

United Nations University Fukushima Global Communication Programme

International Symposium

“Information Sharing and Communication for Recovery in Fukushima: A Human Security Approach”

3 February 2014

Fukushima, Japan

Objectives

In Fukushima, about 140,000 people are still living as evacuees and are still facing many challenges after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami of 11 March 2011, and the subsequent nuclear disaster. Reconstruction of Fukushima can only be established through securing a broader sense of “safety” and “relief” based on a recovery of trust in governments and scientists.

This international symposium was held on 3 February 2014 in Fukushima, under the United Nations University Fukushima Global Communication Programme¹. Experts from Japan and abroad came together to present their experiences and insight into the challenges facing recovery efforts following the triple disasters. While considering a human security² approach centered on the well-being of individuals, the speakers repeatedly emphasised the importance of improving information sharing and communication based on scientific findings. Such efforts can reduce anxiety levels and support community dialogue that will empower recovery efforts. The following provides an overview of the presentations and discussions during the symposium.

List of Speakers

[Open Remarks]

Dr. David Malone, Rector, United Nations University

Mr. Masao Uchibori, Fukushima Prefectural Vice-Government

[Keynote Speeches]

Prof. Hiroyuki Yoshikawa, Director-General, Centre for Research and Development of Strategy,
Japan Science and Technology Agency

¹ Recognising that the situation after the nuclear accident must be looked at from a human security* perspective, the United Nations University initiated its Fukushima Global Communication Programme in 2013 to promote international dissemination of reliable information on the situation and challenges in Fukushima.

>> [Fukushima Global Communication Programme Website](#)

² The United Nations defines "human security" as underscoring the universality and interdependence of a set of freedoms that are fundamental to human life: freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity.

» <http://unocha.org/humansecurity/about-human-security/human-security-all>

Prof. Miranda Schreurs, Professor, Berlin Free University

Mr. Tamotsu Baba, Mayor, Namie Town, Fukushima Prefecture

[Moderator]

Prof. Kazuhiko Takeuchi, Senior Vice-Rector, United Nation University

[Panelists]

Prof. Satoru Tanaka, Professor, University of Tokyo

Prof. Hiroshi Suzuki, Professor Emeritus, Fukushima University / fellow, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies

Prof. Miranda Schreurs, Professor, Berlin Free University

Mr. Yuri Kushnar'ov, First secretary, Embassy of Ukraine in Japan

[MC]

Mr. Hideyuki Mori, President, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies,

Key Messages

- At the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident, delays and insufficient information about the accident and evacuation order led to distrust of central government, local governments and scientists. Information provided by scientists and experts sometimes contradicted itself, deepening distrust and confusion. It is necessary to re-examine the role of social scientists in an emergency situation.
- Scientists are expected to provide information about the local/individual situations while identifying what science does and does not know so as to support local discussions and facilitate individual decision-making. Their role is not to persuade people.
- In the affected areas of the Chernobyl accident, due to the large social and psychological impacts, centres for social optimism were established to provide necessary information as well as health care services and livelihood support to affected people.
- The decision to close nuclear power plants in Germany was based on open discussions among local authorities and communities with citizen's participation. This decision aims to transform the social system by replacing large, intensive energy sources with small, decentralised energy sources.
- Fukushima, aiming to recover from the nuclear disaster, is required to share future visions of society with local communities and achieve these visions. At this time, it is important to support diverse choices for individual rehabilitation of living conditions while keeping in mind that some people have difficulty reconstructing their lives in their home towns. Effective support would be to provide places for community-based discussion with information sharing mechanisms to share necessary information for the discussion.

Summary of the Symposium

Opening session

In his opening remarks, Dr. David Malone (Rector, United Nations University) shared his experiences the previous day when he met with citizens who had been displaced by the triple disaster that struck Japan on 11 March 2011. While expressing his admiration for the spirit of these individuals, he also explained how the challenges facing Fukushima have somewhat receded from international focus. In this context, he highlighted the significance of addressing not only the multiple scientific challenges surrounding the disaster, but also the international community's confusion and lack of knowledge on such topics. The UNU's Fukushima Global Communications Programme aims to convey the situation in Fukushima to the global community, looking at what kind of impact the nuclear accident had, and what kind of situation the people of Fukushima find themselves in. He expressed his hopes that UNU, through this programme, will be able to generate greater understanding of the scientific challenges and communicate these at the international level.

On behalf of the Fukushima Prefectural Government, Vice-Governor Masao Uchibori welcomed participants and set the stage for the afternoon discussions by outlining the scale of challenges facing Fukushima Prefecture. Around 140,000 people out of total population of 2 million in the prefecture have been evacuated due to the nuclear accident, including 90,000 living in temporary housing. While noting the considerable progress that has been made towards recovery, Mr. Uchibori highlighted a range of issues relating to human security that will need to be addressed, including diverse support to evacuees, decontamination activities, establishment of food safety monitoring systems, construction of public housing as well as commercial and medical facilities, with particular attention being paid to health and mental care. He also highlighted that there needs to be a transition towards a society based on renewable energy, not relying on nuclear power. He ended his speech with the phrase "the opposite of impossible is not possible, but challenge", showing his intention towards recovery beyond diverse issues.

Keynote speeches

The first of three keynote speeches was delivered by Prof. Hiroyuki Yoshikawa (Director-General, Centre for Research and Development of Strategy, Japan Science and Technology Agency), who provided his insights into the role of scientists during times of crisis. In the case of the Fukushima accident, Prof. Yoshikawa pointed out the lack of preparedness to engage in interdisciplinary cooperation among engineers, politicians and other experts. Noting that there are 800,000 scientists in Japan, he emphasised the need for effective communication not only among scientists, but also with the government and other stakeholders. Furthermore, he remarked that the lack of a communication mechanism between the operator and the constructor of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant made it difficult to collectively access the available expertise of nuclear power engineers and safety engineers. Prof. Yoshikawa suggested strengthening the Science Council of Japan (SCJ) through the creation of a neutral, public science-based think tank similar to those that can be found in the US, UK and Germany. In addition, he recommended that the Prime Minister should have a science advisor,

who could act as a link to the proposed SCJ think tank as well as potential government and corporate think tanks. An effective communication network, created in a time free from crisis, where scientists can make recommendations to the government and share information with the society, can subsequently function as a useful tool when unexpected disasters occur.

Prof. Miranda Schreurs (Berlin Free University) delivered the second keynote speech and shared experiences from Germany on post-disaster environmental recovery. Prof. Schreurs described a number of environmental disasters around the world, and pointed out that the world has not had enough experience with nuclear accidents. She also commented that effective communication was a considerable challenge and mentioned that, after the Chernobyl accident, German newspapers published multiple news stories with alarming headlines based on simplified or inaccurate information about the dangers of radiation.

Prof. Schreurs noted that the Chernobyl disaster did, however, catalyse Germany's decision to phase out nuclear power by 2020, which was subsequently reinforced by the Fukushima accident. Referring to discussions by the German "Ethics commission for a safe energy supply", she emphasised how the push for an energy shift came from the bottom up, starting with local communities and NGOs, and showed the process to organise public discussions towards a decision supported by scientific knowledge.

Concluding on a hopeful note, Prof. Schreurs shared information about environmental recovery efforts in the former East Germany, which in the 1970s was among the most polluted places on earth due to industrial runoff. Sustained and costly efforts over a 20-year-period, however, have transformed the region, providing a potential model for the restoration of land in Fukushima.

The third keynote speech was given by Mr. Tamotsu Baba (Mayor, Namie Town, Fukushima Prefecture), who provided his first-hand experiences of the nuclear disaster and the continued suffering of its residents as well as challenges facing recovery efforts. Mr. Baba explained that prior to 11 March 2011, Namie Town had a population of 21,434, but that now 14,659 of these residents have been evacuated to locations across Fukushima Prefecture, while 6,455 have left the prefecture. In some cases, families have been split apart, for example when a mother and children leave the prefecture due to health concerns, while the father remains behind.

On the day of the disaster, alerts to be issued by the government after the nuclear power plant emergency cooling system failed were never received in Namie Town. The town had to decide the direction in which to evacuate without the right information, which eventually exacerbated the damage. Mr. Baba expressed deep concerns with how compensation payments to evacuees have been handled, and emphasised that residents of Namie Town have been deprived of their constitutional right to the pursuit of happiness. Looking forward, Mr. Baba explained that residents are now split among more than 600 cities and villages. He stressed that there is an obligation to support their lives which include full health care and medical compensation, job security, and support for reparation and

compensation. Nearly three years have passed since the disaster and while the number of residents who wish to return to Namie is decreasing, he continues to search for the way to rebuild the life of each resident and restore their hometown.

Panel discussion

Moderated by Professor Kazuhiko Takeuchi (Senior Vice-Rector, UNU), a panel discussion followed the keynote speeches, and included the participation of Prof. Satoru Tanaka (University of Tokyo), Prof. Hiroshi Suzuki (Fukushima University / Institute for Global Environmental Strategies), Prof. Miranda Schreurs (Berlin Free University) and Mr. Yuri Kushnar'ov (Embassy of Ukraine in Japan).

Prof. Tanaka shared insights into the role of effective communication in reducing the anxiety levels of Fukushima residents. He noted the failure of communication between scientists and residents about the risk of radiation exposure in Fukushima due to the different explanations by different experts. Reflecting on this, the Atomic Energy Society of Japan is developing common documents to use when explaining scientific data to citizens. However, data should not be used by scientists to persuade citizens. He emphasised that scientists should honestly communicate “what science does and does not know” and take on the role of supporting citizens so they can be convinced to make the better choice. Local governments' efforts to identify the contamination status of each area and individual doses of citizens could be basis for local discussions and citizens' respective choices on their future plans. Such an approach can help to reduce anxiety levels and keep residents motivated to address this difficult and complex situation.

Prof. Suzuki shared the difference in terms of recovery efforts between in the case of natural disasters and nuclear disasters. He indicated that in the usual process for disaster recovery, there is convergence over time from “support for evacuees” to “local recovery”, but in the case of a nuclear disaster, the phase of “support for evacuees” will continue for the long-term. Prof. Suzuki stressed the importance of mutual communication and understanding among governments, residents and experts on the various issues facing local residents and areas. He drew attention to one useful mechanism, that of roundtable discussions to build local consensus. He also introduced the concept of a platform to share information among residents, scientists and government. Linked to the fact that the number of citizens wanting to return home is decreasing, and the fact that it is not realistic to make a life in the community as it was before the disaster, he stated that one way to achieve community recovery was to build a “Japanese version of a compact city”. This would mean that urban areas and outlying farming and fishing villages could support each other, making it possible for residents to come and go from their homes to their place of work.

Mr. Kushnar'ov began by highlighting the continuous support from the Ukraine to Fukushima based on the experiences of the Chernobyl accident. He also explained that the most significant effects of the

disaster have been social and psychological. To address these issues, the Ukraine has established five centres for social optimism, which have functions to train teachers and doctors, provide advice hotlines for survivors of the disaster, and convey information to support the lives of residents. After the accident in Fukushima, many Japanese experts and government officials made visits to the Ukraine, and among other things, they were very interested in the fact that the information conveyed by the centres was considered trustworthy by the local residents. Mr. Kushnar'ov concluded his remarks by sharing the Ukraine's commitment to help and provide special expert consultation to Japan as it works to establish a similar centre in Fukushima.

Prof. Schreurs described the discussion that took place at the time of Germany's decision to phase out nuclear power, which debated the energy issue from the perspective of two ethical problems namely, "responsibility to future generations" and "global equity". In short, to change energy composition, there needs to be a transformation of the social system, through the scaling-down and decentralisation of the electricity system and a move away from fossil fuel dependency. Prof. Schreurs expressed her hope that while Japan deepens the discussion on bringing in a safer energy system, it will also be a good chance to deepen democracy.

In the questions and answer session with the audience, there was a question for Prof. Schreurs on measures to improve the divided situation of residents and communities post-disaster. She replied that organising discussions on a future vision that can be shared and, if it is impossible for the situation to return to its original state, then communicating about what would be next best way to rebuild the community outside the town are opportunities for divided residents to think about "living altogether once more".

In response to a question about post-decontamination urban planning, Prof. Suzuki explained that there are different challenges facing agrarian areas and rural cities, and a variety of options needed to be provided to evacuees, as over 45% are currently undecided about whether to return or not. Likewise, Mr. Kushnar'ov explained that in the aftermath of disasters, governments often look to technological solutions, while placing insufficient attention to psychological rehabilitation.

There was a question about the reason for the delay in residents returning home after the Fukushima accident, as compared to after the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki when residents began to return home immediately. Prof. Tanaka explained that there was a difference between the impacts of a nuclear bomb (instantaneous radiation exposure to heat rays and radiation) compared to the after effects of a nuclear accident (Long-term radiation exposure risk caused by low doses of radiation). Prof. Suzuki mentioned that there was not enough known about the health risks of radiation directly after the nuclear bombing.

One of the audience members talked about their experiences of visiting the Ukraine, specifically on activities to support Slavutych town and its residents. He also raised a question asking whether the situation in Japan, which forces residents into long-term evacuation instead of relocation, seems to be preventing those people from embarking on the next stage of their lives.

For promotion of information sharing and communication, the panelists provided several suggestions which included effective utilisation of the Fukushima Environment Creation Center to be established in 2015, and organising an international workshop in Fukushima in order to directly convey the experience in Ukraine by experts, scientists as well as government officers from there. It was also proposed that Japan should tell the world more about its efforts such as energy saving and volunteer activities to overcome the Fukushima accident, which could be partly achieved by sending more young people overseas.

Prof. Takeuchi likewise emphasised the need for the scientific community to speak with one voice to ensure coherence and avoid potential confusion. He concluded the panel session by highlighting the importance of building consensus for realising recovery in Fukushima, based on sufficient information sharing and the several options proposed, and to take steps towards a new vision for the future.