

My experience in Fukushima and more

Right after 3.11, Dr. Shunichi Yamashita from Nagasaki University said radiation was not dangerous up to 100 mSv/y. He explained that it was safe to be exposed to up to 100 mSv/y of radiation, on TV, radio, newspapers, lectures and in information from schools and so on.

So schools considered it safe to do outside activities in the atmosphere with $0.5 \mu\text{ Sv/h}$ of radiation which was 10 times more than normal.

School lunch was first local food production to begin. The School board didn't give parents the choice not to eat school lunch until the second school term. So children whose parents trusted his opinion that 100 mSv/y was safe, ate the local school lunch.

It's not the same radiation rate everywhere outside. Only 10cm can make a difference of $2.3 \mu\text{ Sv/h}$ to $5 \mu\text{ Sv/h}$ which is 46 times and 100 times more than normal.

City officials and teachers in schools didn't protect the children and students.

A teacher I know personally found the radiation rates in the schoolyard weren't homogeneous and reported this to the school to protect the children. He resigned from the school because he was warned not to do it. He took his children out of school and is now living in Nagano.

A doctor who used to take my piano lessons also evacuated his family at that time. He keeps asking for a transfer. I know of several teachers and doctors like him.

Our house didn't get any damage from the 3.11 earthquake. However my children and I were exposed to radiation when we were in a line for water for a couple of hours on the day after the earthquake because our water supply was shut off for about 20 days. We were outside lining up while we didn't know that the air dose rate was 23 mSv/h, which was 460 times more than normal. We didn't know about the explosion in the nuclear power stations, and had received no public announcements.

TV news told the news about the explosion of the power stations, but it said it was safe. We didn't know the danger and drank the contaminated water and cooked with it and ate without the iodine preparation being distributed. **We didn't get any instructions telling us not to drink the tap water without the iodine preparation provided right after the accident.**

We had the first explosion on 12th of March.

Later I found the city's official air dose rate. It was $23 \mu\text{Sv/h}$, which was 460 times more than normal. I was shocked that the government didn't let us know about it. The Japanese government says that it is safe, however my two children and I have abnormal blood test results of our thyroids, and my son also has a 5mm cyst.

According to some press reports, thyroid cancer is a lifestyle-related disease. [Moreover, the officials of Koriyama in Fukushima distribute to children a leaflet which says cancer is a national disease and that one out of two people will get cancer. The government says that people develop cancer because of having no self-care, not because of the effect of the radiation.]

I soon tried to have my children take a whole-body counter check right after the accident. But I couldn't get them tested, even though I tried everywhere. At that time I made phone calls to hospitals throughout the city for a thyroid blood test and all of them said they don't do any thyroid

tests. I asked the prefectural office where I could get proof of our exposure to radiation, but their answer was there was “nowhere” to prove it.

My husband is a city official. He said he should be informed first in a state of emergency. But we weren't informed of the explosion and my children and I were exposed to radiation outside.

Also, though my husband is a city official he had no knowledge about the radiation. He learned about it from a written statement the government sent to the city. He took telephone calls and responded to people's fears and said “It is safe.” I asked him “Who knows if it is safe or not? Doesn't your conscience ever bother you?” He answered, “I wouldn't say it is safe, without thinking it is safe.” Soon the bonds of our marriage were broken.

7 months had passed since the accident, and the city published the air dose radiation rate of $0.12 \mu\text{Sv/h}$. However, when I used the Geiger counter I borrowed from the city office, I saw a numbers from 0.24 to $22.14 \mu\text{Sv/h}$. Also, a volunteer group measured the radiation of soil and pruned branches, and the rates were more than 20000Bq/kg . **I felt that the Japanese government and local government didn't protect us when I saw how my husband acted in his office and looked at the radiation rates measured.**

I also studied a paper for the rates of nuclear elements such as strontium and plutonium in the tap water at the city office, but they didn't give me the detailed data because they said that it might cause people to be confused. They just gave me the paper of the iodine and cesium ND data.

I started to think of getting out not because of a subjective fear of radiation, but because of the poor reaction of the government, school teachers, lawmakers, lawyers, with knowledge of radiation rates which I saw with my own eyes, and the health problems suffered by own my family. Everyday we keep having diarrhea, nose bleeding, canker sores, and blotches on the nose. These are the actual symptoms which my family and friends had after the nuclear plant accident. I realized that cancer isn't the only disease that radiation causes.

The announcements from the government were different from the truth. Though the government forces citizens to break the law, local officers only do as they are told. Even the official document disclosure system cheated citizens with lies that sounded like truth and stalled us for time.

Teachers don't protect children. They disregard parents that care about radiation. When I made lunch for my child so as not to eat the contaminated school lunch, her classmates bullied her and she was subjected to physical violence from them. Instead of warning the parents of those children bullied her, I was told by the teachers not to be scared of radiation.

It was my daughter's school being in denial that in the end made me decide to evacuate. The mood around us meant that we would not be safe from exposure. I looked hard for a way to live there because I didn't want to live apart from my parents. It's painful to move away from aged parents, so I tried to persuade them into leaving with us, but they said "It's too late to leave home." My

husband follows the line that we are safe. My mother-in-law didn't approve of us leaving. She lives with her grand children and her daughter in Iwate but she said "You should remember your place."

I struggled and had trouble with my family, and officials. But my parents advised me to put my children first, so I left my husband and aged parents in Fukushima and evacuated to Kitakyushu with my children in the end.

Two years have passed since the 3.11 earthquake. In this time the government made people choose to spread radiation, saying "stick it out" without evacuating them from Fukushima.

The government encouraged people to say "I want to keep living in Fukushima." They cultivated an atmosphere which made people think that Fukushima is safe and that it is possible to decontaminate the area and rebuild it, which in turn triggered the contaminated debris disposal subsequently all over Japan.

And because the government didn't compensate the people who were anxious about radiation, an atmosphere has been created where people feel compelled to accept it if they become ill, or die, even if you evacuate. **I felt the cold stares from officials of the environment ministry, who didn't know about such suffering when we made a speech in front of the ministry building. Many people seem to be indifferent about what is happening in Fukushima and the situation we are facing.**

The ETHOS activities that keep people in Fukushima, is a success. I personally feel retreat trips, eat and other campaigns and decontamination are parts of ETHOS activities.

Because if you face the facts, we can get only one answer, but they make people choose to incinerate

and recycle the radioactive materials without not telling us the facts and risk, and without compensating us for our suffering.

The sewage became a highly contaminated sludge, and the sludge and decontaminated dirt are incinerated and made into cement. **Though everything comes back to us, they don't face these facts.** Then the nephew of my friend, who lives in Iwaki-city, which is supposed to be low contaminated and safe, was diagnosed with leukemia the other day. The next day my cousin who was well, died a sudden death, and my friend also passed away. I didn't see the deaths of so many acquaintances before 3.11.

Everything can't be caused by radiation, but **we should learn the lessons from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.**

Once a nuclear accident happens, governments hide the facts, and because local officials don't have any knowledge about it, they mindlessly follow what the government decides. Of course it's not everybody, but politicians, all sorts of religious organizations, NPO, and many other groups unite and try to mislead ignorant people. I wonder why some companies and the government assist them to do it.

Now I face the fact calmly that it's been 2 years since the experiments of radiation incineration started all over Japan after 3.11, which they say doesn't cause illness.

Moreover, after they made a perfunctory report about the experimental incinerator in Samegawa village which exploded the other day, biomass power generators that use radioactive materials, and incinerators will start to be built to burn contaminated waste throughout Japan. One has been built in Fukushima.

There are very few people that are aware of the risk.

Media gloss over this issue and continue to indoctrinate people as before and people are not going to think and act themselves for years to come.

Even if we flee overseas now, the contamination isn't going to disappear. And as the radiation chased after us here in Kyushu, outside of Japan it's just the same unless people's attitudes change. And I'm wondering if the "environmental" industry in Kitakyushu is also going to cheat people in Southeast Asia in the same way they cheat us Japanese.

The future of our children we saw before 3.11 was the freedom to make-believe with peace of make-believers.

Lastly, we have chosen the way to generate electricity without changing our life style, and we still continue to put out waste products, even though we experienced a nuclear accident.

It seems that even if the nuclear power plants disappear, but our lifestyles and attitudes don't change, the nuclear plants will just switch over to something else dangerous.

For example, solar panels are recommended in advertisements. But they will be a waste when after 20 years. How do we dispose of them?

We dispose of waste in the areas where people live. Nuclear power plants are also there.

It's not what kind of energy we should use, I just wish we could look into our life, change the way we think, and have the courage to face seriously our way of living. To tell the truth, I want to return to my hometown in Fukushima, and see my parents and friends.

However, Japan is spreading out radiation, and then a lot of people accept the situation, and work for the recovery in Fukushima where people accept living with the radiation.

It's impossible for me to understand what is going on.

I really hope to share the facts with people who can face them without a fear.

I almost gave up. I was physically and mentally worn out, but I would like to hold out for a little bit more hope for the future and the Japanese people.

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