

Introductory Remarks¹

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In Japan, many people describe the country as “the only atomic-bombed country.” Although Japan is the only country to have suffered a nuclear attack in war, in many other countries, the production of nuclear weapons or nuclear tests have harmed many people’s health, sometimes fatally. However, this kind of nuclear damage remains relatively unknown in Japan.

Many people in Japan did realize the terror of the “ashes of death” after the Daigo Fukuryu Maru (also known as “Lucky Dragon No. Five”), a Japanese tuna fishing boat, was exposed to radioactive fallout from a U.S. hydrogen bomb test in 1954.

Furthermore, radioactive leakage in a series of accidents at nuclear power plants has raised concerns over the health risk they pose. In particular, the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant Accident made us realize that a serious nuclear power plant accident would make a vast area inhabitable, permanently severing residents from their homes and livelihoods. Despite the experience of radioactive contamination caused by such grave accidents, however, Japan has not yet constructed a comprehensive scheme that compensates victims for “nuclear contamination damage” such as loss of life, long-term health damage, and damage to property.

On the other hand, on a global scale, a significant number of people have been harmed by nuclear contamination, even in the period before nuclear weapons technology was reappropriated for nuclear power. Many people have been harmed through nuclear weapons development, including in uranium mining and other production processes, or in nuclear tests conducted to examine the bombs’ capacity.

This collection of articles is part of the findings of a collaborative research project.

¹ This is a translation of the following original Japanese article (translated by Yuichi Yokoyama; proofread by Annelise Giseburt). Ozaki, Hironao. 2020. “Tokushū ni atatte” 特集にあたって [Introductory Remarks]. *Kankyō to Kōgai 環境と公害* [Research on Environmental Disruption], 50 (2): 7.

Researchers who have extensive knowledge of different local contexts have collaborated to investigate different kinds of nuclear contamination damage caused by the countries that led development of nuclear weapons—namely, U.S., USSR, UK, France, and China—and a wide range of support measures for victims. As far as I know, there is no other comparative research which investigates nuclear contamination damage on such a cross-regional, global scale like this one.

For more than a decade, I have been involved in a collaborative research project in which researchers conduct comparative analyses of support measures for victims of pollutions, adverse drug reactions, and occupational diseases and identify advantages and disadvantages of the measures to propose better ones. I believe this collaborative research on nuclear contamination damage deserves special attention as world-leading research which explores a wide range of damage and investigates kinds, mechanisms, and levels of support for nuclear contamination victims on a global scale. Differences such as healthcare systems and value of currencies posed challenges to this comparative analysis. Nevertheless, knowing how different countries have been addressing nuclear contamination damage and what kinds of risks they have been compensating for contributes to the improvement of support measures in various countries. Furthermore, this research will also be beneficial for countries which are in need of support measures for nuclear contamination victims—such as Japan, which still needs to address what kinds of long-term health effects the victims of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident will suffer and how the government should compensate for the damage they have received.

The first article by Takemine presents a general outline of this collaborative research; it discusses the goals and significance of the research in reference to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. Hosokawa discusses the support system in the Commonwealth of Nations, and Yang analyzes the support measure in China for veterans who participated in nuclear tests. Mashimo discusses issues caused by a new law in France which entitles not only military personnel but also workers who participated in nuclear tests to compensation. Hirabayashi discusses the significance of the system in Kazakhstan, which defines all the “citizens who lived, worked, or served in the army” in contaminated areas as the victims of nuclear tests. Tamayama details a comprehensive law in the nuclear superpower, U.S., which targets a wide range of the population including workers and local residents. All the support measures discussed in this collection of articles are touchstones for the future of support for nuclear contamination victims.