Typhoon, Natural Disaster and NGOs’ Actions in Taiwan

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Taiwan has been attacked by many serious natural disasters recently and they have caused numerous vulnerabilities, especially in the mountain and seashore areas. Some villages disappeared because of typhoons and mudslides, and many people lost their life and properties. Normally, typhoons come at the summer time in Taiwan and they usually bring torrential rains and gusty winds. That stone and soil accompany with flood does flow down from the mountain, which cause serious damages. Especially after the 921 Earthquake, structures of the earth in the calamity areas, which are especially located around the central mountain areas, have greatly changed and it becomes loose, soft and easy to move. Mudslides become much more frequently in recent years, and their destructive powers are really alarming.

For example, Typhoon Morakot took at least 619 people life this summer because of great areas of mudslides. In July 2001, 214 people lost their life in the attack of Tao-Chih Typhoon. Two months later, 104 people lost their life in the attack of Na-Li Typhoon. In addition, homes, roads and many other public infrastructures were destroyed. Flood and mudslides come not only at the typhoon seasons but also accompany with heavy downpour in normal times. The government and NGOs put their efforts on how to reduce the vulnerability caused by it. They also try very hard to rescue the victims in those disaster areas. Within those rescue actors, it is especially worthy to pay attention to the role of non-governmental organizations. This is a paper try to investigate what NGOs have done, and why they have become important actors for the rescue works and for the revitalization of disaster communities.

1 The 921 earthquake took place on September 21, 1999, and it was the largest earthquake within a hundred year of Taiwan’s history. The epicenter was located at the ChiChi Township, the Nan-Tou County. Its magnitude (ML) is 7.3.