

# Interaction and Collaboration as a Source of Community Recovery and Empowerment: Some Insights from Minamata and Kizawa (Chuetsu) for Post-Disaster Sustainable Community Development

## Abstract:

The Great East Japan Earthquake occurred on 11 March 2011 and shocked both Japan and the world with its scale and seriousness of the adverse impacts on human communities and living environment. It has never been an easy task to overcome such an adversity and find a way to restore and revitalize communities in the post-disaster period. The government assistance is necessary to rebuild basic infrastructure and social services for any community. A critical challenge remains if a community building could be sustainable in the long-run perspective. Therefore, it can be useful if we look closely at cases moving into the direction. In this seminar, we will examine the question by focusing on two particular cases: Minamata-city, Kumamoto, and Kizawa-community in Chuetsu, Niigata. Minamata-city, severely damaged by organic mercury pollution for more than a half-century, has become a leading environmental model city with local-grown vision, policy, and method. Kizawa-community, a small village hard hit by the 2004 Chuetsu Earthquake in Niigata prefecture in Japan, has gradually identified local assets through interaction with outsiders in the process of community reconstruction. By sharing these two in its hardships, measures overcoming the problems and community changes, we would like to discuss keys to reconstruct a community in a sustainable form in the post-disaster phase.

## Takayoshi Kusago

Takayoshi Kusago is a professor in the Faculty of Sociology at Kansai University, and a visiting professor to the IRES, UBC for 2015-2016. He holds a Ph.D. in international development from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. From the perspective of human development and capability approach, he has studied a variety of subjects pertinent to modernization and sustainable community development. He has published research papers in academic journals including *World Development*, *Social Indicators Research*, and coauthored *GNH (Gross National Happiness)* in 2011.



**March 11th 12:30-2 PM**  
**UBC Institute of Asian Research Room 120**  
(C.K. Choi Building 1855 West Mall)