



Grasping the Fukushima Displacement and Diaspora

3.11 disasters in Japan relocating people and local governments beyond borders

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Introduction – grasping the evacuation

3.11 The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami has not only led to massive casualties and physical damage in Tohoku and elsewhere, but it has also brought about the social and psychological distress of forcible displacement of the people from their homes.

While it is difficult to grasp the overall picture of evacuations because evacuees have no legal obligations to report to the authorities their whereabouts (which are personal decisions of each household along with laws and regulations concerning privacy) there is some data available to grasp the rough picture of the evacuations from the disasters. According to the “Nationwide Evacuee Information System¹” established by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan, there are 8,904 people who reported as evacuees in and/or from Iwate, 15,078 for Miyagi and 63,533 for Fukushima as of July 14, 2011². Though these figures cannot tell us whether these people are within the same prefectures they were in before the disasters or evacuated across the prefectural border, there is no doubt that number evacuees in and/or from Fukushima Prefecture remains the highest of the three hardest hit states. Based on other data by the Cabinet Office and National Police Agency, as of June 14, 2011, a total of 22,788 were identified as evacuees staying within Fukushima.

In Fukushima, because of the complex nuclear power plant situation, tens of thousands were evacuated. The panic and miscommunication concerning the radiation fueled appropriate fear but also harmful rumors, some hysteria and the concomitant shortage of vital supplies and aid workers in the tsunami-hit coastal municipalities of Fukushima Prefecture such as Minami-Soma City and Iwaki³.

While bits and pieces of information concerning the lives of Fukushima evacuees were reported in the domestic media, little is known geographically about the state of the displacement and diaspora for the people of Fukushima-ken in the international media. In the study of geography, Isoda (2011)⁴ in this bulletin provided analyses of earlier situations of what he called “Fukushima Hamadori Diaspora” based

1 Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan <http://japan.mfa.gov.ge/files/japan/tsunami/22-04-11/22-3.PDF>
With this system in place, evacuees can report, at their will, their current location and contacts to the local government where they are staying so the information is passed through the prefectural government of the present location to their original prefectures and municipalities. The evacuees, in turn, can receive announcements from the original local governments such as payments of relief money, health insurance and local tax.

2 Cabinet Office Website <http://www.cao.go.jp/shien/4-extra/system.html> (Last visited on July 22, 2011)

3 Oda, T. (2011): The situations of Iwaki City outside Evacuation Zone: the record of a region affected by harmful rumors about radioactive contamination

4 Isoda (2011): Fukushima Hamadori Diasporaage and sex of evacuees from the nuclear crisis, 2011 East Japan Earthquake Bulletin of the Tohoku Geographical Association <http://www.soc.nii.ac.jp/tga/disaster/articles/e-contents12.html> (Last visited on July 22, 2011)

on the List of Evacuees made available from Fukushima Prefecture in April 2011. Likewise, although the firsthand statistics are limited, a simple GIS (Geographic Information Systems) mapping might help us better understand the geographical relocations of the local governmental functions and people, the Fukushima Diaspora.

This report is a snapshot of such relocations to remind the international aid organizations and academic community that Fukushima Prefecture received the brunt of the multiple disasters that precipitated a variety of predicaments, and a call for continuous attention paid to the situation and needs in Fukushima.

Relocations of Municipal Government Functions

The situation of Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant (the NPP hereafter; 37°25.5'N, 141°02.0'E) relocated not just the residents in proximity but also the functions and offices of the local municipal governments. Normally in Japan, local municipalities are based within the geographic boundaries of the city, and the judicial power is basically limited to the local geographical territories. One exception is the case of Miyake Island of Tokyo where the entire population, along with the local government offices, was evacuated to Metropolitan Tokyo between September 2, 2000 and February 1, 2005 due to the volcanic hazards. However, evacuation and security zones designated by the central government forced the local governments out of their political boundaries. Presently eight townships and villages of Futaba County have relocated their administrative functions outside the security zones (Fig. 1, Photo 1)⁵. Seven of them are within Fukushima Prefecture, away from the NPP, while one, Futaba Township is relocated to Kazo City, Saitama Prefecture, more than 200km away from its home. This created a unique situation where a local municipality is based in a different prefecture than what it belongs to. The Township of Iitate in Soma County was also relocated to Fukushima City following the government's widening the evacuation zones to the northwest of the NPP based on the detected levels of radiation.

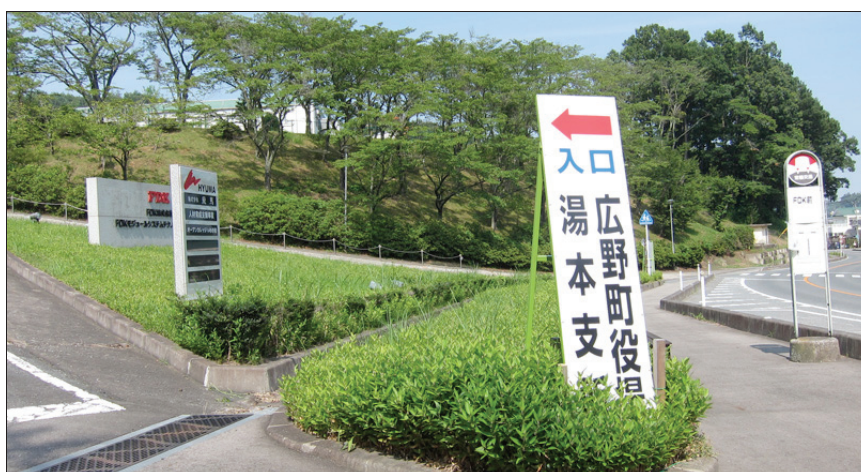


Photo 1 Town Office of Hirono-machi relocated to a private firm office in Iwaki City, Fukushima Pref.

(By Takashi Oda on August 9, 2011)

⁵ The pink line municipalities indicate that they evacuated while the blue line municipalities are the ones receiving the municipal functions of the towns evacuated.

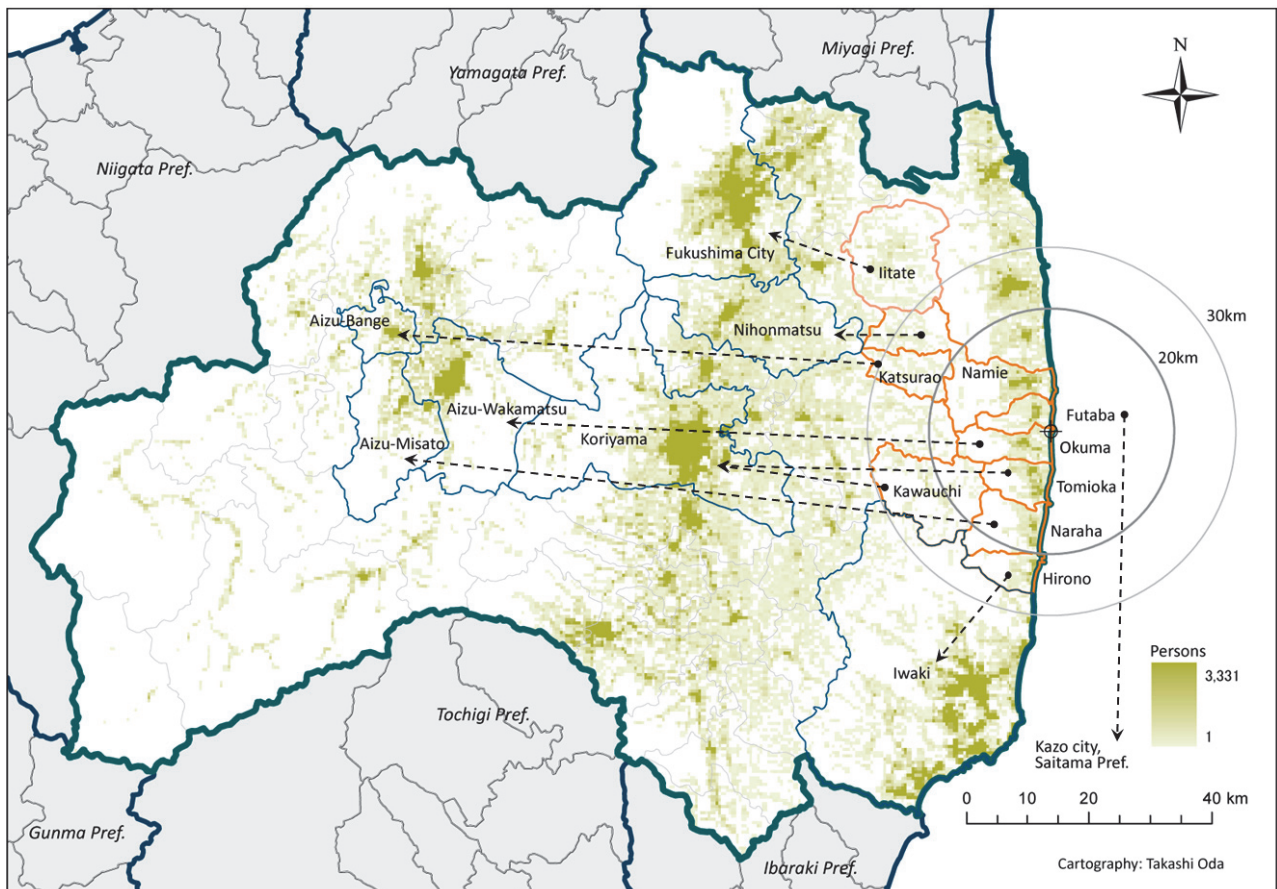


Fig. 1 Relocation of municipal governments and 2005 population in Fukushima Pref.

Source: Fukushima Prefectural Government (2011) for relocations; created by Takashi Oda

Map created based on 500m mesh block data, Population Census (2005), Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

The lack of accessibility to local public services is problematic, as evacuees do not necessarily relocate to the areas adjacent to the areas to which the municipal offices are relocated, and they are scattered throughout Japan according to their own decisions. On July 22, the Japanese Government submitted legislation to allow the evacuees to receive local municipal services in the present municipalities such as education, nursing care and other services, while the central government appropriates necessary budgets to these accepting municipalities. The passage of such laws would reconfigure the roles of the local governments and decision-making of where the evacuees would live.

Locating evacuees of Fukushima and the Diaspora

According to the Fukushima Prefectural Government⁶, there are no reliable statistics available on the state of evacuations within Fukushima. Data gathering is limited as those who take shelter with neighboring relatives do not necessarily report to the municipal government about the address change.

From the most recently available monthly survey by the Fukushima Prefecture, it is estimated there were 2,005,480 residents in the prefecture as of May 1, 2011. This includes people who have been evacuated outside Fukushima Prefecture. Many of the evacuees stay outside their home prefecture without changing the present resident register. Since this survey is based on the National Census taken on October 1, 2010 adjusted with resident register, the prefectural statistics office believes “residents of Fukushima Prefecture have certainly gone below two million.”⁷ So, where have they relocated? The Cabinet Office and Fukushima Prefecture provide some statistics of the state of evacuees⁸. GIS mapping of these figures provides us with some ideas of their whereabouts (Fig. 2). The size of the circles in Fig. 2 indicates the number of people evacuating in each prefecture.

Many of the Evacuees were reported in the prefectures surrounding Fukushima. There are 7,219 in Niigata Prefecture, followed by Yamagata (5,518). The southern bordering prefectures of Tochigi (2,624), Gunma (2,510) and Ibaraki (1,905) have higher number of evacuees from the other regions of Japan. Tokyo metropolitan areas including Tokyo, Saitama and Chiba host thousands of those who are in temporary residential situations.

This data also breaks down into four categories depending on the types of evacuation:

- Type A: temporary housing/shelter including public community learning centers and local schools;
- Type B: those staying at either hotels or inns;
- Type C: “others” including those who are relying on relatives and acquaintances; and
- Type D: those that are in “housing/residential units” including public housing, temporary housing, private houses and hospitals.

The highest percentages of those that are in either hotels or inns are found in the bordering prefectures and in Shizuoka Prefecture. Others are in shelters in Yamagata, Niigata, Tochigi, Saitama and Nagano Prefectures.

There are ways that local governments have responded to the needs of evacuees. Some of the accepting municipalities provided subsidies to the hotels and inns so that the fees could be reduced for the evacuees. However, some others rely on relatives and acceptances in Kanto and Koshinetsu regions, particularly in Chiba where Tokyo’s bedroom suburbs are located, although the accuracy of the data is questionable as everyone reported in Chiba is in the same category. Further to the west, the number of evacuees decreases as the distance from Fukushima increases, yet the prefectures of Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo and Nara, the Kansai metropolitan areas host around 500 people respectively.

⁶ Interview with emergency management headquarters official July 22, 2011

⁷ The Fukushima Minpo Newspaper, July 30, 2011. P. 6.

⁸ The survey was conducted on June 30, 2011 and the data were provided by the Cabinet Office to the Fukushima Prefecture on July 13, 2011. The number of Fukushima evacuees in Iwate and Miyagi Prefectures are the numbers as of July 13, 2011, reported to Fukushima Prefecture through the Nationwide Evacuee Information System.

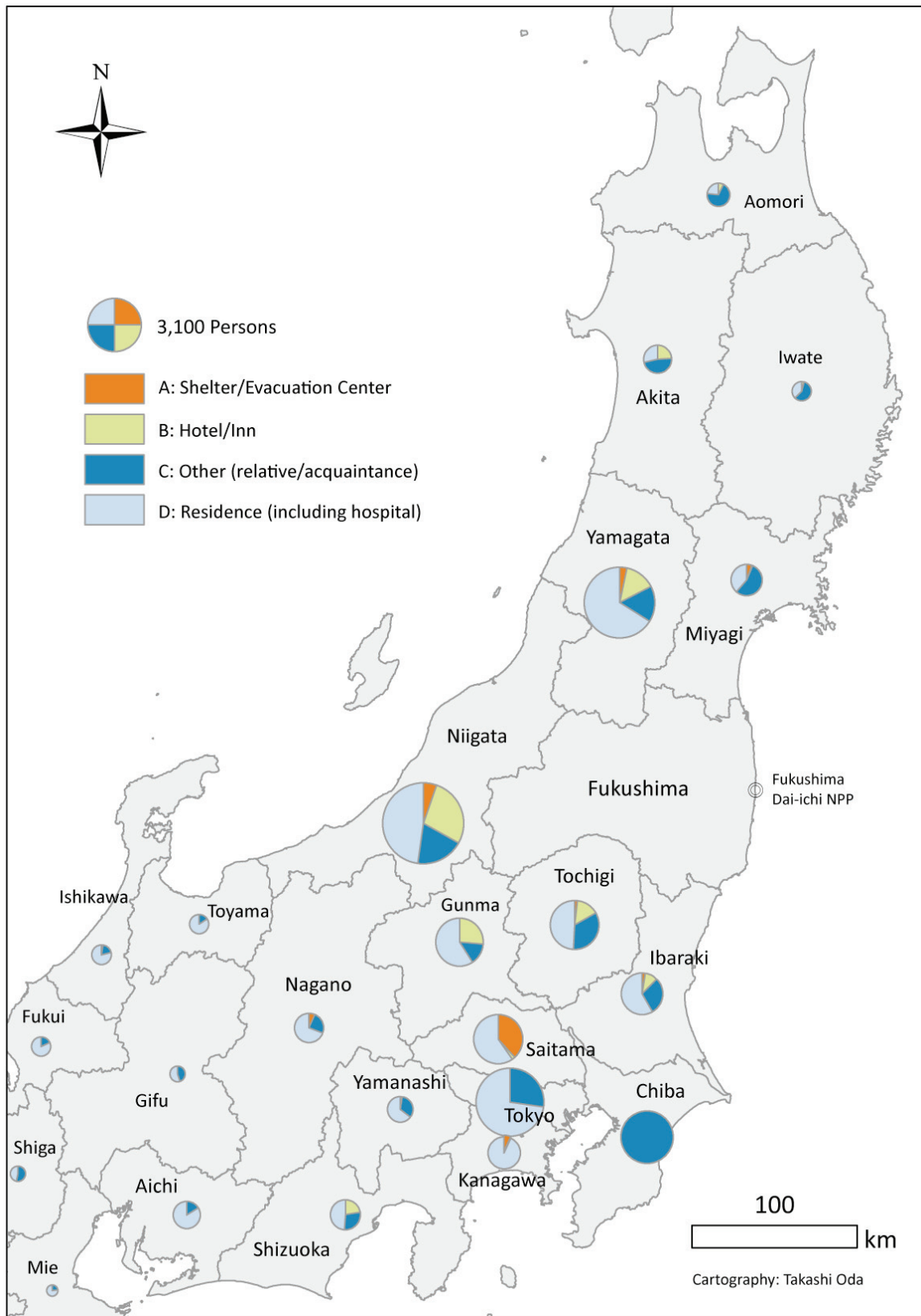


Fig. 2 Distribution of evacuees from Fukushima Pref. and types of evacuations, June 2011
Source: Fukushima Prefectural Government and Cabinet Office (2011) for relocations; created by Takashi Oda

Concluding remarks: call for continuous international attention

As discussed in this report, more than 63,000 Fukushima people have been displaced as results of the 3.11 earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power plant disasters. Many of them are now outside their native prefecture while some of their registered municipal offices for those who were from the NPP security zone areas have also been relocated. Not knowing what is going to happen to their lives, homes, communities and neighborhoods and for how long they have to wait, the evacuees have to endure forcible relocations and displacement as none of their community has ever experienced. As the temporary housing units are constructed in Iwaki City (photo 2), and other parts of Fukushima Prefecture away from the security zones, they may once again relocate themselves. For those who have school children, at the beginning of the second term in August, some families are expected to migrate again to have wider job opportunities for the parents and/or better school environments for the children. More local-scale analyses of the forced displacement and diaspora are necessary to clarify the state of mind for those who are displaced from the rooted communities.

Meanwhile, as international media shift their attentions away from the lives of people affected by the disasters, continuous attention should be paid by the international community to the state of relocations and displacements in and from Fukushima and other parts of the areas affected by the 3.11 disasters. A full understanding of their status-quo geographically is essential for the assessment of needs and supplies, and vital for considering the stress, predicaments, and difficulties concerning the forcible relocations of the evacuees and impacts on the hosting communities and municipalities.



Photo 2 Temporary housing units built in Chuodai, Iwaki City, Fukushima Pref.

(By Takashi Oda on July 24, 2011)

(Article submitted on August 11, 2011)

Appendix: Table Evacuees from Fukushima who are outside Fukushima Pref.

District	Prefecture	A: Evac. Shelter	B: Hotel Inn	C: Relatives	D: Residence	Total
Hokkaido	Hokkaido			529	806	1,335
Tohoku	Aomori		42	403	134	579
	Iwate		17	234	150	401
	Miyagi	57	11	600	423	1,091
	Akita	7	203	411	244	865
	Yamagata	183	774	911	3,650	5,518
	Fukushima	-	-	-	-	-
Kanto	Ibaraki	47	191	552	1,115	1,905
	Tochigi	50	393	887	1,294	2,624
	Gunma	20	653	362	1,475	2,510
	Saitama	1,017	58		1,591	2,666
	Chiba			3,024		3,024
	Tokyo	15	34	1,375	3,678	5,102
	Kanagawa	78			1,068	1,146
Chubu	Niigata	389	1,993	1,378	3,459	7,219
	Toyama			64	338	402
	Ishikawa		11	77	336	424
	Fukui		1	76	337	414
	Yamanashi		20	234	469	723
	Nagano	62	5	222	640	929
	Gifu			118	143	261
	Shizuoka		223	292	492	1,007
Kinki	Aichi			133	681	814
	Mie			33	112	145
	Shiga			135	119	254
	Kyoto				477	477
	Osaka				564	564
	Hyogo		4	197	297	498
	Nara			29	49	78
Chugoku	Wakayama			23	27	50
	Tottori			33	37	70
	Shimane			23	120	143
	Okayama			58	74	132
	Hiroshima			69	166	235
Shikoku	Yamaguchi			42	52	94
	Tokushima			10	48	58
	Kagawa			17	32	49
	Ehime			66	83	149
Kyushu	Kochi			28	28	56
	Fukuoka			88	211	299
	Saga			7	53	60
	Nagasaki			37	74	111
	Kumamoto			44	28	72
	Oita			42	139	181
	Miyazaki			40	41	81
Okinawa	Kagoshima			59	69	128
	Okinawa	2	40	46	211	299
Total		1,927	4,673	13,008	25,634	45,242

Source: Fukushima Prefectural Government and Cabinet Office (2011)

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