

“Earthquake and Persons with disabilities”

2. Example: Case studies by organizations of persons with disabilities (from examination by the Promotion Council)

The discussion introduced on page 29 that featured the theme of "Disaster and Persons with disabilities" from the "Council for the Promotion of Reform of the System for Persons with disabilities" that we was an action by the city (Minamisoma City).

We conducted hearings directly from the central members of victim support groups from organizations of persons with disabilities.

Here, we will publish materials from the hearings, which were submitted by central members of organizations of persons with disabilities that aided persons with disabilities in the Fukushima Prefecture.

You can read documents by other participants at the hearing on the Cabinet Office Measures for Person with Disabilities homepage. (Please refer to the end of this boxed article)

Local support initiatives report by an organization of persons with disabilities

(JDF (Japan Disability Forum);

Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas, Kiyoharu Shiraishi)

1. Actions for " people requiring support in the event of disaster"

- **Effectiveness of current actions**

Immediately after the Great East Japan Earthquake, we established the Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas and strongly requested the disclosure of the Register of People Requiring Support in the Event of Disaster from the Fukushima Prefecture and the municipalities affected by the disaster. However, this information could not be provided because of the barrier of protection of personal information.

In the Fukushima Prefecture, Minamisoma City experience particularly heavy damage due to the disaster and is designated as an emergency evacuation preparation zone. Under the strong sense of duty that we must confirm the identities of persons with disabilities who are troubled as they were not able to evacuate and remained within the city, we demand that the city disclose the

Register of Persons with disabilities in Minamisoma City.

The City of Minamisoma has also judged it necessary that they devise emergency evacuation measures for the persons with disabilities who remain in the city, and we are on the same page in deciding to disclose the Register.

In all of the Fukushima Prefecture, only Minamisoma City complied with the disclosure of the Register during the Earthquake.

We believe the fact that in the administration of each prefecture, everyone was busy taking disaster recovery measure in response to the Earthquake, which made it impossible to take care of persons with disabilities. However, there should have been slightly more effective actions in disclosing the Register of People Requiring Support.

- **Cooperation and participation of organizations of persons with disabilities in the training and planning for evacuation**

As far as we have observed, in Fukushima Prefecture there are no plans for evacuation or conducted emergency drills including the participation and cooperation of organizations of persons with disabilities.

When a disaster occurs, persons with disabilities tend to be put on the backburner. We need to devise evacuation plans, which focus on persons with disabilities who fail to escape.

The country and local governments should include organizations of persons with disabilities in the Evacuation Planning Committee to devise detailed evacuation plans.

- **Regarding the creation of the Register of People Requiring Support (setting the range of subjects and privacy protection)**

After experiencing the Earthquake, we have strongly recognized the need to create a Register of People Requiring Support.

There is no doubt that people requiring physical assistance should be considered as people requiring support, but we also think it necessary to include those people with intellectual disabilities and mental disabilities who don't require physical assistance and those belonging to a gray zone who don't have disabilities certificates.

The unprecedented Earthquake is a national crisis and because helping citizens should be our first priority, we do not think it is the occasion to be discussing individual privacy protection.

2. Safety confirmation and understanding support needs

(1) As far as Fukushima Prefecture is concerned, the safety confirmation of the persons with disabilities might not have been as readily carried out by administrative leadership, as expected.

(2) Cooperation between the administration, local welfare officers, and the neighborhood associations of each area might not have been successful.

(3) Fukushima has the particularity of having had the nuclear plant accident and the administration itself of each municipality also became subject to evacuation. Therefore, they might not have been able to conduct the safety confirmation of persons with disabilities.

(4) In the affected areas, they might not have understood the individual needs of persons with disabilities.

- **Regarding the subject responsible for confirmation of safety understanding support needs and the system for this purpose**

We believe that it is the responsibility of local governments to conduct safety confirmation and understand support needs.

However, there are limitations in terms of the staff systems of local governments in the event of an earthquake.

It is necessary that private organizations, local welfare officers, and neighborhood associations cooperate with local governments to understand support needs and confirm the safety of persons with disabilities.

- **Confirmation by people providing welfare services and cooperation with the administration**

- **Information disclosure**

Not only in the event of an earthquake, but also even before such a disaster occurs we should aim for cooperation and exchange between the administration and people providing welfare services.

We should seek to build a relationship between the administration and people providing welfare services (organizations of persons with disabilities) and realize information disclosure within a trusting relationship.

- **Regarding safety confirmation of the welfare service users, such as inpatients, outpatients and home-help recipients**

To confirm the safety of users of welfare services, the establishments providing such services should take responsibility and confirm the safety of persons with disabilities.

However, we must create the system to conduct safety confirmation by the related establishments in place of such establishments that must be evacuated due to disasters. In such cases, there must be cooperation between the administration and the establishments.

- **Regarding safety confirmation of persons with disabilities who do not use the services mentioned above**

We must make it possible to conduct the safety confirmation of persons with disabilities immediately through the cooperation among the administration, private organizations, local welfare officers, and/or neighborhood associations.

To that end, it is necessary for us to conduct further studies into the roles of local welfare officers.

3. How to shape the mechanism of support for persons with disabilities soon after disasters

- **Regarding evacuation shelters**

- **Problems with regular evacuation shelters**

Regular evacuation shelters are largely places like school gymnasiums, where the ground is uneven at the entrance.

Due to mats being laid out on the floor, this created a problem where people in wheelchairs could not lie down to sleep.

In addition, there were not any bathrooms or baths at the evacuation shelters that could support people in wheelchairs.

There were cases in which persons with developmental disorders, who are unable to live communally, parked outside in the parking lots near evacuation shelters and took shelter in their cars with their families.

- **Problems with welfare evacuation shelters**

Although we received information that there were several welfare evacuation shelters in Fukushima Prefecture, we had no idea as to where they were and what kind of persons with disabilities had taken shelter there.

In Koriyama City, some persons with severe physical disabilities had their belongings scattered all about their homes or had their homes half-destroyed, leaving their homes in an unusable state.

Therefore, we asked Koriyama City to have the welfare center for persons with disabilities, which was being used as a regular evacuation center at the time, used as an evacuation center for persons with disabilities and as a result, it was

used as a welfare evacuation center.

Is welfare evacuation center the proper naming for such a place?

- **Regarding support for persons with disabilities in the event of emergency evacuation**

- **Provision of information and relief supplies to evacuation shelters**

Staff from the Fukushima Support Center for Persons with Disabilities in Affected Areas visited evacuation shelters in various areas with the Fukushima Prefecture and asked about the safety and support needs of persons with disabilities.

However, we could not find persons with disabilities in most evacuation shelters. Perhaps because persons with disabilities thought it to be near impossible for them to take refuge in regular evacuation shelters, very few persons with disabilities evacuated to evacuation shelters.

Staff from the Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas visited evacuation shelters and put up posters saying that they can support victims of the Earthquake with disabilities. Because of this, the Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas started to receive inquiring calls. We were not able to provide individual supplies to the evacuation shelters.

Because people live communally in evacuation shelters, relief supplies needed to be handed out to all evacuees.

Since there were persons with disabilities who were spending the entire day in wheelchairs, we asked the administration to allow us to arrange some beds in the evacuation shelters for them.

The staff from Fukushima Support Center for Persons with Disabilities in Affected Areas also took some of the persons with disabilities to public baths, because they had not been able to bathe for weeks.

- **Provision of information and relief supplies to homebound evacuees**

We asked establishments performing work related to persons with disabilities in Soma City, Minamisoma City and Iwaki City that had resumed operations to become bases for relief supplies and we brought the relief supplies to those locations.

We took measures in delivering relief supplies from these establishments to users of the establishment and persons with disabilities living in the area.

When Iitate became a planned evacuation zone, we received information from

litate's administration, saying that persons with severe physical disabilities wanted to take shelter within the region, rather than go to special facilities for persons with disabilities.

Staff from the Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas repeatedly visited the homes of persons with disabilities in litate wanting to take shelter within the region and was able to convince them to enter apartments run by the Fukushima City.

Persons with disabilities were also evacuated fearing the effects of radiation damage to outside of the prefecture.

Two persons with disabilities were evacuated to Nishinomiya City in Hyogo Prefecture through the cooperation of persons with disabilities that are an acquaintance of ours who had experienced the Great Hanshin, Awaji Earthquake.

- **Consultation support system in the event of emergency evacuation**

(1) The state of affairs was that offices providing consultations for persons with disabilities in the Soso area of Fukushima Prefecture had to evacuate the entire office to outside the prefecture or to other areas within the prefecture. Therefore, it became difficult to carry out consultation operations in the area.

The Fukushima Support Center for Persons with Disabilities in Affected Areas asked Fukushima Prefecture to ensure that there is a consultation support system for the earthquake victims with disabilities. As a result, the Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas, as a consigned organization supporting persons with disabilities, was able to deploy consultation support staff and was able to build a consultation system for the persons with disabilities who were evacuated.

(2) In Minamisoma City, a life care office that resumed operations before any others played a key role in completely undertaking all consultations for persons with disabilities in Minamisoma City single-handedly. However, the office was not originally made for consultation services, but still needed to offer life care services despite most of the staff being evacuated. Thus, the office faced a lot of difficulties.

4. How to shape support for reconstruction for persons with disabilities

- **Securing houses**
- **Regarding temporary housing (construction of barrier-free houses and house modification)**

The Fukushima Support Center for Persons with Disabilities in Affected Areas visited temporary houses set up in Fukushima Prefecture to investigate where earthquake victims with disabilities were living.

As far as could be seen, there were no temporary houses that could support the lifestyles of people with wheelchairs. There were some temporary houses with slopes here and there.

However, when we knocked on the door to see who was living there, we found that these houses were mostly mismatched, with ordinary people without disabilities living there.

The issue is that temporary houses have been built in remote areas and it is difficult for persons with disabilities to move to them.

Temporary houses are generally built on unused land, but it is just not right to rebuilding in places where the radiation dose is high, such as Fukushima City, Date City, and Koriyama City.

Based on the aforementioned issues, if we consider the fact that people will move from temporary houses to live in houses built as part of reconstruction support, we must include persons with disabilities in the reconstruction process and build universally designed houses where victims of the earthquake can live at ease.

In addition, we think it necessary to make universal design the standard for temporary housing as a future course of action.

- **Deemed temporary housing**

In Fukushima Prefecture, we call deemed temporary houses “rental houses”. However, we cannot determine where the rental houses are or where persons with disabilities are living.

As rental houses mostly makes use of leased housing from the private sector, the way they are built makes it difficult for people with severe physical disabilities to live there.

There is no information as to how far renovation of these houses has progressed.

It is necessary that the country takes the lead and offer full financial support for the renovation of these houses with the consent of the owners of the private leased housing.

- **Individual living support**

- **The effectiveness and limits of continuous support by private**

support groups

The Fukushima Support Center for Persons with Disabilities in Affected Areas is working as JDF. Support for persons with disabilities should be carried out by persons with disabilities themselves.

The agonies and difficulties of carrying a disability are best understood by people who have disabilities themselves.

Private support organizations cannot offer as much human support as they would like due to a weak financial base.

In that sense, we can see that there are limits for them in terms of offering continuous support.

It is imperative that the country and local governments offer financial support to those private support organizations run by persons with disabilities.

- **Continuation of administrative welfare services and response to new needs**

The administration is physically weak after experiencing the Earthquake. It currently cannot continue administrative welfare services. The country must take the initiative in performing such administrative support. The country needs to actively offer support that corresponds to new needs and is adjusted depending on the circumstances.

- **Support to welfare offices**

The Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas has dispatched volunteers mainly to Minamisoma City offices to assist the staff in those offices because they are experiencing a shortage of staff due to evacuation.

However, such a situation cannot last for long.

We think it necessary that we offer some support to offices where the number of staff decreased due to the disaster.

- **Employment support**

(1) Subcontract work from many companies is decreasing in establishments for persons with disabilities within the Fukushima Prefecture due to the Earthquake. The rewards (wages) for persons with disabilities using these establishments have noticeably decreased as a result. We developed a project named the "Fukushima ∞ (Infinity) Connection" in Minamisoma and other cities, in order to work out the wages of users and some of these establishments have started selling metal badges made by users nationwide.

(2) There must a long-term employment support system in order to strive for the

general employment of persons with disabilities. We need to drastically increase the number of job coaches and offer long-term employment support in the workplace.

- **Enrichment of the consultation support system**

(1) From June of last year, the Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas placed consultation support staff (consigned by the prefecture) within the center and carried out consultations with victims of the earthquake with disabilities through cooperation with consultation support offices within the prefecture. This service is expected to continue into the next fiscal year as an expanded consultation system with an increase of consultation support and strengthened operations consigned by the prefecture. In order to consult with persons with disabilities in affected areas with great care, we must consider offering financial support to increase the number of consultation offices or the number of staff working in consultation offices.

In one case, consultation support was consigned by an office that owned a large inpatient institution in the Soso area, but all the residents of the inpatient facility itself had to be evacuated to outside of the prefecture due to the Earthquake, leading to insufficient consultation support for persons with disabilities in these areas.

We should perhaps ask large social welfare organizations with sufficient funds and human resources to conduct consultation support, as a policy for the country and local governments. However, there are many small establishments operating in the area such as NPOs, which are truly concerned about the wellbeing of persons with disabilities and offer consultation services to them. We must seriously consider having consultation services carried out at such establishments.

- **Challenges for reconstruction**

- **Definition of reconstruction for persons with disabilities**

(1) For persons with disabilities, reconstruction means the establishment of a social infrastructure for daily living. This social infrastructure must consist of securing housing where one can live at ease, enriching the living assistance system, securing jobs (employment support), and enriching income security for persons with disabilities who are not able to work.

In devising reconstruction plans for municipalities, all newly built houses (reconstructed housing) must be built with universal design. We must not only enrich housing construction in areas affected by the Earthquake, but also

nationwide by setting certain legal constraints.

We must enrich our support for persons with disabilities to allow them to enjoy a satisfactory level of support no matter where they live.

In the Tohoku area that experienced damage due to the Earthquake. As such, we feel that the financial infrastructure of the prefecture is weak and awareness about the welfare of persons with disabilities is low. Therefore, we see some administration responses that suggest that the care of persons with disabilities should be left up to their families.

There are also many cases where families who cannot take care of persons with disabilities end up admitting them to inpatient institution. We must see to it that wherever persons with disabilities live in this country, they will receive at-home welfare services appropriate for them.

In Japan, it seems that houses are not built keeping persons with disabilities in mind and thus when victims of the earthquake with disabilities try to live in rental houses, they have to live under poor housing conditions. There are some provision services for daily living supplies. However, their benefits and people eligible vary depending on each local government. It is the responsibility of the country to cover the expenses incurred in remodeling houses, such as installing electric lifters, baths and toilets, and lifts at the entrances of houses.

Regarding employment support, after this Earthquake, what we have strongly felt is that work brings energy, smiles, and pride to people. Even with the economic support, without jobs that people can devote themselves to, hardships will continue. The entire prefecture has received damage from both contamination and rumors as a result of the nuclear plant accident, and people have lost their jobs. In such a situation, without the creation of new jobs, vitality will not return to the persons with disabilities remaining in the prefecture.

In the early 1980s, at the National Coordinating Committee for the Establishment of Income Security determinedly worked toward establishing a basic disability pension. After that, there have been no further developments regarding income security for persons with disabilities.

When a person with a severe physical disability is living independently in the city, the amount that he or she receives from the basic disability pension type 1 and in special disability benefits is approximately 100,000 yen in total. However, it is thought that living on such an amount is extremely difficult.

More income security must be provided for persons with disabilities who cannot work, including those who are victims of the Earthquake.

The land area of each of the prefectures in the Tohoku area is large and the population is small and traveling by train or bus is extremely difficult for persons with disabilities. In some sparsely populated areas, buses run only twice a day. When using taxis, the high cost is a problem.

In Koriyama City, where I live, because the bus carrier company is under the Company Rehabilitation Act, there has been no progress in spreading the use of low-floor busses.

We can suggest that the country take the lead to establish a taskforce team, including organizations of and for persons with disabilities and private organizations, to create a system of transportation services for persons with disabilities and the elderly in the Tohoku area.

Due to the nuclear power plant accident, radioactive material has been scattered across the prefecture. There is no telling as to how serious the damage is due to the radioactive material.

There are some persons with disabilities who voluntarily evacuated to other prefectures from fear of radiation. Based upon this, TEPCO and the country should cooperate in order to provide living security that includes securing assistance for those people.

We must reconstruct houses in places where the levels of radioactivity are extremely low.

Furthermore, all those houses should be built with universal design. In the case of Fukushima prefecture, the population outflow of young people will accelerate due to the nuclear power plant accident.

Under such circumstances, the people who remain will need to be able to carry on life there. The population of elderly people and persons with disabilities will increase, thus we need to consider housing for communal living as well. We need to prepare in order to be able to quickly help evacuate the elderly and persons with disabilities, in the rare event that another accident like that of the no. 1 power plant was to occur again.

In Fukushima prefecture, currently the number of helpers rendering welfare services to persons with disabilities and the elderly people are decreasing.

Because of that, the number of children and infants at kindergartens and day-care centers are decreasing, leading to an excessive number of staff in those facilities.

It is proposed that in thinking about securing jobs for those offering services for children, we devise an Urgent Labor Correspondence System (tentative name).

- **Regarding the participation of organizations of and for persons with disabilities in devising a plan for reconstruction and its implementation**

(1) In spite of our experiences with earthquakes such as the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the Chuetsu Earthquake, we have devised reconstruction plans disregarding persons with disabilities who are also Japanese citizens.

We must regard this Great East Japan Earthquake as our first step and chance and I propose that we establish Reconstruction Planning Committees for the country and each local government that will seriously listen to the opinions of persons with disabilities who are the first people to be affected by a disaster.

We also need to invite many organizations of and for persons with disabilities to participate in this Committee.

- **Other**

There will surely be other major earthquakes in the future.

We need to learn from this Earthquake and further strengthen disaster prevention measures.

First, we need to start with evacuation shelters and make school gymnasiums and other such structures which are full of barriers into barrier-free buildings. Before another earthquake occurs, we must prepare compact baths and toilets that are user-friendly for persons with disabilities and for the elderly. Therefore, whenever such a disaster should occur, we can install these baths and toilets at evacuation shelters.

In Fukushima prefecture, temporary housing was built in the summer of last year throughout the prefecture.

The Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas visited temporary houses located in various places in the prefecture and conducted investigations.

We found that temporary houses offered little comfort to people with severe physical disabilities and in some cases they were impossible to live in.

Furthermore, although slopes could be found here and there on some temporary houses, the people living there were ordinary people and not persons with disabilities.

In spite of our experience with the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake 17 years ago, we have not built temporary houses that consider persons with disabilities. We must build such temporary houses in response to future major earthquakes.

From design stage (standardization), we must build temporary houses that are easy for persons with disabilities to live in, meaning houses with entrances that are wide enough for a wheelchair to go through, houses without steps, houses with baths and toilets that leave wide enough spaces to allow care-providers to give support, and houses that can accommodate beds.

Since many elderly people will be living in temporary houses, all the temporary houses need to be built with universal design.

(Attachments from this article can be viewed on the Cabinet Office's homepage for measures for persons with disabilities: Committee for Disability Policy Reform > 37th > Document 6.)

http://www8.cao.go.jp/shougai/suishin/kaikaku/s_kaigi/k_37/pdf/s6.pdf

(Reports from three additional reporters, Takashi Koyama from the Iwate Kyosaren Support Center, Hiroshi Ono from the JDF Miyagi Support Center, and Takashi Yahata from the Yume Kaze Fund were regrettably omitted due to length.)

Please refer to Cabinet Office's homepage for measures for persons with disabilities).



JDF Fukushima Support Center for Persons with disabilities in Affected Areas