Challenges of returning to Kawauchi Village

Yuko Endo
Mayor of Kawauchi Village, Fukushima Prefecture
Kawauchi Village, Fukushima Prefecture
The Evacuation of Kawauchi Village

● March 11, 14:46: Great East Japan Earthquake
● March 12, 05:44: The residents of the town of Tomioka were evacuated to Kawauchi Village due to a 10-km evacuation order.
● March 12, 18:25: The evacuation order is extended to a 20-km radius.
● March 15, 11:00: A sheltering order is issued for a 20- to 30-km radius. The Kawauchi Village office decides to evacuate.
● March 16, 06:00 All residents are evacuated to Koriyama City.
Results of Airborne Monitoring by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (April 2011)
Results of Airborne Monitoring

November 2011 → November 2013
Declaration of Return from Koriyama City to Kawauchi Village

January 2012: The head of village declared that residents could safely return to their homes because radiation doses were found to be at comparatively low levels.

April 2012: The village government office resumed normal services for schools and other public facilities.
Fundamental policies for the return to Kawauchi Village

1. Choice
Respect the decisions of residents whether or not they decide to return.

2. Judgment
Determine the risks involved for each resident. Respond to other problems caused by risk aversion.

3. Self-support
Demand thorough compensation while supporting the new independent lifestyle plans of the residents.
Specific policies for returning to the village

1. Decontamination
2. Employment creation
3. Health management
4. Development of the educational environment
5. Resumption of agriculture and forestry
6. Infrastructure improvement
7. Additional compensation for those returning
Rate of residents returning to Kawauchi Village (November 2014)
Reasons residents did not return to Kawauchi Village (February 2012)

1. Concerns about health effects due to radiation
2. Anxiety about access to health care
3. Anxiety about the living environment, such as shops and welfare facilities
4. Anxiety about employment
5. Anxiety about children’s education issues
Decontamination of the living environment

● Decontamination of areas most frequently used by residents, such as schools and residential houses, before other places.
● A final goal of decreasing the annual exposure dose to less than 1mSv (less than 0.23\(\mu\)Sv/h).
● Decontamination of residential houses and other buildings in the village is complete.
Outline of decontamination in Kawauchi Village

Before decontamination

Before the decontamination, radiation dose rates were measured.

After decontamination

After the decontamination, the effect of the decontamination work was checked by measuring the radiation dose rates again.

Decontamination aims to lower the final radiation dose to less than 1 mSv/year.

Final radiation dose goal: less than 0.23 mSv/hour

Work required before decontamination
- Washing the roofs and outer walls of buildings
- Pruning and removing fallen leaves within 20 m of houses
- Removing top soil from gardens

Work required after decontamination
- Residents measure the radiation dose rates by themselves using survey meters that were distributed to each house. The Village Office asks residents to consult the office if an abnormally high radiation dose rate is observed.
- Radiation management is conducted by the Village Office as well as the government and related organizations. The Village Office is making efforts to mitigate residents’ anxieties.

Flexible containers

Contents of the work
- Wastes resulting from decontamination are put in flexible containers.
- In cases where residents conduct decontamination work by themselves, the wastes are put in containers that are distributed and collected by the Village Office.

Transported by trucks

Temporary storage site

Contents of the work
- Flexible containers are brought to a temporary storage site.
- Wastes resulting from decontamination are monitored at all times, and managed with full countermeasures for safety.
- The temporary storage site has controlled entry.
Customary events resume
Promotion of agriculture and forestry
Employment creation
Cooperation with government and academia
Conclusion

1. The prides and significance of living in the village needs to be restored.
2. Residents need to reestablish their willingness to live in the village and their life goals; they need to ask for compensation.
3. Investment needs to be timely and intense.
4. Conflicts between residents over returning to the village need to be mitigated.
5. Evacuees face challenges in trying to solve problems according to their principals.
6. It is difficult for Kawauchi Village to continue as the local authority.
We thank those who have supported the reconstruction efforts. We hope to re-create the village as you remember it.

Thank you for your attention and continuous support!