

Decontamination outside the Plant in Fukushima

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Decontamination has been pursued in Fukushima since the nuclear accident that occurred there in March 2011. Pursuant to “the Act on Special Measures Concerning the Handling of Environmental Pollution by Radioactive Materials Discharged by the Nuclear Power Station Accident Associated with the Tohoku District – Off the Pacific Ocean Earthquake That Occurred on 11 March 2011” enacted in August of that year, the Ministry of the Environment has been conducted decontamination in 11 municipalities located in the Areas under Evacuation order.

The efforts being led by the Japanese government and a lot of the municipalities have finished the whole area decontamination of the target municipalities by the end of FY2016, except in Difficult-to-Return Zones.

“Did you drink the local water and eat the local rice?” “Is decontamination really effective?” “Have you really not been affected by the radiation?” These are some of the questions that local leaders, doctors, educators, and other stakeholders often expect children from Fukushima to encounter when they grow up to become students and professionals and meet people in Sendai, Tokyo, Osaka, and other places outside Fukushima Prefecture. They believe that these children need special educational support to help them answer these questions about radiation and the situation in Fukushima.

Although some children from Fukushima may be resilient enough to adequately explain the local conditions and talk about radiation, some children might be discouraged from eating local rice and drinking local water. It seems odd for host communities to ask children who have had to move away from their home prefectures to explain about Fukushima. Instead, the host communities should learn more about decontamination work and radiation so that they can offer vital support to these young new members of the community.

In Japan today, this approach is probably one way for the country to genuinely apply the lessons learned from Fukushima.

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