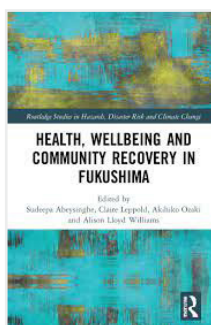


# Health, Wellbeing and Community Recovery in Fukushima



## Author

Edited by Sudeepa Abeysinghe, Claire Leppold, Akihiko Ozaki & Alison Lloyd Williams

## Reviewed by

**Dr Katitza Marinkovic Chavez**

University of Melbourne

## PUBLISHED BY

Routledge

ISBN: 9781032022734



© 2024 by the authors.  
License Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience, Melbourne, Australia. This is an open source article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>). Information and links to references in this paper are current at the time of publication.

We live in an increasingly uncertain world, where emergencies and disasters are becoming frequent, severe and overlap. Building resilient and hopeful futures requires that we review and redefine our understandings of what disaster recovery is, listen to diverse experiences and learn from the past. This book draws on the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan in March 2011, when an earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident resulted in almost 20,000 deaths and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Since that time, there has been ongoing controversy over the long-term social and health effects of this disaster.

This book is divided into 15 chapters that addresses different aspects of how communities have lived with the legacy of the Fukushima disaster. The list of authors includes Japanese and international researchers, professionals, volunteers and community members; many whom directly experienced the event and the long recovery process.

The book successfully achieves a critical approach to the social aspects of recovery and invites the reader to reflect on how health and wellbeing are influenced by the interactions between social and institutional structures. Chapter 1 helps the reader situate the case of the Fukushima disaster in the field of disaster recovery. This chapter is followed by Part I, focusing on the experience of professionals from the sectors of healthcare (Chapter 2), mental health (Chapter 3), education (Chapter 4) and the law (Chapter 5) who were involved in the aftermath and recovery. Section 2 explores the recovery experiences of communities and living with risk after the event in terms of monitoring radiation levels (Chapter 6), assessing health (Chapter 7) and promoting mental health (Chapter 8). The third section discusses how pre-existing social inequities can obstruct the recovery process. Based on real examples, the book provides in-depth analyses

of the influence of gender disparities (Chapter 9), migration status (Chapter 10) and the stigma that the people of Fukushima endured for many years in the media. The fourth section reflects on the complex relationships between community engagement, participation and wellbeing and how these contribute to build hope for the future. The first chapters highlight the importance of acknowledging school children (Chapter 12), volunteers and community members (Chapter 13) as valid and important social actors, while Chapter 14 addresses the challenge of integrating expert and local knowledge to reconstruct and decommission after a nuclear disaster. Finally, in Chapter 15, the editors provide their views on the unique contributions of each one of the previous chapters and emphasise the need to develop understandings about disasters and long-term recovery by drawing lessons from the past and integrating different forms of knowledge. To do this, they propose an interdisciplinary dialogue that includes professionals, decision-makers, researchers and community members from a diverse ages, abilities and backgrounds. In this way, we can develop better ways to protect mental health and wellbeing after complex, cascading or compounding disasters like those experienced in Fukushima and other places in the world.

This book, *Health, Wellbeing and Community Recovery in Fukushima*, is valuable material for any researcher, professional, policy maker or person living with hazard risk. One of the book's greatest strengths is its capacity to integrate, critically and respectfully, the perspectives of authors from different backgrounds, disciplines and lived experiences. In this way, this book succeeds in modelling its message that we should learn from the past through collaborative and inclusive dialogue to build hopeful futures where communities can live with risk in ways that supports community and individual wellbeing.