kumamoto City, Koushi, Kikuchi, Kamimashiki, Aso, Uki, Uto, Yatsushiro, and other southern areas running on or along active fault lines.

There has been a huge impact on both immigrants and overseas tourists across Kumamoto, many of whom were especially vulnerable to disaster. As of December 2015, there were more than 10,767 registered foreign nationals with more than 3 months of residential status in Kumamoto prefecture. More than 50% (over 5,000 residents) are considered to have been negatively affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes.

Interview Research on Immigrant Single Mothers Affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes

Background

According to the Immigration Bureau of Japan, more than 10,000 medium- to long-term foreign residents, with residential status of 3 months or more, live in Kumamoto prefecture as of December 2015. This figure represents 0.6 % of the total population of the prefecture (1,780,000). There are more female foreign residents living in the prefecture than male foreign residents: 6,827 female foreign residents (63 %) versus 3,940 male foreign residents (37 %).

The followings are the top 10 nationalities of foreign nationals currently residing in Kumamoto Prefecture: 1) China (4,195), 2) Vietnam (1,610), 3) The Philippines (1,607), 4) South and North Korea (998), 5) The United States (319), 6) Taiwan (239), 7) Indonesia (227), 8) Nepal (221), 9) Thailand (210), and 10) Cambodia (114).

The top 10 statuses of residence are 1) “technical intern training” (3,458), 2) “permanent resident” (2,869), 3) “student” (1,135), 4) “spouse or child of Japanese national” (762), 5) “special permanent residents” (526), 6) “dependent” (523), 7) “engineer, specialist in humanities, international services” (388), 8) “long-term resident” (291), 9) “skilled laborer” (187), and 10) “instructor” (142). The holders of “permanent resident,” “spouse or child of Japanese national,” or “long-term resident” total 3,923, more than one third of foreign residents (36%) in Kumamoto. The majority of these individuals appear to be immigrant women married to a Japanese national, although included in this number are women who have become single mothers due to separation or divorce, who have been widowed, and who had children outside of marriage.

About This Research

Objectives

In the wake of the earthquakes there were many immigrants and foreign nationals who were classified as “People Requiring Assistance During a Disaster,” who were and continue to be negatively affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes of 2016, among whom are significant numbers of immigrant single mothers. In general, these immigrant single mothers tend to be socially isolated, have limited access to information, and limited connections to the Japanese community. Since they can be considered as one class of vulnerable residents in society, we conducted interview research with immigrant single mothers who were affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes. This research was conducted to better understand 1) how immigrant single mothers coped at the time of the disaster

and subsequent evacuation, and 2) what the challenges were that they faced as single mothers and as immigrants. It is hoped that through an examination of the issues and needs specific to this group of residents it will be possible to plan a support system for future disasters, as well as to provide a medium to long-term network of support for immigrant single mothers who were affected by the earthquake disaster in 2016.

Participants

The target participants of the interview research were immigrant single mothers - unmarried, divorced, and widowed- who experienced the Kumamoto Earthquakes of 2016. We included those women who were not residing with their children at the time of the interviews, or whose children had already grown up.

Participants were recruited from lists of persons already connected with Kumustaka, as well as from their friends. Some participants were introduced by *Gaikoku Kara Kita Kodomo Shien Net Kumamoto* (Support Network for Children with Foreign Roots). Some participants were also introduced by interviewees post-interview.

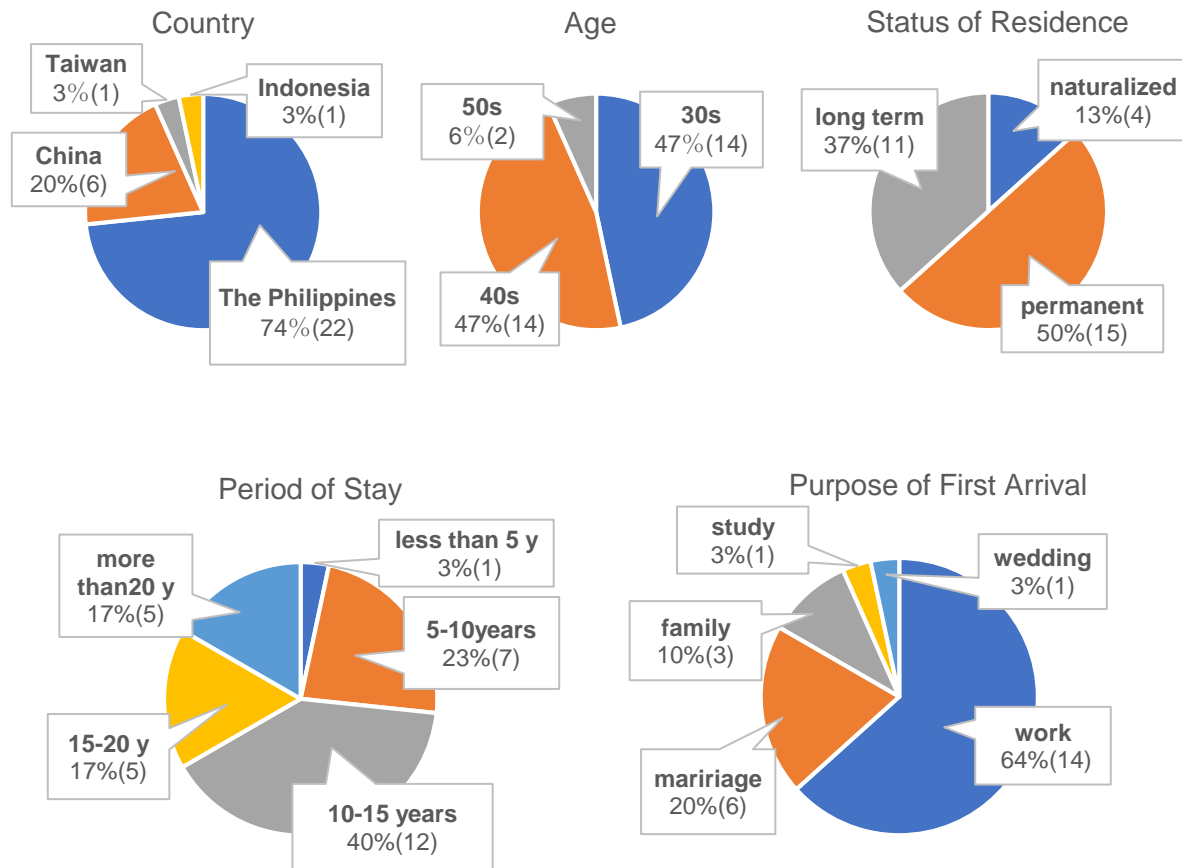
The Fieldwork

The interviews were conducted between July 2016 and January 2017, and included 30 immigrant single mothers who experienced the 2016 Kumamoto Earthquakes. Interviews averaged one to two hours long, and were all recorded. Interviews were conducted primarily in Japanese (two of them with a Chinese interpreter, one in English, and one in both Japanese and English), primarily at participants' homes, although one interview was conducted at an interviewer's house, and another at a coffee shop. Each participant received 10,000 yen after the interview as a relief effort, as well as a token of appreciation. Participants were also provided with information regarding social resources as needed, including victim relief services.

Results

Background of the Participants

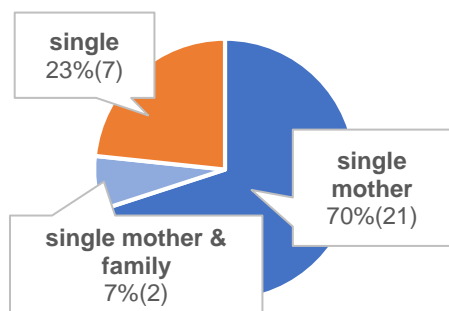
The age of the 30 participants ranged from 30 to 56 years old (average 40.3). The countries of origin were The Philippines, China, Taiwan, and Indonesia. Participants responded having lived in Japan from 4 to 35 years (average 13.5 years). Most participants had lived in Japan for more than 10 years, and there was only one woman who responded living in Japan for less than 5 years.



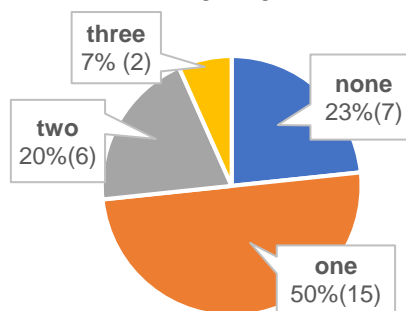
Of the 30 participants, 19 responded that they first came to Japan to work on an “entertainer” visa, and that they married a Japanese man whom they met within their 6 months of stay. The reasons for other participants coming to Japan varied. Reasons given by respondents included coming to study, coming to stay with family members already living in Japan, and for the purposes of immigrating as a returnee from China with her family during high school. Another participant explained that she came to Japan for the first time for her wedding, but stayed in her country with her Japanese husband for a while before moving to Japan when her husband was transferred back to Japan. Six women came to Japan for the first time after getting married with a Japanese national in their own countries.

As for the participants’ households, 23 participants constituted single parent households, while others responded that they were single-person households due to their children having already grown up and moved to another location in Japan, or to live with family outside of Japan. There were two single parent households in which the mother’s mother or sister were temporarily staying with them at the time of the earthquakes. The average number of children per household was 1.1, and 12 participants had a child or

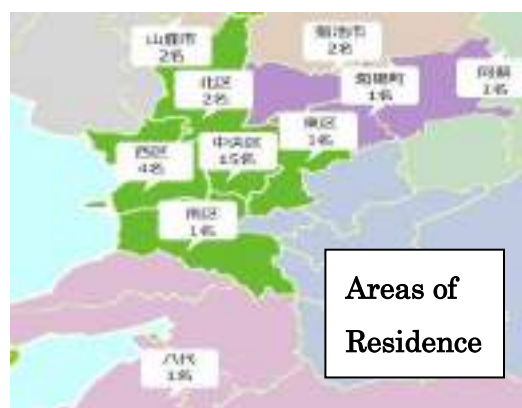
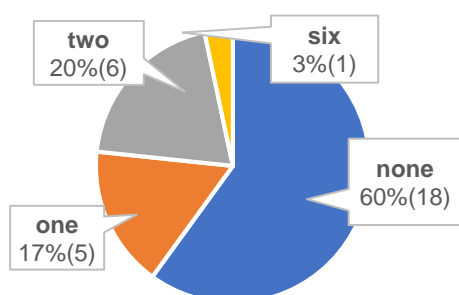
Types of Household



Children Living Together



Children not Living Together



children from whom they lived separately. Ten participants responded being in a relationship but unmarried.

Of the 30 participants, 21 became single mothers after divorce, 3 had a child or children out of wedlock, and 5 had a child or children both during the marriage and out of wedlock. One woman was still residing with her spouse, but engaged in a legal conflict regarding marital support. Fourteen women described domestic violence and neglect as a reason for the separations.

At the time of the interviews, the participants resided in 6 municipalities inside Kumamoto Prefecture, in Yamaga in the north, and in Yatsushiro in the south. The majority of respondents resided in the Central Ward of Kumamoto City. We were not able to interview anybody from Mashiki town, which was at the epicenter of the earthquakes. However, we were able to interview a woman residing in Aso, which was one of the most devastated areas. In addition, another interviewee was in Aso at the time of the earthquake on April 16, although she resided in Kumamoto.

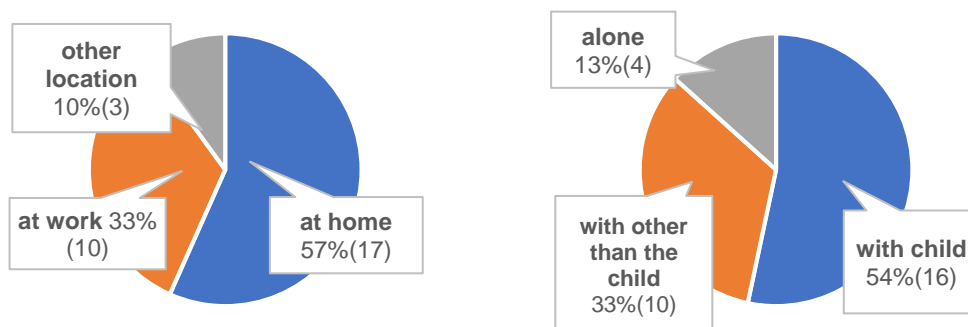
April 14 Earthquake

The first main earthquake, preceding the main earthquake on April 16, hit Kumamoto with an intensity of 7 at 9:26 p.m. on April 14, 2016. Seventeen participants were at home at the time of the earthquake, while another 10 participants were working at *hostess* clubs. Five of the 10 had their children at home alone, and 1 had her child at a nursery care center. One woman was at a restaurant with her child and friend, and another was at a store with her child buying snacks for a school trip scheduled for the following day. There was also a woman who was at home by herself as her child was staying over at his grandparents' house.

At the time of the interviews, many participants responded that they “were in a panic”, “did not understand what was happening,” “did not know what to do,” and “did not know where to evacuate.” Interviewees who were not together with their children at the time of the earthquake responded being very scared as they were not being able to contact their children.

After the earthquake, 6 participants residing in Yamaga, Yatsushiro, Kikuyo, Aso, and Kita-ku of Kumamoto City, continued to stay at home as those areas were relatively far from the epicenter. Four initially evacuated their homes, but came back home later the same night. However, 20 out of 30 participants evacuated their homes and spent the night outside the home until the next morning. Six of the 20 evacuees stayed at evacuation shelters overnight, 4 of them evacuating directly from work in the company of coworkers after picking up their children at home or at a nursery. The remaining two participants were told where to evacuate by their neighbors.

During the Foreshock on 14th



Location of Evacuation on April 14		(Stated Reason for Choice of Location)
home	10	“not severe damage” “too many evacuees at the shelter” “too scared to go outside”
evacuation shelter	6	“recommended” “too scared to be alone” “coworker found a shelter online”
park / playground	5	“many people there” “town announcement”
in car	5	“thought safer” “did not know where to evacuate” “daughter came to pick me up”
family’s or friend’s	3	“got a call from them” “just stayed together”
Fukuoka	1	“after talking with friends who evacuated into the car together”

Participant A (Chinese)

Participant A was at a store alone shopping for her child’s school trip the next day when the earthquake hit. She did not know what was happening and she was too scared to move. All the bottles of wine on the shelves fell down and broke to pieces. She hurried home to be with her child. Her child was crying alone in the dark when she got home. The cupboard had fallen, dishes and glasses were broken, and the TV was also on the floor. She saw people gathering at a park beside the apartment complex and spreading blue tarps on the ground, so she joined them and spent the night there with her child. Food, water, and blankets were available. She cleaned her home the next day. She bought neither reserve water nor food, thinking that another big earthquake would not occur.”

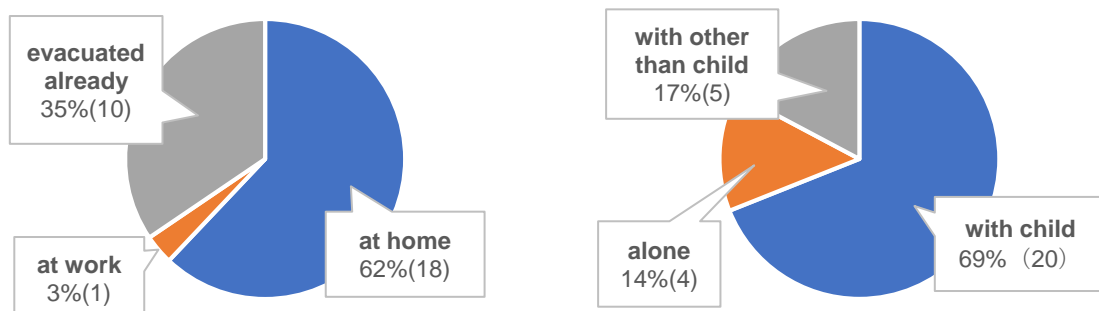
Participant B (Indonesian)

The earthquake hit when Participant B was at home with her children on April 14. She panicked, but the children were comparatively calm. She seriously thought they would die, and her first concerns were for her children. After the shaking eased, she went outside with her children. She felt a little relieved because her neighbors were also outside. They told her that it would be better to go to an evacuation shelter, and they asked her to come with them by car. However, that same evening she and her children returned home from the shelter and she cleaned the mess in the apartment. She could not sleep until the next morning since she evacuated outside after every aftershock.

April 16 Main Earthquake

The second large earthquake, the main shock of the Kumamoto Earthquakes, hit Kumamoto at 1:25 a.m. on April 16. Differing from the earthquake the previous night, only one participant was at work, while 18 were at home. Ten participants had already evacuated their homes due to the previous earthquakes: 4 to the residences of family or friends, 4 to evacuation shelters, 1 was staying in a car, and 1 evacuated to Fukuoka. Twenty out of 23 participants who resided with their children were with their children at the time, and 10 were also together with family or friends. One teenage child was at home alone as her mother was working at the time. One participant had her child at an evacuation shelter, while one had sent her children to be with their grandparents. One participant who was in Kumamoto City on the 14th, evacuated to her ex-husband's house the following day as she had no other place to go, but the area in which the ex-husband's house was located was severely damaged on the 16th.

During the Main Shock o 16th



Location of Evacuation on April 16		(Stated Reason for Choice of Location)
shelter	9	“brought by family, ex-husband or friends”
car	8	“too many evacuees in shelter” “picked up by coworkers or ex-husband”
park, outside shelter	8	“recommended by neighbors” “too many evacuees in shelter” “told not to come to the shelter as it seemed dangerous”
friend’s	1	“evacuated already after the first earthquake”
home (no evacuation)	1	“too scared to go outside home”
Fukuoka	1	“evacuated already after the first earthquake”

The main shock on the 16th was much stronger than that of the previous night. Many participants feared they would die or not be able to evacuate outside, and a few participants sustained injuries. Compared to the previous night, all the participants, except one who had a fear of being outside at night because of a previous experience of domestic violence, evacuated their residences. Some of those who evacuated to a shelter were there also the previous night, while others were brought by friends and family.

Participant C (Chinese)

After the foreshock on the 14th, Participant C stayed in a shelter with her son and friends but came home around 11 p.m. since she could not sleep. Her 16-year-old son decided to stay at the shelter because his friends were also there. The main shock hit when she was finally about to fall asleep. She escaped the house wearing nothing but her pajamas. Thinking of her son, she started crying out of fear of leaving her son alone should she die in the disaster. She got a call from him right after she evacuated outside, and was told not to come to the shelter because it could be too dangerous there. As people were gathered in a park in front of the apartment, she also stayed there until the shaking eased, and then went to the shelter.

Participant D (Filipina)

Terrified by the continuing aftershocks, Participant D called her ex-husband on the 15th and asked for help. She was sleeping in her ex-husband's house when the main shock came and the roof collapsed. The area experienced a blackout and the house was filled with the smell of gas. She managed to escape through the collapsed roof and over damaged furniture, which she gave thanks to God for. She was injured and her face was covered with blood; however, her desperation to survive outweighed any feelings of pain or fear at the time. Her ex-husband was already outside when she got out, and they went to a shelter together. She was able to sleep at the shelter, taking comfort in the thought that she would not die alone in the case of another big earthquake.

Evacuations

After the earthquake on the 16th, no participant could continue the life they had led prior to the earthquakes. Some returned home relatively soon, but there were participants who remained evacuated for about half a year. In the interviews, we asked where they had stayed after the 16th. Half the participants responded that they had experienced staying in a shelter. There was only one participant who stayed in a shelter designated for foreigners set up by the Kumamoto International Foundation (KIF). Most participants stayed in neighborhood shelters. There were some participants who were forced to move shelters several times as over time, some shelters were closed or combined with other shelters as evacuees gradually returned home. On the other hand, some participants decided to stay in cars or at the homes of friends because they were uncomfortable with being surrounded by strangers, or with the sanitary conditions at some shelters. Four participants fled to the less-affected areas within Kumamoto Prefecture. Eight participants returned to their home countries temporarily, and one participant sent her child to her home country. Four participants stated that discomfort at being housed with only Japanese—with being the only non-Japanese—was the reason for their moving to the shelter for foreigners, or to other places.

Locations of Evacuation Following the Earthquake of April 16		
(multiple answers)		
shelter	14	“no other places to go” “aftershocks continued” “child did not want to go home” “did not want to be alone”
car	11	“scared of sleeping alone” “felt secure” “don’t like big crowds” “uncomfortable with only Japanese in shelter” “did not want to use toilet in shelter”
family’s or friends’	10	“difficult to stay in a shelter”
home country	8	“no work” “worried about by family” “Kumamoto was not good environment for the child” “mother’s death”
home	3	“limited damage to the house” “for child’s school” “did not want to bother others” “cost too much to evacuate outside Kumamoto”
hotel and other lodging facilities	2	“uncomfortable with others in shelter” “child was sick” “child did not want to stay with many Japanese”
park, or outside shelter	1	“had to move out of a shelter”

Participant E (Filipina)

Participant E spent many nights in her car parked in front of her apartment. She did not stay in a shelter because there were a lot of evacuees and inadequate toilets. But the main reason for her choosing to stay in her car was because she thought the Japanese government would primarily help Japanese people, with immigrants like herself given the lowest priority. She also assumed that it would be uncomfortable to stay in a shelter surrounded only by Japanese. She did not know about the shelter for foreigners operated by KIF. She heard there was financial support for immigrants to return to their home countries. As a result, she considered returning home in the event that her apartment collapsed as she did not have the money to move into a new apartment.

Participant F (Filipina)

Participant F spent two nights in a car parked at the hotel where she worked. Subsequently, she moved her car to a hospital in order to stay together with a friend who was not a staff member of the hotel. They spent about 10 nights in the car. During the daytime, she spent time at her customer's prefab office during the daytime, and returned to her car after dinner. She slept alone in her car sometimes, but at other times she and her friend stayed in her friend's car as she let a boy from her hometown use her car as he did not have one of his own. She temporarily returned to her home country in May using her savings, along with money provided by one of her customers. She returned to Kumamoto in June to look for a new place to live, but she stayed at her customer's office again for about two months because she could not find a new place. In September, she finally moved into her current apartment which was introduced to her by her friend.

Difficulties During and After Evacuation

Even though some participants could return home relatively soon, every single individual reported facing various difficulties, such as a lack of utility services, food shortages, and no work. In the interview, we asked about their challenges during and after the evacuation regarding their overall living conditions, their children, their challenges as a single mother, and the challenges they faced as an immigrant.

1. Overall Difficulties Related to Living Conditions

In the aftermath of the two large earthquakes there were continuous aftershocks day after day. Many participants were anxious about the possibility of another big earthquake occurring at any time. This added to the intense fear and trauma that resulted from the major quakes on the 14th and 16th. Some were too scared to enter their homes, and would only do so to procure basic necessities. Some had to move around between several shelters as some shelters were closed or integrated with other shelters as time passed. One participant reported that she was not able to continue to live in her apartment due to intense fear experienced during the main earthquakes. As a result, she moved out of the building even though the building itself was not severely damaged. We also found that quite a few participants continued to have those fears and anxieties even

Overall Difficulties Related to Living Conditions (multiple answers)		
fear and anxiety	22	fears of “what if... -a big shake occurs when I’m without my child” -the building or housing where I am collapses” anxieties over daily life -“concern over suspicious persons”
sleeplessness	22	fear/anxiety, “no space in car”, “noise in shelter”
water	15	toilet and bath, drinking water
lives in shelter	12	unsanitary toilet, “too noisy to sleep”, “stress of being with strangers”, infections, anxiety, cold, “being shy”, “babies crying”
food	10	“stores closed”, “not enough food distributed”, “hard to secure food for children”
other	10	“became ill”, “not having a car”, “traffic jam”, “long line at gas station”, “new purchases to replace those broken”, financially

at the time of the interview. Two participants insisted on keeping the door to the interview room open during the interview. This was in December, almost eight months after the two major earthquakes. They told interviewers that this was because they believed that with the door open they would be able to evacuate in the case of an earthquake. Moreover, as the two major earthquakes occurred at night, many participants reported being anxious at night, and said that they continued to sleep in their cars even after returning home. One participant, who lives alone as her child had already grown up, reported changing her job after the earthquakes in order to work at night so that she wouldn’t be alone and scared at home.

In addition to the fear and anxiety over the earthquakes, 9 participants also mentioned additional anxiety caused by problems in their daily lives, such as shortages of food for their children, a lack of income without work, and difficulties in securing a new place to live. Two participants mentioned that personal safety at the shelter or in a car was a concern as they lacked the protection of a male family member.

Another common issue among the participants was sleeplessness. Some could not sleep out of the fear and anxiety of another earthquake, and some worried about their livelihood going forward. One participant reported being unable to sleep anywhere, saying that a car lacked the space to stretch her body, the evacuation shelters were too

noisy, and that she was too worried about the prospect of her building collapsing in another earthquake. This state of perpetual anxiety was the source of much stress, causing her to lose considerable weight.

The shutdown of the water supply was a serious issue during the disaster, although the power supply was restored soon in many areas. More than half of participants answered that access to water was a problem. For many, accessing water for the toilet and bathing seem to have been more problematic than securing drinking water. Many evacuation shelters were out of water, resulting in an inability to flush toilets, so some participants said they tried as much as possible not to use them. One participant said she did not want to wait for two to three hours to use a public bath. Unable to take a bath, she had to clean her body with wet tissues provided by the shelter each day. When she had her period, she used dirty water first and then rinsed herself with drinking. Also, the cost of taking public baths and using coin laundry machines was mentioned as a difficulty.

Staying in an evacuation shelter, which half of the participants experienced, appears to have been very tough for many participants. Especially for those with small children, infections and other public health concerns factored large, with a few participants reporting that their children became sick at shelters. However, for some participants, there was no choice but to stay in a shelter as they lacked a car and could not return home. One participant said she was in a shelter even though she did not want to be, reporting that she feared the shelter roof would collapse in the event of another large earthquake.

Participant G (Chinese)

Participant G stayed in a shelter, but it was uncomfortable because people were talking loudly. Her child also could not sleep, so they went home. They slept on the first floor for about a month, although she used to sleep on the second floor before. Since the earthquakes, she reported feeling very scared, but did not know how to deal with it, and was unable to think of other things. Finally, she made the decision to temporarily return to China with her child as the child's school was closed for about a month.

Participant H (Chinese)

Participant H reported that the toilet in the shelter was horrible. It stunk badly due to a lack of water for flushing. She was only provided with a small amount of drinking water in a plastic bottle that she could use to wash her face and teeth. Although food was provided, a lot of people were in line waiting. When she finally received food, it was only one rice ball per person, which was cold and hard. There were no products at stores. She saw a notice at a clinic, saying “only for serious condition.” It was hard to find medicine as well. She had a friend who had an aged mother suffering from headaches, and it was only after trying three different stores that she could buy medicine for her, which was difficult as she did not have a car. She also reported being constantly tired due to a lack of sleep. Added to these stresses were heavy rains, which she felt made Kumamoto a difficult place to stay in the wake of the disaster.

2. Difficulties Related to the Children

Twenty-three out of the 30 participants lived with their children at the time of the interviews, and 3 of them had a grown-up child who lived separately in Kumamoto or inside Kyushu. When asked about difficulties related to children during and after evacuation, 9 participants answered “nothing.” Looking at the ages of their children, children of 5 of the 9 participants were in junior high or older. The remaining 4 had children in high school or older, who were able to take care of their younger siblings. Seven participants talked about how their children helped them by taking care of their siblings and by gathering information. From this it is possible to conclude that once the children reached a certain age they seem to have become a source of support for their mothers. Also, in some cases children appear to have acted as a source of information, albeit sometimes indirectly. Some participants reported that the information regarding disaster prevention that their children learned at school, or information they had acquired from other parents at school, was very helpful. It was also reported that children were a source of strength and hope in the midst of many difficulties.

Contrastingly, participants with small children appear to have experienced more difficulties. The 14 participants who answered that they experienced difficulties all lived with a child or children of elementary school age or younger. Ten of the participants

Difficulties Related to the Children		(multiple answers)
emotional/behavioral changes	10	“cannot sleep alone”, “avoidance”, “cannot stay at home alone”, “don’t want to go to school”, “no intention to try things”, “intense fear after even a small shock”, “don’t speak”, “don’t listen to parent”
nothing special	9	“had support from families and friends”, “children were calm”, “children helped collecting information”, “children called to help”
fear of being apart from children	9	“could not go to work”
children want to stay in shelter	5	“children weren’t lonely and enjoyed being with friends in shelter”, “children hoped a big shock would come again”
food for children	3	“milk for babies”, “food allergies”
children became sick	3	“caused by evacuation life in shelter”
impacts on study	2	“negative effect on high-school entrance exam preparations”
worry children bothering others	2	in a shelter or a public bath
other		“limited room for play(playground)”, “worsened relationship with daughter”, “unstable schedule”, “stressful for a child who just came to Japan”

indicated changed behaviors in their children, as well as emotional difficulties such as “she did not speak a word for a few days as being in a state of shock.” Nine participants stated that the anxiety over leaving their children at home alone to go to work in the midst of continuing earthquakes as being a significant difficulty. Four out of the 9 participants said they were thankful to have had a family member or friends to help babysit the children, or to have a workplace that allowed them to bring their children with them to work. However, those who did not receive any support were forced to take days off from work. Some participants stated in the interview that they were still scared of leaving their children alone.

At the time of the interviews, half (15) of participants resided in two-person- households consisting of a mother and a child, and in four cases the children were of

preschool age. Common to all four was that their child enjoyed their time as an evacuee. Unlike at home, the child had other children or adults to play with, had meals together with many people, and had different toys and food while outside the home. They said that the child missed living together with many people after going back home, where they had only their mother for company.

Interviews indicated that the issues faced by mothers of older children differed from those with younger ones. For participants with children in junior high or high school, especially *jukensei* (a student preparing for entrance exam), the closing of schools was one source of concern. Also, one participant was concerned about the stress experienced by her child, who had just recently arrived in Japan and enrolled in a junior high school. She expressed concern that her child was experiencing stress in adjusting to the Japanese language and life in Japan. Another participant, because she was mentally unstable herself during the evacuation, had quarrels with her teenaged daughter, who subsequently ran away for a short period before returning.

Participant B (Indonesian)

Participant B was very anxious to leave her children at home alone to go to work. She wished to have her family in Japan to help babysit her children. She felt that she was very lucky to be off from work on both the 14th and the 16th. If they were not together during the disaster, she said that she would have panicked more. She reported that thinking about her children helped her to stay strong.

Participant I (Chinese)

Participant I's child wished for another big earthquake because she received a tasty sausage at the shelter. The child enjoyed the departure from normal life of being alone with her mother as she was surrounded by friends and seemed to be happy. Participant I does not know how to explain earthquakes to her child in Japanese. She reports that her child seems to look down on her these days as she cannot communicate effectively in Japanese while her child can. One week after the closing of the child's preschool caused the mother to be tired of being together with her child all the time. Her daily routine had changed drastically, and she expressed that she felt like she could not handle it anymore.

3. Difficulties as a Single Mother

Many participants indicated loneliness and anxiety as difficulties stemming from being a single mother. A participant said that “the feeling of security is different without a man.” Although they had the same feeling of loneliness and anxiety even prior to the earthquakes, the feeling appears to have intensified during the disaster. Two participants reported that they wanted a husband when their children got sick since they also felt insecure. Six participants said that they had no one else to rely on so that they contacted their ex-husband or the father of their child. One participant started talking about how lonely and hard it was to have a newborn baby during the disaster, and the interview had to be briefly halted until she was able to regain her composure.

Other difficulties as a single mother included financial struggles and the challenge of balancing work with parenting. Some participants talked about not having enough time with their child as they worked another job at night or on weekends to make ends meet, and some talked about anxiety over leaving the children at home alone while working. On the other hand, some participants said that they did not feel any difficulty as a single mother because they received help from their family, friends, and neighbors. Some also said that they did not need a husband because they thought that even if they had one, he wouldn’t be any help. Some talked about a husband as a point of access to Japanese language and culture, equating not having a husband with not understanding Japanese. They sometimes talked about a husband as being equivalent to a vehicle, through whom they could more easily navigate the country and culture.

Difficulties as a Single Mother		(multiple answers)
fear, loneliness, anxiety	8	“insecure without a man” “intensified loneliness during the disaster” “nobody to rely on”, “safety concerns” “insecure future” “intensified anxiety when the child is sick”
financial problems	3	“hard to make ends meet”
balancing parenting and work	4	“no time to be with child” “cannot leave child alone”
other	2	“limited understanding of Japanese language and culture” “worry about sexual violence towards daughter” “cleaning”, “manual labor” “having no car”
nothing special	15	“having support from children, family, and friends”, “a husband wouldn’t be a help”

Participant I (Chinese)

Participant I felt really lonely during the earthquakes. She was very grateful to her friends who gave her a call during the quake on the 14th and came to pick her up after the earthquake on the 16th. She said she will never forget the goodwill she received. Tearfully, she reported that it was very lonely being a single mother. She said that she could not understand how her ex-husband could ask her if she was scared, wondering who in the world could be fine with being alone during such a disaster.

Participant E (Filipina)

After the big earthquakes, Participant E was concerned about her daughter in the event of another earthquake as her workplace was far from her home. If anything should happen to her, she said, she had no family here and her ex-husband is too old to raise their child. As an option, she reported thinking about returning to her country where she has her own family and she feels secure.

4. Difficulties as an Immigrant

When asked about difficulties faced by participants due to being an immigrant, 22 participants answered, “Especially nothing,” since they were able to receive help from others even when they had some problems. There were positive comments such as “There was much support in Japan,” “Food and other supply was distributed fairly,” “Japanese are kind,” and “Japan is wonderful.” On the other hand, there were not a few participants who experienced some challenges as a result of being immigrants. Five participants indicated that the language was a problem in some situations, such as when they attempted to find an *onsen* (a hot spring). For example, some participants experienced difficulty reading *kanji* (Chinese characters). There were also some participants who felt uncomfortable and, even worse, discriminated at evacuation shelters, where the majority of evacuees were Japanese. One participant heard someone talking about her in the shelter, saying that she was a foreigner. She also had no one come to give information or talk to her at the shelter. There was also one participant who talked about missing her family and home country as a difficulty stemming from being an immigrant.

Difficulties as an Immigrant		(multiple answers)
nothing special	22	“people were kind and helpful”
language	5	“could not understand as people talked too fast”, “could not read information”, “could not understand evacuation orders”
uncomfortable	3	“only Japanese in shelter”, “a child just arrived in Japan and hadn’t gotten used to Japanese life”
other	3	“discrimination”, “prejudice”, “family absence”, “could not ask for help”

Even among those who answered not having had any problems as an immigrant during the disaster, there were some participants who experienced struggles which would not have happened if they had been Japanese. One example of this was when Japanese evacuees complained that Filipino evacuees did not understand Japanese, and that their children stayed up late and were noisy. Another case involved an elderly Japanese woman in the shelter who knowingly asked a participant’s child intrusive questions such as ““Where is your father,” and “Why is he not here,” as there is a rumor that all Filipinas in the area are single mothers. There were also some participants who said they did not have any problems because they understood Japanese, but they also said that it must have been very difficult for those who did not understand the language. There were also some participants who spoke about general issues concerning people from their country. For example, some participants related that “Filipinos don’t know where shelters are,” or that “Chinese don’t know what to do when an earthquake hits.”

Participant J (Chinese)

Participant J says that Japanese know what to do because they are quite familiar with earthquakes, but Chinese are not familiar, so they don’t know how to prepare, where to evacuate, or how to protect themselves in the case of such disasters. There was almost no earthquake information in Chinese, so it must have been a big problem for those who did not understand Japanese. She understands it, so she had no problem acquiring information. However, even so, she was unsure of procedures and constantly wanted to know what would happen next, what to expect, and what to do.

Participant K (Filipina)

Participant K evacuated to a park and to a city office, and as the Japanese were all quiet there, she felt that she could not raise her voice to ask for help. She felt that she would look selfish if she did so because everyone was struggling. She was very anxious, and she was surprised to see some Japanese laughing in this situation. She was also surprised by some people trying to secure some space for themselves as if it was first come, first served, and others applied make-up as if nothing special was going on. She thought that not a few people acted inconsiderately.

Information

In the interviews, we asked “How did you acquire earthquake-related information?” Most of the participants (24) seem to have acquired information through acquaintances and contacts, such as family, friends, and co-workers. There were also many participants who exchanged information with friends from the same country through SNS or text messaging, and who depended on friends who understand Japanese or had a Japanese husband. For some participants, children were also helpful in gathering information and bringing what they learned from school back home.

Source of information	
(multiple answers)	
SNS	21
Facebook	16
LINE	7
WeChat	4
Instagram	1
unknown	2
TV	18
radio	5
at shelter	7
other: town broadcasting, internet, circular notice, newspaper, emergency alarm from cellphone, texting message, KIF	

Source of information	
(person)	
friend	17
fellow national	9
Japanese	4
work place	7
supporter	5
child	4
family	4
neighbor	4
ex-husband	3
internet community	3
parent of the same school	2

As information tools, SNS was popular among many participants, with *WeChat* popular among Chinese, and *Facebook* popular among Filipinos. TV was another primary source of information for many, with some respondents saying “TV was always on in the shelter,” or “I turned on the TV for 24 hours.” There were only 5 participants who used a radio to acquire information, while another 5 acquired information from public institutions, such as municipal governments, KIF, and *chonai-hoso* (in-town broadcasting).

Info in first language	
nothing	15
SNS	3
friend	2
news	1
newspaper	1
e-mail	1

Half the participants said they could not acquire information in their first languages. Even if they did receive information in their language or in English, the amount appears to have been very limited. Two participants reported that they could not receive any information regarding the earthquakes and relief services either in their language or in Japanese. Five participants reported that acquiring information was a problem particularly because it was only in Japanese. As to the information they wanted to know, the most frequent responses were information about aftershocks (6 participants), such as when another big shock would come and when the earthquakes would stop, information about what to do during earthquakes (3), information about the locations of shelters (3), information about water (2), information about food distribution (1), and general information about support services (2).

Participant L (Filipina)

Participant L did not receive any information on the earthquakes or after-earthquake support. Even though she exchanged some information with her Filipino friends via Facebook or emails she did not have any other sources of information as she could not read Japanese. Besides, her TV was broken in the disaster. At the time of the interview, she reported not having any information about support services. Even when she came back to the city from the southern part of the prefecture, she did not have a good understanding of the situation.

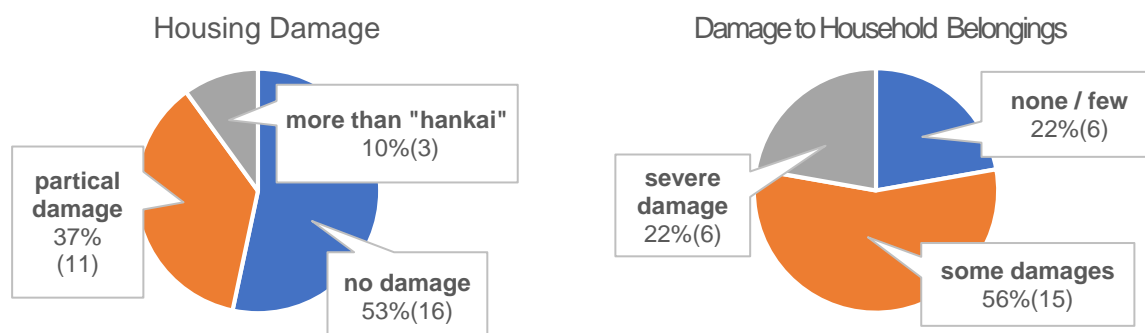
Participant M (Filipina)

Participant M acquired information from a service called Earthquake Early Warning via her cellphone, from friends and their husbands, and from Kumustaka. She also watched TV, listened to the radio, and checked Yahoo's Earthquake Early Warning service. She heard the announcement about food distribution from *chonai hoso* (in-town broadcasting). She belongs to a Filipino LINE group. On Facebook, her friends posted information in Tagalog. She primarily sought information about what had happened, what would happen, where to evacuate, and how to protect herself.

Housing

All of the participants, with the exception of two, lived in rental housing, including private apartments and public housing, prior to the earthquakes. About half the participants (46%) had their housing damaged, and 21 (78%) had some household belongings damaged. Seven participants moved into a new place following the earthquakes, with five of them moving within the same district, and 2 moving from the north ward to the central ward in Kumamoto City. Three participants, whose apartments were classified as *hankai* (half-destroyed), could not continue to live there, and had no choice but to move. One participant, whose apartment was classified as *ichibu sonkai* (partially destroyed), also moved due to the fear that her apartment complex would fall off of a nearby cliff in the event of another large earthquake. There was another participant who reported moving because she could not endure living in a place where she had felt such intense fear during the earthquakes, even though the apartment itself was not seriously damaged.

Housing	before	after
private apartment	20	21
public housing	5	5
rented house	3	2
owned house	2	1
lodger		1



At the time of our interviews, there were only 4 participants who had applied for *risai shomeisho* (disaster certificates). The status of their housing were *daikibo hankai* (large-scale half destroyed) (1), *hankai* (half destroyed) (1), and *ichibu sonkai* (partially destroyed) (2). Those whose housing were certified as *daikibo hankai* and *hankai* had already moved into new apartments at the time of the interview, utilizing the *minashi* (quasi-) temporary housing system. However, one participant, having resided in seriously affected areas, had her room severely damaged to the point that it was sitting at an angle. Despite this situation, she paid all the expenses to move as she did not know about the *risai shoumeisho* (destruction certificate) or other relief support services.

Participant L (Filipina)

Participant L did not apply for a *risai shomeisho* because she did not have adequate information about it. She also reported that she did not think that her apartment was seriously damaged. However, she moved into her current two-story apartment in early August because it became too scary for her to live and sleep in such a tall building after the earthquakes. When moving into her previous apartment, she was unable to rent it under her name because she was not a Japanese citizen. Instead, she rented it under the name of her friend's Japanese husband. Therefore, as she thought it would be the same this time, she asked her friend's husband for assistance from the start. He agreed to help and the rental process went smoothly.

Participant F (Filipina)

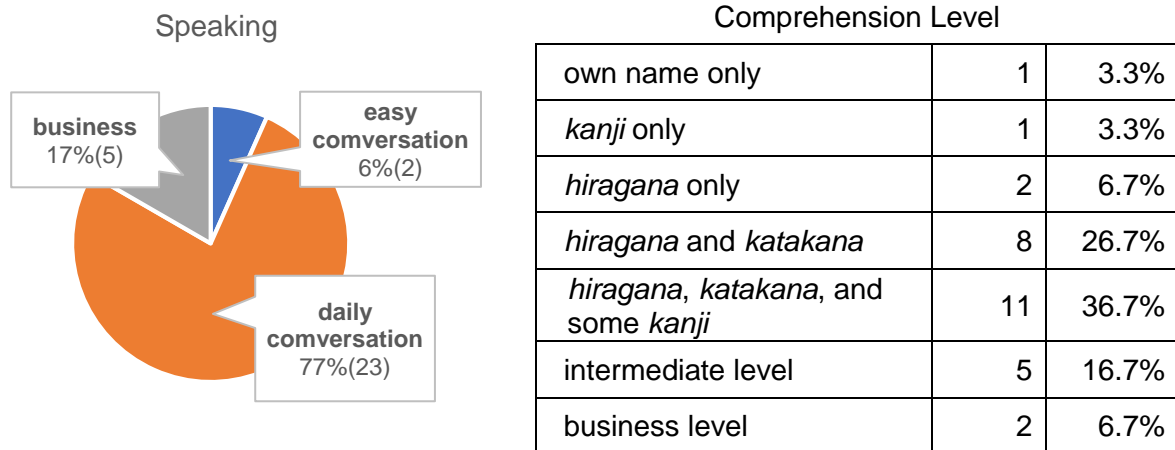
Participant F and her friend used to live in a house that the “mama-san” (woman who runs the establishment) of the *hostess* bar they worked had rented to her employees. Her friend’s room was damaged a little, but her room was seriously damaged. The landlord did not intend to repair the house as it was old. At the time of the interview she had no plans to use the relief assistance to move because she said that she did not have anywhere else to stay after the divorce, and the mama-san let her stay for a reduced rent (20,000 yen a month following some negotiation).

Immigrant Single Mothers and Information at the Time of the Disaster

People accumulate information through their own experience and education, and there is big difference in the accumulated information of people born and raised in Japan and that of those who were born and raised abroad. People born and raised in Japan are more likely to have experienced actual earthquakes, and to have received disaster evacuation training at school. They probably know that schools become shelters in the case of disasters, and that food, water, blankets, and some other supplies would be provided there. However, earthquakes do not occur in every country. Many immigrant single mothers have neither experienced earthquakes nor received disaster prevention education. Only 7 participants reported that they made any earthquake preparations, such as water and flashlights, or had experience of disaster prevention training. Eight participants had no knowledge of earthquakes, and did not make any preparations for earthquakes or other disasters. As a result, they did not know what to do when the earthquakes started.

There were also differences in the information received by participants, which was highly dependent on the Japanese language ability of the participants, as well as their relationships with others. With the exception of one participant who had lived in Japan for 4 years and 4 months as the time of the earthquakes, all participants had lived in Japan for more than 5 years. Twenty-nine (94%) reported having no problems communicating in Japanese for the purpose of daily conversation, and 5 participants reported having business level conversational skills. However, there were many instances during the interviews when participants did not understand questions and explanations from the interviewer in Japanese, and others in which the interviewer had

Japanese Language Ability of the Participants



difficulty understanding their Japanese. Reading and writing in Japanese appeared to be more difficult for participants. Twenty-three participants reported having difficulty understanding handouts and documents from schools or the government. In such cases, they told interviewers that they either asked their family and friends to read the information for them, or simply left the information unread. It is doubtful that those with limited Japanese language skills (especially reading skills) understood earthquake-related information released by the governments in Japanese. There were only 5 participants who reported having obtained information from public agencies, and 2 of the 5 said the information concerned relief supplies and shelters and was obtained through *chounai housou* (in-town broadcasting). Although KIF (available in English, Chinese, and Korean) and Kumustaka (in 9 languages, including Tagalog, Chinese, and Indonesian) released multilingual information online (via websites and Facebook accounts), only one participant reported accessing these services. No participant reported accessing the Kumamoto City website or the Kumamoto Prefecture website, which employ an automatic translation system. Twenty-six participants acquired earthquake-related information from those whom they had regular contact, such as family, friends, and co-workers. Throughout the interviews, we observed that for single mothers to survive in Japanese society, it was importance to have interpersonal connections.

Only 5 participants answered that they had a language problem during the earthquakes and subsequent evacuations. Others confided that even when they did not understand information or instructions in Japanese, it was not a problem because they received help from people around them. However, at the time of the interviews we strongly felt that adequate earthquake related-information had not reached immigrant single mothers. To the question “Did you apply for *risai shomeisho* (destruction

<i>Risai Shomeisho</i> (destruction certificate)	
applied	4
did not apply	24
did not knew at all	12
did not know well	5

certificate)?” many participants responded by asking “What is that?” Some said they had heard about it but did not know the details, saying “I was too shy to ask someone about the earthquake victim assistance system,” or “I’ve heard the words ‘*hankai*’ and ‘*zenkai*’ but I don’t know what they are.” However, to our surprise, the majority of participants responded that they had not even heard of a *risai shoumei* or about other relief support. Although many participants said that they did not have any language related problems, we feel that information about the existence of relief assistance such as *risai shoumei*, which is well known among Japanese living in Kumamoto, was hardly known among immigrants. Clearly, it is necessary to disseminate multilingual information more effectively and efficiently.

The Earthquakes Effect on Immigrant Single Mothers’ Jobs

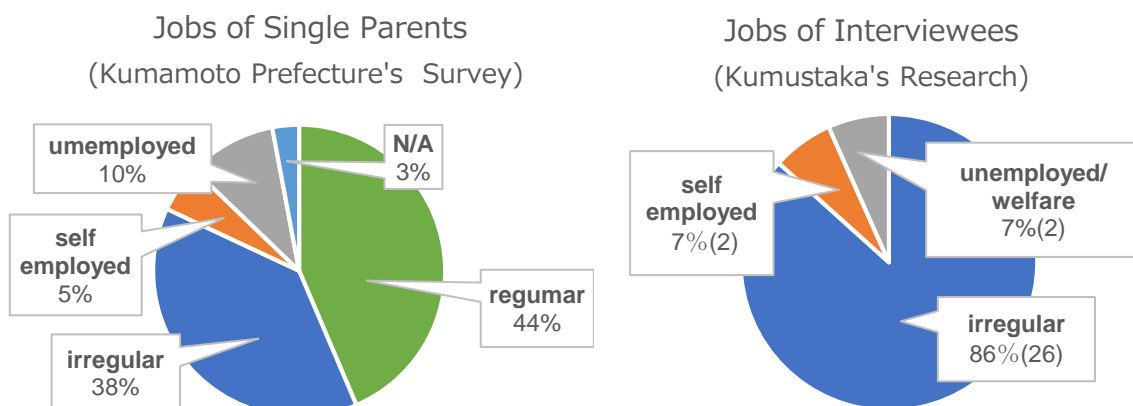
At the time of the interviews, 21 (70%) participants were single mothers residing with children, and 15 of them reported not having family or relatives in Japan. They have navigated Japanese society and survived the earthquake disaster by utilizing support networks, such as friends and co-workers, that they established by themselves following their arrival in Japan. However, even with such support networks, it appeared difficult for them to receive financial support and help in caring for their children. The continuing aftershocks following the two main earthquakes were a major source of anxiety when participants were forced to be away from their children. We noticed a higher degree of anxiety in participants who lacked family support. Even with small children, those who had family support said it was a great help and that they truly appreciated it. The anxiety from the earthquakes and aftershocks, and from being apart from their children, had a considerable effect on immigrant single mothers financially.

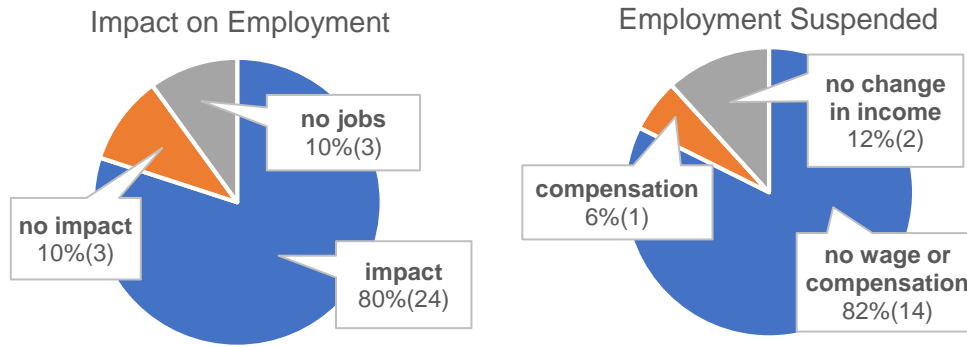
According to the survey on single-parent households conducted by Kumamoto Prefecture, 43.5% of the *jido fuyo teate* (child rearing allowance) recipients were regular employees, and 38.4% were non-regular employees prior to the earthquakes. Amongst

Occupation	primary job	secondary job
English teacher	2	1
sales clerk	3	1
care worker/nursery	2	
hostess (cocktail waiter)	10	4
food processing worker	4	1
manufacture worker	2	
cleaning worker	2	1
examiner	1	
Office clerk	1	
farmer	1	
unemployed	2	
restaurant staff		1
interpreter		2

respondents there were no regular employees, and all of them, with the exception of 2 self-employed and 2 welfare recipients, were non-regular employees, such as part-time workers or temporary dispatched workers. It is difficult for a single mother to manage work while raising a child alone, especially for those with a small child, and the time they can be available, not to mention the types of work they are able to perform, can be very limited. Limited Japanese language skills and prejudice against foreigners in society are additional obstacles for immigrant single mothers seeking employment. The result of this is that they are often only able to find unstable employment.

It is not easy for immigrant single mothers to earn adequate income to from a single job due to low wages. Eleven participants reported having more than one job,





which was about 39% of the participants who were working. Thirteen out of 28 participants who disclosed their earned incomes to us earned less than 150,000 yen per month, with the majority earning around 100,000 yen. One reported working for 5.5 hours a day part-time on weekends and other holidays, in addition to her regular work, even though her main job required her to work 40 hours a week plus overtime. However, she reported barely making ends meet with her total income around 150,000 yen. Twelve out of 15 participants whose monthly wages were more than 150,000 yen, worked as a “hostess” (cocktail waitress) as a primary or secondary job. According to the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, 50.8% of single parent households were living in a state of poverty as of 2016. However, this study indicates that the percentage of immigrant single parents in poverty appears to be much higher.

The Kumamoto Earthquakes affected immigrant single mothers and their employment and financial situations significantly, which were not easy even prior to the earthquakes. Eighty percent of participants reported a negative impact to their employment situation. Among 17 participants who were off from work due to decisions made by their employers, one was paid during the down time, one was paid half of her normal wages, and another used her paid-leave. However, the remaining 14 participants (82%) received no income during the shutdown, receiving neither income nor compensation. Even after their work started again, 9 of them were forced to take leaves of absence because they could not leave their children at home alone, or had to clean and fix their residences. Eight out of the 9 had no income during the time, while only one

Impact on Job	(multiple answers)
work closed	17
leave of absence for personal reasons	9
decrease of working hours	6
change of job	3

participant used her paid leave. Six participants who worked in the service industry, at places such as hotels or bars, stated that their hours and pay were cut as business declined, possibly due to the overall decline in the tourist and service industries across Kumamoto following the earthquakes. Thus, some of them changed jobs, while others started another job while maintaining their original employment. Eleven participants stated that their financial situations became much harsher, and that they were worried about how to make a living in the future. Some participants had no choice but to borrow money to make ends meet. The majority of the single mothers were already struggling financially to make ends meet even prior to the earthquakes. However, the earthquakes significantly worsened their financial situations. As non-regular employees, they lost income due to not being covered by a compensation plan. The earthquakes had a severely negative impact on the lives of the single mothers interviewed.

The Stories

The Story of Rosa -----

When the earthquakes started, Rosa had just started a new life with her three children, including a new born baby after the divorce from her Japanese husband.

April 14 Foreshock

The first earthquake hit Rosa and her family when they were having dinner with friends from the same apartment. She did not know what happened but thought it was a ghost showing up. Her friend's husband shouted it was an earthquake. Rosa grabbed her two children and fled outside, where she watched a part of the apartment building collapse. Remembering that moment, she said she felt "Panic, panic, and panic." She and her friends went to pick up her third child who was at a sports practice. Then they stayed in her friend's car in a parking lot overnight.

The next day she evacuated to Fukuoka with her children and her friend's family, but she was still in a state of panic. She took sedatives (thirty pills) and drank lots of alcohol until she blacked out. After surviving the stress of an abusive relationship and the subsequent divorce, she felt devastated at having lost her new home and at not knowing what to do and where to live. With so many troubles, she was desperate and thought that she wanted to die.

Uneasy Life at the Evacuation Shelter

After the main earthquake on the 16th, Rosa returned to Kumamoto with her children. They stayed overnight in a camping tent at the property next to her friend's house. But it was rainy and cold outside, and she felt scared there. So, the next day, her friend took her and her family to an elementary school which had become an evacuation shelter. The shelter was very crowded, and the only space they could find for themselves was beside the shoe boxes at the entrance. It was cold, and cats and dogs were nearby. This was a harsh environment for Rosa, who had small children. She felt like an outsider and very uncomfortable as no one talked to her there and she heard someone saying, "That's a foreigner there." The food provided was inadequate. She received only a small amount of milk in a plastic bag for her baby. Obtaining hot water was very difficult even if she wanted to feed her children. She felt she could not handle it anymore, and called Kumustaka and was brought to Kumamoto City International Center. Different from the previous shelter, there was a lot of food and other relief supplies, people

were generous, and she did not have any language troubles. As evacuees were from various countries, her anxiety lessened. She made friends with other evacuees, and they later helped her clear her apartment in preparation for moving.

However, her children continued to suffer psychologically, and panicked every time there was an aftershock. They suffered from eczema, and all of her family members caught a cold. She was also worried that the loud noises made by her children might be troubling other evacuees. Making trips to a public bath and coin-laundry were also troublesome, and she was forced to spend a lot of money.

Concern about the Future

Following the main earthquakes, Rosa became very anxious about the prospect of securing a place to live and new employment. As a result, she began drinking alcohol more often after the earthquakes, and the relationship with her adolescent child deteriorated. Rosa felt lonely and anxious about her life, especially considering that she was raising three children (including an infant) on her own. When we asked her what the difficulties were of being a single mother, she broke into tears and was unable to answer.

The Story of Mary -----

Mary married a Japanese man, had a child with him, and divorced. Currently she works 5 to 6 days a week in a factory to raise her child. She has to take a day off sometimes since her child is still small and got ill often. Her ex-husband has not paid her child support, so she has trouble making ends meet. However, her biological sisters live close to her home and are a source of support.

April 14 Foreshock

When the foreshock hit in the evening of the 14th, Mary was watching TV with her child in the living room. That was the first big earthquake she had ever experienced. A shelf almost fell down. She held her child with one hand and the shelf with the other hand, and then she went under the kitchen table with her child. She called a friend from her church. The friend told her to get outside, so she changed her clothes and went outside to evacuate to her younger sister's home. Her child seemed to be in shock and scared, and was silent for a while.

April 16 Main Shock

Mary was sleeping with her child at her sister's house when the main shock hit on the 16th. "Stay still," shouted her sister's husband. Then she placed her body over her child covering both of them with a futon. The shaking was much more

severe than on the 14th, and many things fell to the floor. She was very scared and began to panic. However, being a mother, she held her child tight and tried to soothe her. “We’ll be okay if we keep praying to God. He will protect us,” said Mary to her child again and again. Her child, however, could not speak even a word.

Once the shaking eased, they went outside and stayed in a car.

Two Week Evacuation in a Car

Mary, her child, and her sister’s family stayed in an evacuation shelter only for one night. Due to the crowding, they decided to use their cars for temporary shelter, which they parked in front of her sister’s house, a supermarket, or her workplace. Although there was little damage to her apartment and no impact on the utilities in her local area, she was too scared to be in the apartment. She would hurriedly cook in the apartment before returning to the car to eat, and only took a shower every other day. She spent two weeks in this way. After that, Mary reluctantly returned home after her sister’s family and other neighbors went home. Still scared, she ended up spending two more nights in the car.

Balancing Work and Parenting

Mary’s employment resumed quickly without severe impact from the earthquakes, but Mary could not leave her child alone, so she did not go to work for a week. However, she eventually decided to go back to work because she needed the income. Small aftershocks continued even after she returned to work. She got nervous every time the ground shook. “You will get used to it,” her co-workers told her. However, she never did, and spent her time at work worried about her child.

During the disaster, her child often became sick often, and could not speak for a while after the earthquakes. Worried about the prospect of future earthquakes, she asked her sister to take care of her child instead, even after the preschool reopened. Now her child often wants to go to the homes of her sisters’. Mary thinks that this is due to the loneliness of living only with her mother.

Because she has not returned to The Philippines since coming to Kumamoto, Mary wants to return home to show her child to her parents sometime soon.

The Story of Maria -----

Before the earthquakes Maria lived with her Japanese husband and their two children. Even after the couple separated, they continued to life under the same roof. She decided not to divorce because she was worried about the future of her children.

April 14 Foreshock and April 16 Main Shock

When the two big earthquakes hit, Maria's husband was hospitalized. Her house had little damage from the earthquake on the 14th. However, the shakes were much more intense on the 16th, and the house was damaged. A lot of things fell down inside her house, and she could not get outside easily. Once the shaking eased, she pushed against the broken door hard again and again in order to get out. She evacuated to a park nearby with her children but without any of her belongings. She saw that a condominium in front of the park was slowly slanting. It was a terrifying moment for her. She also saw some residents inside the condominium trying to get out by breaking the windows. After sunrise, she and her children went to a junior high school nearby to evacuate.

Three-Month Evacuation

Maria and her children spent two months as evacuees at a gym of a local junior high school. They could not sleep inside the gym, so they slept in her car parked outside the gym. Two months later, they moved to a shelter at the ward office and spent another month there. What Maria felt was most difficult during the time was water. The water supply stopped for days, both in her house and the shelters, and water trucks could not come because of damage to the roads. As a result, they went to different shelter to get water. To take baths, she traveled to a neighboring city, where she waited for 3 hours and paid 2,000 yen for a family bath a few times.

Language Problems

It wasn't until Maria's husband was released from the hospital that she learned about available disaster relief assistance. She also learned that earthquake victims could take a public bath for free. However, she did not think she could have made use of this service because she had a hard time finding public baths as she could not read kanji. All the signs at the shelter were in kanji at first, so she did not understand what was what. However, the principal of the school added katakana to the kanji, which made it easier for her to read and was helpful.

In the same shelter, there were three single-mother families from her native country. Japanese evacuees complained about their children staying up late and being noisy, but the mothers could not communicate well in Japanese. Maria did not have any problem speaking Japanese, so she interpreted for them and gave them some information.

There were many relief supplies provided at the shelter, and she knew some immigrant single mothers who did not go to a shelter because they did not want to feel uncomfortable as Japanese evacuees might complain about them. She gathered relief supplies for the immigrant women at the shelter and brought the supplies to share with them.

Even though Maria doesn't have any problem conversing in Japanese, she cannot read kanji, so she did struggle to get information. She could not obtain any information in her native language, and she could not understand the information in Japanese on the TV or radio. So instead, she acquired information from Kumustaka, parents from the same school, and her friends' Facebook pages.

Not only Maria but also many other immigrants have difficulty in reading and writing kanji. She wants information to be at least in hiragana or katakana if her first language is not available. Maria and other immigrants had very limited access to important information on food, water, coin laundries and other available support and assistance. She also wanted to know about resettlement assistance and other financial assistance as their house was classified as "half-destroyed," but her husband and her mother-in-law told her nothing about it, saying that it was none of her business.

About Children

Maria was concerned that her children would not want to go to school after the earthquakes and they had lost motivation. They did not eat as much as they used to because the food supplied at the shelter was different from their usual meals. She was also worried that they would not be able to stop playing with their smartphones, which, she thinks, was caused by the environment at the shelter, where there was very limited space to play and many smartphone users.

The Story of Lora -----

Lora currently works as a *hostess* to make a living for her and her child. She divorced from her Japanese husband shortly after giving birth. Co-workers and other staff at her work have been supportive and helpful whenever she has some issues. She also has some friends from the same country with whom she can talk to.

Child at Nursery During the Foreshock

Lora was at work when the foreshock occurred. She was on the seventh floor, which shook badly, and the workplace became a big mess. She seriously thought

she would die as she could not get outside easily. She just hoped her child would survive.

Once the shaking eased, she went to pick up her child at a nursery nearby. All the children at the nursery were crying and she felt so sad for them. Not being able to return to her work as the building had a gas leak and a temporary ban on entering, she had no choice but to wait in a park nearby with her co-workers. Later that night, one of the co-workers found on the internet that an elementary school nearby had become an evacuation shelter, so they walked there together.

Lora was in the gym of the elementary school when the main shock occurred on the 16th. There were about 300 evacuees inside there. She quickly grabbed her child and rushed outside.

One Month Evacuation

Lora and her child spent a month as evacuees at the elementary school gym. For the first two days she was provided with only rice balls to eat. Toilets there were terrible as they lacked water to flush. She did not go home during the first week and borrowed some clothes from her friends. She could not sleep well at the shelter, which was a source of stress for her.

In the middle of May, the shelter closed and she returned home, but she was too scared to be in the apartment, so she decided to return to her home country for about two weeks. All the other co-workers from the same country also went home temporarily. Even after she returned to Kumamoto, she still had trouble sleeping as the aftershocks continued. However, she decided to be strong; otherwise she could not do anything, she thought.

Contrary to Lora's expectation, her child enjoyed staying at the shelter very much, as there were many other evacuees to play with. As a result, he wanted to go back to the shelter after they returned home. Fortunately, the child ate and slept well and stayed healthy without showing signs of emotional instability. Lora thinks her child must have been lonely when only the two of them lived together.

Future Employment

Lora's work was closed for about a month after the earthquakes. She was paid half of the salary and was given some consolatory payments during that time. However, as her income decreased, she struggled financially and had to borrow some money.

The hostess club reopened and she returned to work, but she is worried that they do not have as many customers as before. The building is still under repair

and covered with nets, and she thinks the adjacent building is slightly slanted. She even feels a little scared to work in the building. However, she truly appreciates her co-workers for being supportive like a family. She is financially struggling but she thinks “We all the same, so it’s okay.”

The Story of Sara -----

Sara lives with her daughter after her divorce from her Japanese husband.

She is currently working as a part-time *hostess*.

April 14 Foreshock

The big foreshock hit Sara and her daughter in the evening of 14th when they were about to take a bath. She increasingly panicked as the shaking continued. She rushed out her door, downstairs, and out to the parking lot, almost dragging her daughter. When she came back to herself, she realized that her daughter was shivering and crying. Her daughter had no clothes on, and her feet were scraped and bleeding. She felt so bad for not having noticed, and she continued apologizing to her over and over.

When she and her daughter evacuated to the nearby elementary school, she received a call from her ex-mother-in-law with whom she has kept a good relationship even after the divorce. The mother-in-law invited Sara and her daughter to stay at their house, so they decided to do so.

April 16 Main Shock and Evacuation Life

After the main earthquake on the 16th, Sara, her daughter, and her mother-in-law evacuated to a park nearby. Sara felt it was unsafe to return to the house, so she decided to take everyone to an evacuation shelter. However, the mother-in-law, being drunk, disagreed, and said to Sara “Do you think the house is that weak?” She also asked her granddaughter, “Which do you choose, mom or grandma?” Sara did not want to quarrel with her mother-in-law, but felt that it was more important to protect her daughter. As a result, she decided to go to a shelter close to the house with her daughter. As they were leaving, Sara heard the mother-in-law telling her husband, “Sara doesn’t want to stay in this house anymore,” which made her cry. The mother-in-law later apologized to Sara on the phone and came to pick them up. However, Sara decided to temporarily stay in another evacuation shelter located at the elementary-school near her apartment.

About the Daughter

During the ten-day evacuation in the elementary school, Sara's daughter had her legs touched by a boy whom she made friends with. Sara told one of the shelter staff about the incident, and it appeared that there were other girls who were touched by the same boy. The staff asked the boy's mother to keep an eye on him. Sara became very worried about her daughter, especially when she had to leave her alone at night to work. She did not go to work for a month as she could not leave her daughter alone, but later became friends with Japanese single mothers in the same shelter, who also worked at night. They took turns to watch over their children when they had nights off. Her daughter was in a state of shock from the earthquakes for a few days, and said that she was lonely. Even now, she says she does not want to see anything related to the earthquakes because that would remind her of the experience.

Housing Problem

Sara's apartment had a lot of cracks but was classified as "partially destroyed" according to the destruction certificate. Adding to her worries, the cliff next to her apartment appeared ready to collapse at any time. Her daughter also insisted that she did not want to go back to the apartment so Sara looked for a new place to live. She had to pay a cancellation fee and rent for a month even though she could not stay there after the earthquakes. She found a small, one-bedroom apartment, but the rent was almost twice that of the previous apartment. She might have been able to find somewhere cheaper, but she wanted a strong and sturdy apartment that was available to move into right away. She felt that there was no choice at that time. She heard that there were some relief programs for the earthquake victims, but she did not know any of the details. She was also eager to settle down in a new place as soon as possible. As a result, she paid the rent and other expenses to move out of her own pocket.

Her work has started again, but customers have not come to the club as often as before. "They don't have money nowadays," said Sara laughing. She hopes to get a daytime job someday. "I want as ordinary life," Sara said.

The Story of Marie -----

Marie was married to a Japanese man, but divorced after giving birth. Now she lives with her child. When the earthquakes happened, her other child, who is living in her native country, was visiting her temporarily.

April 14 and Evacuation Life

When the foreshock occurred, Marie was working at a *hostess* club, and her two children were at home alone. She called a lady in the same apartment, who often cares for the family, and asked her to check the children to make sure they were okay. Being apart, she was terribly worried. She rushed home by taxi as the multi-story parking lot she parked her car was shut due to the earthquake. Returning to her house, she found the cabinet door opened, and most of the tableware in pieces on her floor. Aftershocks continued, so she and her children walked to a park nearby. They stayed there for a while and returned home shortly after. She was able to get some sleep that night.

On the 15th, Marie and her children went to the parking lot to get her car, and then went shopping to buy water and other necessities. She was very tired and went to bed early that night. Then, the main earthquake occurred after midnight on the 16th. The power went out and the TV fell down. "Don't panic," her children said to Marie. That's when Marie realized that she was crying out loud.

Afterwards, Marie and her children spent the daytime in her apartment, and nights in her car parked at an elementary school. She could not sleep well inside the car, so sometimes she would sleep in the morning after she returned home. Marie did not choose to stay in the school, which was turned into an evacuation shelter, because she was afraid of her children contracting infectious diseases there.

Gas was restored soon after, but water service did not resume until the end of April. During this time Marie learned first-hand the importance of water. Clearing up the mess in the apartment was hard work because all electrical appliances, including a rice cooker and TV, were broken. As a result, Marie had to buy new ones.

She visited Kumamoto City International Center often to receive relief supplies and for consultation. She also went there for a soup kitchen service run by volunteers originally from Marie's country but now living in Fukuoka. Japanese people were all helpful there too. She did not attempt to procure many relief supplies from the elementary school because she thought many evacuees there were in more need than she was.

She experienced body shivers for two months after the earthquakes even when resting. She thought that her children were tougher than she was. Their existence meant a lot to Marie.

Disaster and Work

As the *hostess* club she worked was closed until the middle of May, Marie had no work, no pay, and no compensation. Even without any income from work, she still had to buy water and food, and replace electrical appliances. In addition, she had to send money to her family in her country. She struggled financially and could not pay rent for a while.

After the earthquakes Marie went to *Hello Work*, a public employment service office, but had to wait hours to use a computer for job searches. She wanted to find a daytime job, but it was difficult since so many people were also looking for work after the earthquakes. Marie finally got a job in October 2016. Her current monthly income includes wages of around 130,000 yen, a child allowance, and a child support allowance. She struggles to make ends meet with the money as she also has to send some money for her child and her mother back in her home country, in addition to supporting herself and her child here in Japan.

Marie's dream is to continue her current employment and raise her children well. She is careful about her own health to avoid being absent from work. She wants to work during the day and also at night to get out of her financial difficulties, but at the same time is trying not to work too hard.

The Story of Karen -----

Karen divorced two times, and currently lives with two children in an apartment in southern Kumamoto.

During the Earthquakes

When the earthquake hit on April 14, Karen was at home with her children. She had never experienced such a big earthquake before. She felt her heart beating, and the children were very scared. She was afraid to go outside, so they stayed inside the apartment that night. She could not sleep until the next morning because of the nonstop shaking.

Karen described the effect of the main earthquake saying that the "Inside the apartment was turning around." She felt she had to evacuate to somewhere, and tried calling a taxi, but the phone call did not go through. So she made contact with her friend through Facebook. The friend came to pick Karen and her children up, and they went to a public facility nearby as evacuees.

In addition to the disaster, Karen was hit by shocking news from her home country on the 18th: her mother had suddenly past away. Karen's mother was so

worried about Karen after watching news about the earthquakes on TV that she could not sleep and lost her appetite. Having high blood pressure, the mother lost consciousness and died shortly after. Although Karen wanted to fly back home right away, the road to Fukuoka Airport was shut, so she had to wait until it reopened on April 22.

About the Children

Karen's two children developed fevers from the stress of the earthquakes and from being cold in the shelter after moved there. Feeding her children was another big problem for Karen as both children have food allergies. With limited food available at that time, it was difficult to obtain adequate food that the children could eat. Also, relief supplies provided at the shelter in southern Kumamoto consisted only of food, with no water or sanitary products.

Karen's became sensitive to even small aftershocks following the main earthquake. Even now, they jump out of bed when the earthquake is an intensity of III or more. She tries to soothe them by making jokes or telling them, "I'm here with you. Don't worry."

Difficulties as an Immigrant

The shelter Karen stayed is located in southern Kumamoto, close to the Ariake Sea. A handout that explained where and how to evacuate in case of a tsunami was distributed to every evacuee at the shelter. However, the handout was only in Japanese with lots of *kanji*. All immigrant evacuees there, including Karen, could not read *kanji*, so they were very anxious at not knowing what to do in the case of a tsunami. There was an actual tsunami alert once. The announcement seemed to urge evacuation, but she did not understand what it was actually saying. Not knowing what to do, she ran to her car and stayed there. She thought she would give up her life and die with her children if a tsunami hit them.

Karen also experienced prejudice as an immigrant woman at the shelter. There was a rumor among Japanese in her town that all immigrant women were single mothers. One day at the shelter an elderly woman came to Karen's child and asked her knowingly, "Where is your father? Why he is not here with you?"

Karen had to overcome the disaster and her mother's death following the earthquakes. Even now her heart pounds and she cannot sleep when there are relatively large earthquakes. "Things are tough now, but I'm a mother. I've gotta do my best," Karen says smiling.

The Story of Mari -----

Mari married a Japanese man and gave birth to two children. She has not legally divorced yet, but left her husband because of domestic violence. She currently lives with her children in an apartment, and her own mother and sisters also live nearby. She has a part-time job during the day and she also works as a *hostess* a few nights a week.

The Earthquakes

When the first earthquake hit on 14th, her youngest child had a fever of 39 degree Celsius. She was extremely scared as she had never experienced such a large earthquake before. She almost panicked, but managed to calm herself by talking to her children and by telling them and herself that they would be okay.

In the evening of the 15th, Mari left her children at her mother's house and went to work. However, the *hostess* club she worked was closed because of the earthquake, and she returned to her apartment by herself. She was already sleeping alone when the main earthquake hit. The power went out, and being alone and in total darkness, she was terrified. Although her neighbors were evacuating outside the apartment, she was too scared to be outside alone in the darkness as she feared that her husband or a suspicious person might show up due to her separation. Mari tried to comfort herself by contacting her friends through Facebook and praying to God.

Family Support

After dawn, Mari went to her mother's house to be reunited with her children, and they spent three days there. When they returned to their apartment, the power was back on, but there were still no water or gas. Even after they returned home, for a while they continued to eat at the mother's house and come back home to sleep at night since her mother's house was not as affected by the earthquakes as Mari's, and she felt more comfortable there in the company of other family members. Mari's mother and her husband live in a one-story house with a big yard. While staying in the house, Mari felt no fear and her children spent their time in peace.

Her mother took care of the children when the school was closed, so she could go to work. Mari goes to her mother every time she has trouble. "Family is the most important," says Mari.

Changes

Mari felt that she and her children experienced psychological changes following the earthquakes. Mari jumped up in preparation to rush outside even after small aftershocks for a while after the earthquakes. Even now she has trouble sleeping, and often wakes up around 2 or 3 o'clock every morning. She still has severe anxiety and a fear of being outside alone at night, so she rushes into her apartment from her car after she parks.

Her children have also become reluctant to stay at home by themselves, which they did not have a problem with prior to the earthquakes. She is worried and feels sorry about such a change. She finds it scary to be alone, and thinks that being a single mother is "unsafe." She says, "I cannot be strong without a man."

Information and Language Barriers

Mari experienced a language barrier during the disaster as there was no disaster-related information either in her native language or in English. Some disaster-related terms and kanji such as *hinanjo* (evacuation shelter) were difficult, so she searched for word meanings online. She obtained information mostly from her friends through Facebook, and sometimes from her customers at the *hostess* club. She heard at work that those who had their house damaged could receive financial assistance or have their houses repaired, although at the time of the interview she did not know about *risai shomei*.

Mari says she has a dream of owning her own house for her children. She also hopes her children will have the freedom to live as they please.

The Story of Rita -----

Rita married a Japanese man and moved to Japan, but separated just before giving birth to her child and is currently divorced. After the separation, she wanted to go back to her country as giving birth and parenting alone in a strange country seemed very stressful. However, she decided to stay in Japan for the future of her child. The earthquakes occurred shortly after she secured new employment in April 2016.

April 14

Rita was at home with her child during the earthquake. At first she did not understand what it was, but after she realized the situation she was not overly scared. However, she suddenly felt intense fear and started shivering once she got a call from her work, in which she was warned that another large earthquake was

likely to come. She became even more scared when an emergency earthquake alert service started ringing on her cellphone. She grabbed her child and rushed out from her apartment in her pajamas, but she did not know where to go or what to do. She went into a restaurant on the first floor of the apartment where one of the customers covered her child's head with a pot, and they went outside together. She was so scared that she was in tears. For the first time since her divorce she wished she had a husband, and thought that it is hard to live without a man.

Once Rita went outside, she noticed that people were going somewhere, but she did not know where. She stopped some people walking by and asked where they were heading to. That was how she learned that there was a place called a *hinanjo* and that was where she could evacuate to. She had never heard the word *hinanjo* and did not know that it was a place where people could go during a disaster.

The owner of the restaurant told Rita that an elementary school nearby had become a shelter, and her neighbor took her and her child there by car. While in the shelter, she received a call from her workplace telling her to come there because the elementary school was old and dangerous. Then her co-worker came and picked them up at the shelter. She also received an international call from her family back home after the earthquake. She did not want to have her mother worried about her, so she told her that the earthquake was not where she was. "I'm fine. I'm fine," said Rita to her mother, but in fact she was not fine at all.

April 16

Rita worked next day, on the 15th. After work, she was sleeping there with her child when the main earthquake occurred. Someone cried out, "Be a pill bug!" She did not know what it meant, but as she saw other people curling up, so she grabbed her child and did the same. Everything at the workplace, such as papers and tableware fell down, and the place was a terrible mess. The fear she felt during this main shock was so intense that it could not be even compared to that of the night before. Even now, Rita believes that she could have been killed if she had not been with her co-workers.

Stay at the Community Center as Evacuees

For the next two weeks following the earthquakes, Rita and her child evacuated to a community center close to her work. She got up at seven in the morning to go to work and came back to the center in the late afternoon. Food was provided there, and evacuees, including Rita, also cooked together. There was no

running water at the center, so men brought back “black water” from somewhere to flush the toilets. Unfortunately, Rita was on her period at that time. She substituted adult diapers for sanitary napkins, and used the “black water” to wash herself first, and then rinsed with drinking water. Although her coworkers offered to take them to an *onsen* (public bath), she did not want to wait for hours in line, and was too worried about the possibility of another big earthquake while in the bath, so she did not take a bath for two weeks. For the first few days she was unable to even wash her face before going to work.

All evacuees at the center slept side by side in a large room together. They set futons in two rows, with one side for females and another for males. There was no privacy at the center. Even going inside her apartment to get necessities was scary for her, so she did not have enough clothing. She changed her underwear in the restroom every day, but other clothes only every three days. She became sick a week after the earthquakes, with severe pain in her stomach, constant diarrhea, and vomiting. Eventually, she had to be hospitalized. She thinks that the constant fear of another large earthquake and the unsanitary conditions were the cause.

Rita was in the community center until it was closed as a shelter. When she went back to her apartment, electricity was already restored but all of the lights in the rooms were broken, so it was dark inside. Since water had not yet resumed, she ate at work or used a food service provided at the restaurant on the first floor. The apartment building had some damage and inside her apartment was extremely disordered due to the earthquakes, but not knowing that some volunteer services were available she cleared everything up by herself.

Support During the Evacuation

Rita is thankful for her work, the community center, and the people who were there. She says that being able to continue to work even after the earthquakes was financially very helpful. Having her co-workers was also a big source of emotional support for her. She was also thankful for her employer understanding her situation and allowing her to bring her child to the workplace for roughly a month while the preschool was closed following the first earthquake.

Rita also felt at ease at the community center as a *minsei-iin* (district welfare commissioner) was present, as well as her neighbors whom she was already familiar. Other mothers at the center brought some materials for the children to play with, such as coloring sheets and *origami* paper, so Rita’s child seemed to

enjoy her time with the other children. Rita was also thankful to be provided with food preferentially since she had a child.

Although Rita had a hard time after the earthquakes, she received a lot of help from many people. As a result, she thinks it was a positive experience. She says that now she likes Japan much better than before. “I feel secure because I know I can ask people around me and a group like Kumustaka for help even if I have some problems,” says Rita.

Current Concerns

While she feels secure, Rita thinks she does not have a good enough understanding of Japanese language and culture. She has heard about earthquake relief assistance before, but she does not know the details. She did not know about getting a *risai-shomei* (destruction certificate) until interviewed, although she had heard the words, *hankai* (half destroyed) and *zenkai* (totally destroyed) before.

Future

Since Rita has received help from many people after the Kumamoto Earthquakes, she hopes to study so that she could help people in return. She has heard about a seminar to earn a rescue certificate at the city hall, and is thinking about taking it. Also, she would like to raise her child to become a responsible and independent adult, and would like to send her to college if possible.

Challenges and Suggestions

The 2016 Kumamoto Earthquakes have negatively affected the lives of immigrant single mothers and their families, who were already struggling in their everyday lives prior to the earthquakes. The disaster affected a wide portion of Kumamoto Prefecture, and has negatively impacted economic activities. With irregular employment status and no compensation, many immigrant single mothers lost their income or saw their incomes decreased. Some of them were at work, apart from their children, when the earthquakes hit. What the earthquakes triggered in them was not only the fear of the earthquakes itself, but also intense anxiety at being apart from their children. Because of the nonstop aftershocks following the two main earthquakes, most women could not leave their children alone to go to work, and lacked family or friends to babysit for them. They had to take leave of absences even after their work started again, which meant that they earned no income, pushing them into more difficult financial situations.

Emotional distress suffered by children was another issue for the immigrant single mothers. According to survey data on the emotional effects of the earthquakes on school-aged children conducted by the Kumamoto Prefecture Board of Education, 4,277 out of 170,000 elementary and junior high students in the prefecture were considered to be in need of counseling (May 31, 2006. “4000 students need counselling.” *Nihon Keizai Shinbun Seibuban*). Also, in our research, more than half of the women interviewed reported that their children became emotionally unstable, or reported evidence of behavioral changes to some degree after the earthquakes. For those children who experienced the earthquakes while their mothers were away, the fear and distress they felt must have been severe. It is possible that these children may not have received proper emotional care, especially without the support of any other adult or agency, as earthquake-related information, including mental care and other support services, was rarely accessed by their mothers.

Unfortunately, information in languages other than Japanese or in “easy Japanese” for those with limited Japanese language skills is very limited in Kumamoto. Information in languages other than Japanese was found almost nowhere for some time following the earthquakes. Websites administered by the Prefecture and Kumamoto City have been equipped with the automatic translation systems for translation into English, Chinese, and Korean. However, there was no additional effort by the Prefecture or the City during the disaster, even though they had multilingual staff members who could have released information in other languages or supported immigrants and foreign

nationals in other ways. The only thing they did was to post an announcement concerning fund-raising initiatives for victims of the Kumamoto Earthquakes on their websites. The Kumamoto City International Foundation (KIF) provides information in English, Chinese, and Korean on a regular basis. However, they were over-taxed with the running of a shelter for foreigners, and it was not until April 23 that they were able to launch the disaster multilingual support center and begin releasing multilingual information. Kumamoto City has been periodically publishing regular information classified as “Kumamoto Earthquake Victim Life Support Information” since the earthquakes. Its July 2016 issue was titled “Earthquake Victim Life Support Guidebook,” and printed in English, Chinese, and Korean. However, the city hasn’t published in a language other than Japanese since then. The majority of immigrant single mothers in this research are able to have conversations in Japanese without significant difficulties, but reading and writing Japanese appeared to be a problem for most. Thus, they obtained minimal earthquake-related information released by the public agencies directly.

If a person was born and raised in Japan, they would have been more likely to have some experience of actual earthquakes or to have received disaster education, and might have had some idea of what to do to in case of disaster. However, quite a few single mothers born and raised in other countries had neither experience nor education regarding earthquakes. Due to the differences in experience and knowledge, and due to the shortage of understandable information, they did not know what to do or where to go to seek protection for themselves and their children. Additionally, quite a few immigrant single mothers did not know about the application process or other detailed information regarding earthquake relief programs. At the time of our interviews, some did not even know of their existence. They could not apply for the relief programs since they did not know about them. Even in cases where they did know, language, cultural, and/or social barriers prevented them from applying. Our organization is very concerned about the single mothers and their children who have been negatively affected by the earthquakes, and who were unequally excluded from the care and support that they should have received as victims of the earthquakes. This lack of support could result in additional financial difficulties and worsened mental and emotional states.

The challenges and issues faced by immigrant single mothers, exacerbated by the earthquakes, have in actuality existed even long before them. Immigrant single mothers have gone through marriage, immigration, and divorce, but then decided to live in Japan

as single mothers for the future of their children. However, living in Japan as an immigrant single mother is far from easy.

One major challenge is employment. Immigrant single mothers have limited job opportunities, often possess limited Japanese language skills, struggle with working environments that operate with different qualification/certificate systems than their home countries, and face prejudice from employers and society, in addition to restrictions on time and employment stemming from raising a child. With barriers as single mothers, as well as immigrants, most immigrant single mothers struggle with unstable, temporary, or part-time jobs as irregular employees. Many of the women we interviewed struggle to make ends meet every month with a combination of earned income, *jido teate* (child allowance), and *jido fuyo teate* (child support allowance) since their work is often for low wages with short hours, and they have to take leave of absences when their children become sick. Having more than one job is not uncommon among single mothers, especially after their child reaches school age, after which child-related expenses increase. Income from a single job is often insufficient. Even though they keep working without adequate rest, their lives can be still financially difficult. Being busy with work and raising a child, the health condition of some mothers deteriorates. However, they cannot afford to take time off due to sickness because they have to take care of their children, and if they take sick leave their income as irregular employees decreases. If they have family nearby, they might be able to ask for help with babysitting or for financial support. However, not many immigrant women have their family in this country. According to 2016 statistics from the Ministry of Health and Labor, 50.8% of single-parent households in Japan are in poverty. According to this research, however, the poverty rate among immigrant single mothers appears to be higher than this number.

Fathers were another factor contributing to the poverty among immigrant single mothers. Not only were they absent, but they also often avoided parental responsibilities and obligations, which the social system tacitly allows. Fathers live apart from their children for various reasons, but very few of them take responsibility for their own children as a father after separations or divorce. Only five research participants reported receiving child support from the father of their child, and another five had only sporadic financial support, such as the father paying for the child's cram school or paying some money when the family was short. Although a child is born the product of both a woman and a man, it is sadly all too often that the man abandons his parental responsibilities, pushing all parental obligations to the woman after separation. This is not simply an

issue of individual Japanese males who evade parental obligation, but also a greater issue involving the Japanese social structure, which tolerates such irresponsibility.

Another challenge that immigrant single mothers face is parenting. The stress of raising a child while struggling with an unfamiliar language and culture in a strange society, often without any family support, is unimaginable. Quite a few women either work more than one job or work at night for higher wages to raise their children, and most of them feel that they are not spending enough time with their children and feel sorry for making them feel lonely. Some immigrant women have their children stay with their family in their home country until the children reach to certain age, then bring them to Japan to live together. Once they come to Japan, some of these children struggle at school with studying and communicating in an unfamiliar language, and face prejudice and bullying, which can trigger truancy and juvenile delinquency. In some cases, discord between the mother and the child emerges due to having been separated for a long time. Without any intervention, poverty can be passed down to the next generation for such immigrant families.

Kumamoto Prefecture, as well as Kumamoto City, has developed the “Children and Child Rearing Support Plan,” and provides a wide range of support services for families with children to promote child rearing. However, these services have hardly reached immigrant single mother families. Similar to earthquake relief assistances, the information has not been effectively disseminated to immigrant women, and the support programs do not seem to be user-friendly for immigrant women. Current employment support services do not specifically meet the needs of immigrant single mothers due to language barriers. According to the Child Support Department of Kumamoto City, in the past three years no immigrant woman has used the Single Parent Employment Support Program or the Educational Subsidy Program for Single Mothers. Child rearing support programs also appear to not be easily accessible, not only for immigrant single mothers, but also for Japanese single mothers as well, due to inflexible application procedures and limited office hours. The author of this report has also encountered inconsiderate program personnel quite a few times while accompanying immigrant single mothers to the program office. Staff members displayed an unwillingness to provide immigrants with services, and seemed to do so only grudgingly, caring little for the applicants’ predicament as single mothers. As a result, many immigrant single mothers are reluctant to use public support services, and must survive on their own by making full use of their own personal networks.

Immigrant single mothers and their children are members of Kumamoto society, and many were victims of the Kumamoto Earthquakes the same as Japanese residents. As fellow members of society and fellow victims, support services and necessary information should be equally offered and provided to them as well. In order to do so, public agencies should take responsibility to provide and release accurate information, not only in standard Japanese, but also in easy Japanese and other languages for those who have limited Japanese language skills. It is also necessary for supporting agencies to create a friendly environment for immigrant single mothers to access services. Application processes for earthquake relief assistance programs are overly-complicated, even for Japanese. Eligibility requirements are rigid, procedures inflexible, and it is often unclear what application is required, where to apply, and who is in charge. In order for an immigrant single mother to receive sufficient assistance, accompanying and supporting them with each step of the application process, such as understanding her situation, explaining the situation at a certain office, and acquiring necessary forms and documents, is necessary. Similarly, support program personnel should have a better understanding of the challenges that immigrants often face, and should be supportive of them as fellow members of the community, and should be able to provide proper, sufficient services when immigrants come for help.

Moreover, it is necessary for support agencies to develop and maintain a regular and trusting relationship with immigrant single mothers. Even though it was limited, KIF, Osaka University's Doctoral Program for Multicultural Innovation, and Kumustaka have been providing Kumamoto Earthquake-related information in multiple languages and easy Japanese. However, almost no immigrant single mothers accessed the information provided by these services. Their major source of information was not public or private institutions, but those people whom they have personal relationships, such as friends or co-workers. They also utilized their personal networks to access food, water, and other relief supplies and assistance after the earthquakes. Therefore, by sending out multilingual information constantly on a regular basis, non-Japanese, including immigrant single mothers, would know where to access necessary information. Supporting organizations should also establish good relationships with immigrant single mothers by providing adequate support on regular basis. Utilizing these relationships, necessary information would be able to be effectively spread in times of disaster, and relief and other support services could be accessed by them in case of another emergency.

The lives of immigrant single mothers have become much harder since the Kumamoto Earthquakes, but the hardships are rooted in issues they have been facing even prior to this particular disaster. In order to support immigrant single mothers

affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes, we must work on issues they face in their everyday lives, and strive to improve their living conditions.

The Kumamoto Earthquakes and Kumustaka's Relief Activities for Immigrants and Foreign Nationals

Shinichiro Nakashima

Director of Kumustaka -Association for Living Together with Migrants

1. Starting from Zero

I never once thought that Kumamoto would be at the epicenter of a series of large earthquakes, and as a result, neither as director of Kumustaka or in my personal life did I set about to make any preparations for a potential disaster. Thus, when the earthquakes started there was no manual for us to follow, and we had to start from zero. However, we were able to start taking action to aid immigrants and foreign nationals as early as April 15, the day after the first shock. I believe we were able to take action right away because we had already established relationships with a number of immigrants and foreign nationals, and could easily imagine the fear and anxiety that they must have felt when the power, water, and gas were cut off, and when public transportation stopped.

When thinking about what we as an organization could do, by chance I learned online in the morning of April 15 that the Kumamoto City International Center (KCIC) had opened itself as an evacuation shelter. I called a long-time friend of mine, Mr. Yagi, the director of the center, to get approval for three things. To begin, I wanted to confirm that KCIC would be a shelter for foreign residents and tourists. Second, I asked that one of the telephone lines there would be designated specifically for foreigners, and available in both English and Chinese. Finally, I wanted to make sure that we had the center's approval to disseminate this information via SNS. Approval for all three was granted, and the information was sent out.

When the main earthquake hit, I was sleeping at home on the night of April 15, after clearing up my office and house. I did not consider that another, much bigger, earthquake might be coming, and was taken completely by surprise when it did. There were many foreign and Japanese evacuees at the KCIC on April 16. In addition, all members of Kumustaka were affected by the earthquakes. Some of us evacuated outside Kumamoto City, but some of us were able to immediately join in relief efforts. We brought rice and some other food to the KCIC on the 16th, and quickly realized that relief food would not be distributed to the KCIC because it was not an officially designated

shelter. However, evacuees themselves began to cook and distribute food outside the building. On the 16th, I started sending out e-mails to people on Kumustaka's mailing lists and other related people, asking for food and monetary donations for the food distribution efforts, as well as to report on the earthquake damage. The following is the e-mail I sent.

To those concerned about the foreign victims of the Kumamoto Earthquake (I)
April 16, 2016
Shinichiro Nakashima
Kumustaka –Association for Living Together with Migrants

We express our condolences to everyone who was affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes on April 14 and 16. We announced that the Kumamoto City International Center has become an emergency shelter for foreigners on April 15. As of April 16, 8 p.m., there were about 60 evacuees, including Japanese and foreigners; however, the facility is not officially designated as a shelter. Although it can serve as a temporary evacuation space and accommodation, there are no stocks of food or relief supplies. In cooperation with the staff of the center and volunteers, evacuees are presently running a soup kitchen. However, there is not enough food available for all. If possible, please bring rice, vegetables, meat, and other food directly to Kumamoto City International Center (4-18 Hanabatacho, Chuouku, Kumamoto City). We are afraid that the current evacuation situation will last for a prolonged period. We would like to ask for contributions for victim relief and food distribution. Since there is no time to make a new bank account, we will use the same account as the one for set up for endowment and membership fees of Kumustaka. Please mention "For earthquake victim relief" in the message column if you are able to send money.

Postal transfer account No. 01970-4-26534,
Account name Kumustaka

Since then, this e-mail has been forwarded across Japan to those who are interested in immigrant and migrant issues, and who wished to support earthquake victims. To date, we have received many contributions and much material relief.

2. Emergent Foreign National Victim Relief Activity

Kumustaka sent messages via e-mail and SNS to immigrants and foreign residents whom we had previously established contact with to let them know that the Kumamoto

City International Center (KCIC) was open as an emergency shelter for foreigners, and was able to provide multilingual telephone support. With help from translation volunteers, we also began to release earthquake-related information on our website, not only in English, Chinese, and Korean, but also in other languages, including Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Thai.

In addition to food provided by the city government, evacuees opened a soup kitchen at an open site in front of the KCIC's entrance on April 16 and 17 with supplies brought by Kumustaka and other volunteers. Kumustaka took over the operation of the soup kitchen on April 18, and provided hot meals until April 30th. We served roughly 100 meals per day during the first week, and 40 to 70 meals a day from the second week until April 30.

Kumustaka's Soup-Run Menu - April 18 to April 30

*On April 16 and 17, evacuees made rice balls and miso soup.

Mon. 18th vegetable curry and rice

Tues. 19th dumpling soup, boiled eggs, and rice balls

Wed. 20th Chinese food cooked by technical interns from China:
two dishes of stir-fry (meat and eggplants, tomatoes and eggs), and
fried rice and steamed rice

Thur. 21th chicken curry and toast

Fri. 22th Filipino food: Chicken Adobo (chicken and vegetables), salad, and
dessert

*About 100 meals offered per day between 18th and 22th.

Sat. 23rd boiled gyoza, daikon salad, alpha rice

(We did not initially plan to cook on this day as high school students were
scheduled to cook, however this failed to materialize and we were
forced to cook in a hurry)

Sun. 24th Filipino food: Arroz Caldo (chicken porridge), Ginisang Labanos
(sautéed daikon with chicken), and eggplants and tomatoes salad

Mon. 25th Filipino food: Chicken Adobo, Sopas (creamy chicken soup)

Tues. 26th Filipino food: Pancit Guisado (sautéed vermicelli with chicken and
vegetable) and salad

Wed. 27th Filipino food: sautéed tomatoes with chicken and onions, salad

Thur. 28th chicken curry and rice, tuna salad

Fri. 29th dry curry cooked by a Catholic church from Fukuoka

Sat. 30th *Yakiniku-Don* (rice with barbecued beef and pork)

(It was the last night at the center as it was scheduled to close the following day, and the evacuees requested meat other than chicken.)

There were about 70 to 80 evacuees, including 30 to 40 foreigners and about 40 Japanese, in the KCIC immediately following the main earthquake. The nationalities of the evacuees were diverse, including citizens of Bangladesh, China, Korea, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, The Philippines, and France. The status of their residence was also diverse, including permanent residents, students, technical interns, and dependents of Japanese nationals.

Right after the main earthquakes, the public transportation infrastructure, including the airport, freeways, and JR were shut, and Kumamoto became isolated. People were very anxious without electricity, water, and gas. After one week, the public transportation gradually began to be restored, and recovery of essential services proceeded. Some evacuees moved outside Kumamoto Prefecture, some even outside Japan, and some returned home from shelters. On April 22 and in the week that followed, there were about 30 evacuees at the KCIC, including 15 to 20 foreigners and less than 20 Japanese. The shelter at the KCIC was initially only supposed to be open until April 17, but was extended to the 20th, the 24th, and finally to the 30th. As part of our relief efforts, Kumustaka provided consultations for immigrant families evacuated at KCIC and in need of new places to live, and members of our organization accompanied them to public offices in order to make preparations to move. We also made contact with individuals who had asked Kumustaka for help in the past. The majority of these people are socially vulnerable, even within the greater immigrant population. This group included domestic abuse survivors, those living in poverty, and single mothers. We wanted to check their safety and living conditions to make sure they were okay. We provided them with advice and consultations for their work and living situations.

3. Kumustaka's Medium to Long-Term Relief Efforts for Immigrants and Foreign nationals

As April passed to May, Kumustaka shifted our relief efforts from emergency relief to medium to long-term support. Our efforts have been generously supported by contributions from people across Japan. The following are the details of our medium to long-term relief efforts:

1. Multilingual earthquake-related information

We have been providing Kumamoto earthquake related information in nine languages on our website: easy Japanese, English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Thai, Indonesian, and Nepalese.

<http://kumustaka.weebly.com/>

2. Emergency loans

We have been providing emergency loans to roughly 30 immigrant single mothers who lost income or are in need of new places to live.

3. Assistance for independent living

After the Kumamoto Earthquakes, we engaged in numerous consultations and had about 70 requests for support from domestic violence survivors and single mothers who were affected by the earthquakes.

4. Organizing events to raise awareness of immigrant disaster victims

1) Kumamoto Earthquake! Symposium on Relief Activities for Foreigners

Held at Kumamoto Kenmin Koryukan Parea (about 80 attendees) on July 3, 2016

2) Stop Domestic Violence: Symposium on Batterers' Intervention

Held at Kumamoto Kenmin Koryukan Parea (about 50 attendees) on October 23rd, 2016

3) Immigrants and Human Rights: Symposium on Immigration Policies in Japan and in America

Held at Kumamoto Kenmin Koryukan Parea (about 50 attendees) on February 12nd, 2016

5. Interview research on immigrant single mothers affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes

Over a period of six months, we conducted research interviews with 30 immigrant single mothers (from July in 2016 to January in 2017) about their disaster experience and concerns, and published a report on July 9th, 2017.

6. Cooperation with other organizations

Kumustaka has joined *Yokatai-net* and *Mirai-net* to build collaborative relations with other non-profit and non-governmental organizations.

7. Presenting the content of our relief efforts for immigrants during the Kumamoto Earthquakes

We received requests from 15 organizations and institutions (including universities both inside and outside Kumamoto, Filipino Association, Kumamoto International Foundation, NPOs and NGOs outside Kumamoto, and local

governments), and presented our experiences of the Kumamoto Earthquakes, as well as our organization's subsequent relief efforts. We also were able to discuss aspects related to multiculturalism during a disaster in lectures and panel discussions.

4. One Year After the Kumamoto Earthquakes

A year and a few months have passed since the Kumamoto Earthquakes began in April, 2016. The last shelter was closed on November 17, 2016, and all affected people have returned home, moved elsewhere, or started living in temporary housing or quasi-temporary housing (*minashi-kasetsu*). Infrastructure, such as roads and bridges has been restored, and many houses and buildings have been demolished or repaired. Bankruptcy rates of enterprises and the unemployment rate are currently not increasing due to the heightened demands for reconstruction facilitated by governmental aid, the group subsidy program, and current labor shortages. Superficially, the recovery from the Kumamoto Earthquakes appears to be rapidly moving forward. However, businesses have been closing without a successor to continue them, and the number of business moving into the prefecture, as well as the number of tourists, has been in decline since the earthquakes. Once the reconstruction demand abates, we expect the negative effects of the earthquakes on the economy and industry of Kumamoto to become more pronounced. The number of earthquake-related deaths has also increased because of the stresses caused by long-term evacuations. These deaths are really just the tip of the iceberg, as the impact of the fear and anxiety triggered by the earthquakes and prolonged temporary living situations could result in an increase in the number of deaths that will not be certified as "earthquake-related," as well as in an increase in suicides, mental illness, domestic violence, and poverty.

While not directly caused by the earthquakes, we have had serious cases of suicide, attempted suicide, spousal disappearance, partner neglect, domestic violence, and poverty from October of 2016, a full six months after the Kumamoto Earthquakes.

For over a year we have spent much time working with domestic violence victims, poor, single mothers, and crime suspects, in addition to other immigrant victims of the earthquakes. Many individuals have come forward to ask for assistance in resolving issues. We have been gratified to have played a role in the resolution of domestic disputes, with some domestic violence survivors who were temporarily evacuees expressing positive sentiments, such as "It was nice to have divorce with the abusive husband finalized and an acceptable agreement made through mediation at court," "I got

a driver's license, found a job, and now I'm off welfare," and "I've got a job and put my child in preschool." An immigrant victim of the earthquake, who was in prison at the time, is now released and moving towards rehabilitation. There is also a single mother whose child suffered from social withdrawal for years after being bullied. The child joined group activities at the shelters, which acted as a positive experience for her. Presently, the child has graduated high-school and is working. Having experienced the Kumamoto Earthquakes, Kumustaka will continue to support and stay involved with immigrants and foreign nationals.

Issues of and Suggestions for Multicultural Cooperation during a Disaster
Examining the Experience of the Kumamoto Earthquakes

Shinichiro Nakashima

Director of Kumustaka -Association for Living Together with Migrants

1. Issues Concerning the Emergency Response by Governments During and After the Kumamoto Earthquakes

After the Kumamoto Earthquakes, a shelter for foreigners provided by the Kumamoto City International Foundation (KIF) was highly praised nationally and internationally as an example of successful governmental emergency response. In reality, the role of the government was minimal, and the success of this initiative was due to the KIF's long-term efforts to promote multiculturalism, as well as its cooperative work with non-government organizations.

According to the 2015 Regional Disaster Prevention Plan (RDPP), Kumamoto City stated that it would open the Kumamoto City International Center (KCIC) as an evacuation facility particularly for foreign nationals in the case of a natural disaster. However, the process and details of operating the facility, including who would take responsibility and who would operate what areas, were not at all clear. The facility was originally planned to be a temporary shelter open only during the KCIC's regular office hours, and no plan existed in which the KIF was directed to operate as a 24-hour shelter. It was entirely an accident of chance that the center became a 24-hour shelter after the April 16 main earthquake. Similar to many other shelters that were not officially designated, crowds of people started coming into the center, leaving it with little choice but to become a 24-hour shelter. By similar circumstances of chance, the KIF happened to find itself in charge of the shelter and tasked with operating it without a manual. Since the KIF's staff members were busy operating the shelter, it was not until April 20, after KIF had received help from other organizations in its network, that they began to visit other designated shelters to check on the situation of non-Japanese. It was not until April 23 that they started releasing earthquake-related information in multiple languages.

The International Office of Kumamoto City did not participate in any disaster management meetings of Kumamoto City, and neither the international office nor KIF even knew of its existence until the network organizations pointed out that they were supposed to be provided with information at the meetings on April 20. Thus, considering these circumstances, the 2015 RDPP was not concrete enough to provide multilingual public information in the case of a disaster. As a result, immigrants and foreign

nationals struggled to survive with access to only Japanese information for more than a week after the earthquakes. At shelters, foreigners or other people with limited Japanese language skills, were not specifically identified for additional care as “People Requiring Assistance During a Disaster.” The following are issues and problems regarding the emergency response by Kumamoto City towards immigrants and foreign nationals that we have recognized:

1. The city took more than a week to provide multilingual disaster-related information.
2. The city assumed a temporary shelter for foreigners to be opened only during the KCIC’s office hours, but not for 24 hours.
3. More and more shelters were additionally opened as time passed, and the periods of operation of shelters were repeatedly extended without clear estimation of the needs of evacuees or their potential length of evacuation.
4. The city did not expect immigrants and foreign nationals among evacuees at each designated district shelter and could not treat them properly.
5. There was no clear understanding of who was to be in charge of supporting immigrants and foreign nationals during a disaster, no specific manual for large-scale disasters, and no dispatch of multilingual personnel or counselors from the city government.

What lies behind these problems is a lack of imagination. Specifically, the city did not expect a large-scale disaster such as the Kumamoto Earthquakes, and never seriously considered the repercussions to non-Japanese in the local community. Furthermore, the International Office of the city displayed no interest in supporting foreign nationals at the time of disaster, evidenced by the fact that there was no policy in place for immigrant or foreign-national disaster victims.

2. Suggestions for Improving Governmental Policy for Immigrants and Foreign Nationals.

1. The responsible body for supporting immigrant and foreign national victims needs to be clarified in the city’s RDPP, and such a body must take a leadership role in relief and assistance activities.
2. Disaster-related information needs to be provided in multiple languages right after a disaster, not only for foreign tourists, but also for immigrants and foreign residents.
3. The establishment of 24-hour shelters for foreign nationals, which would also function as an information center, needs to be stated in the city’s RDPP. If the

KCIC becomes a designated shelter, its administrative organization should have the capacity to support foreign nationals during a disaster, and the city should grant the organization the authority and budget to operate the shelter and perform the duties mentioned above.

4. The city needs to better inform non-Japanese of the existence of the information centers, and should develop a collaborative network system with accommodation facilities, such as hotels, universities, organizations tasked with supervising and implementing the technical intern training programs.
5. Each shelter needs to be aware of the existence of foreign nationals and other people with limited Japanese language skills, and the process of identifying and registering the needs of language support should be standardized.
6. A search for immigrants and foreign nationals who are evacuating in cars or outside of registered shelters needs to be conducted.
7. The city needs to employ multi-language personnel to support immigrants and foreign nationals at the time of a disaster, and should provide specific training for personnel in order to develop necessary skills.
8. The city must develop collaborative and communicative relationships with the prefectural government, the Kumamoto Prefecture International Foundation, and other municipalities and international foundations in preparation for future disasters.

Kumamoto City needs to examine these issues and suggestions, and we believe that thorough reconsideration and significant revisions of the RDPP are needed. The current government considers foreigners as visitors, and is focused only on how to increase the economic benefit they bring to the country; however, the focus needs to be shifted towards how to offer safety and relief for foreigners, including visitors and residents.

Additional Note

The Revised Regional Disaster Prevention Plans (RDPP) of the Prefecture and the City

Kumamoto Prefecture and Kumamoto City revised their RDPP after the Kumamoto Earthquakes in April 2016. The following are revisions in relation to foreigners.

1. Revision of the 2017 Kumamoto Prefecture Regional Disaster Prevention Plan

The prefectural government disclosed a revised 2017 RDPP on April 19, 2017 on its website. The following are the new provisions concerning disaster relief for foreigners.

The prefecture shall constitute a Foreigner Assistance Team within the Disaster Control Headquarter, collaborate with other municipalities to identify immigrants and foreign nationals, and provide assistance for them in shelters.

(General Disaster Control: chap. 3, sec. 1, old and new lists on pg. 3 to 8)

Tasks of the Foreigner Assistance Team (International Office)

(chapter 3, section 1, old and new lists on page 3 to 8)

1. Tasks related to identifying foreigner victims (e.g. nationalities, sex, the number) and their evacuation situations.
2. Tasks related to supporting foreigners in shelters
3. Tasks related to providing multilingual information on the prefectural and other websites.
4. Tasks related to contacting embassies and consular offices, and assisting non-Japanese in returning to their country.

Comments (Nakashima)

Municipal governments in Kumamoto Prefecture, excepting Kumamoto City, have provided minimal assistance to immigrants and foreign nationals affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes. Thus, it is meaningful that the Foreigner Assistance Team has been newly constituted in the Disaster Control Headquarters, and that their four tasks are clearly stated in the revised plan. The prefecture seems to have reviewed its work on immigrants and foreign residents during the Kumamoto Earthquakes, and recognized the issues that we have pointed out, making some revisions in accordance with them. However, there is only one staff member in charge of promoting multicultural harmony within the International Office, in which the Foreigner Assistance Team would be set up, even though the office is now expanded to five sections with more than twenty personnel.

It would seem impossible for one person to carry out the four stated tasks in the case of another large-scale disaster. Speaking frankly, all personnel in the office, including contract workers, would need to be engaged. Without more specific guidelines for the tasks, including how to deploy necessary staff and pay necessary costs, the revised plan will not be carried out.

2. Revision of the 2017 Kumamoto City Regional Disaster Prevention Plan

The following are excerpts from the plan.

Measures for foreign nationals

Foreigners could be vulnerable to disasters with the possibility of not being able to take proper evacuative actions without understanding early warning and evacuation information due to the differences in language, culture, and lifestyle. Therefore, regular disaster management is necessary.

(1) Providing information for foreigners

The Kumamoto City International Center (KCIC) shall provide information for foreigners on a regular basis by placing a multilingual support desk, while the city offers interpretation and other support to make public services accessible for foreigners. The designated administrator of the KCIC shall translate health and livelihood-related information from *Shisei-dayoris* (newsletter) and other necessary information into English, Chinese, and Korean, and post it on its website. It also shall send out urgent information concerning warning levels to foreigners registered in the multilingual disaster prevention mailing system. The city shall also develop disaster prevention cards in multiple languages and distribute them among foreigners.

(2) Collaboration with related bodies

To prepare for a disaster, the KCIC's designated administrator, the Prefecture and other municipality governments, universities, nongovernment organizations, ethnic communities, and residents' associations, shall collaboratively bring awareness of disaster prevention, as well as create an environment in which foreigners can actively attend local events, such as disaster prevention training. In the case of sick and wounded persons, the city shall identify medical institutions that provide service in foreign languages, and shall develop a collaborative relationship with medical institutions. The city shall promote the creation of an environment for locals and foreigners to have face-to-face relationships through offering Japanese language lessons, including useful Japan vocabulary and phrases in the case of a disaster, so that foreigners will not be isolated during a disaster.

(3) Countermeasures against large-scale disasters

When a large-scale disaster occurs, the division of disaster management in the Bureau of Policy shall open an evacuation shelter for foreigners within the KCIC. After the occurrence of a disaster, the city shall promptly gather information, translate into other languages in collaboration with the KCIC's designated administrator and related institutions, and provide information for foreigners through the city's website and SNS. The city shall also establish a multilingual disaster support center to provide information from the city and other institutions. In addition, the city shall identify conditions of foreigners through registering them at each shelter and gathering information from related institutions. In order to identify instances of evacuees staying outdoors, SNS shall be utilized as an information tool. Each shelter shall also provide multilingual information.

■ Support Facility for Foreign Evacuees:

Kumamoto International Center 4-18 Hanabatacho, Chuouku, Kumamoto City
phone# 096-359-2020

Comments (Nakashima)

Kumamoto City called for public comments between April 8 and May 8, 2017, concerning a draft of the 2015 RDPP, which was said to be “considerably revised” after the Kumamoto Earthquakes, and the plan was finalized at its meeting on May 31. In the first draft, however, the sections outlining measures for foreigners and tourists during a disaster were not revised at all. Having received and responded to citizen comments on the treatment of foreign nationals, the city made wide revisions and gave supplementary explanations. It was surprising that the foreign-national-related sections in the first draft were exactly the same as the plan prior to the Kumamoto Earthquakes. However, it is impressive that the city made such significant revisions based on the public comments. That said, it has become clear that the International Office of the Bureau of Policy has not attended either a disaster management meeting, or participated in developing the RDPP even a year after the earthquakes. The city must grant the authority and responsibility to the Bureau in order for them to provide support assistance for foreign nationals at the time of a disaster, and staff it with eligible and motivated personnel. Otherwise, the revised plan will be rendered as impractical as it was during the Kumamoto Earthquakes.

***Kumustaka* -Association for Living Together with Migrants**
Income and Expenditure Reports
on the Kumamoto Earthquake Relief and Support Activities
(April 15, 2016 - June 30, 2017)

1. Income	¥16,890,000
Cash donations	¥460,000
Donations by bank transfer	¥16,430,000
2. Expenditure	¥11,310,000
A) Emergency relief activities, e.g. soup-run	¥100,000
B) Emergency loans	¥5,030,000
C) Disaster related multilingual information offering	¥2,100,000
D) Interview Research on 30 immigrant single mothers	¥1,260,000
E) Independent living support and human right consultation	¥750,000
F) Print expenses	¥1,190,000
G) Mailing expenses	¥290,000
H) Honorarium and travel allowance	¥350,000
I) equipment expenses	¥200,000
J) Administrative expenses	¥40,000
3. Balance as of June 30 th , 2017	¥5,580,000

※ Remaining balance will be used as a long-term support fund for immigrants and foreign nationals affected by the earthquakes, to be used to support expenses for disaster-related multilingual information offerings, and emergency financial support.

Interview Research on Immigrant Single Mothers
Affected by the Kumamoto Earthquakes
Published on July 9, 2017

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