

Disaster, Relocation and “Sustainable” Lifestyle?: Indigenous Relocation after Typhoon Morakot in Taiwan, 2009

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Typhoon Morakot of 2009 brought catastrophic damage to Taiwan, and half a million people became victims of it. As risk analysis report of the World Bank showed, “Taiwan may be the place on Earth most vulnerable to natural hazards.” Repeated disasters in recent years have brought serious damage to indigenous populations who are living in mountain areas in particular. After Morakot, the Taiwanese government conducted landslide assessments of mountain areas on a large scale. As a result, many indigenous places of residence were assessed as “disaster potential areas” and suggested for relocation. In Pingtung County, for example, 19 indigenous villages were assessed as disaster potential areas and to date people from 14 villages have therefore relocated to new sites the government and NGOs prepared. However, these relocated villages show a great diversity of situations, and also display quite different strategies to adjust to their new circumstances.

This paper presents a sketch of different situations of Taiwanese indigenous relocations after Typhoon Morakot, and displays how they transform “traditional” lifestyles to “sustainable” lifestyles with new economic foundations in post-disaster reconstruction.

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