Volume 10 | Issue 54 | Number 68 | Article ID 4674 | Dec 31, 2012

# Alternatives to the IAEA: Greenpeace and Japanese Municipalities Measure Radiation□□国際原子力機関に替わる手段―グリーンピースと地方自治体、放射線を計量

## Asia-Pacific Journal Feature

**Between 2012 and 2014 we posted a number of articles on contemporary affairs without giving them volume and issue numbers or dates. Often the date can be determined from internal evidence in the article, but sometimes not. We have decided retrospectively to list all of them as Volume 10, Issue 54 with a date of 2012 with the understanding that all were published between 2012 and 2014.**

Asia-Pacific Journal Feature

On June 8, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which promotes itself as "the world's center of cooperation in the nuclear field", has come under fire for its handling of Japan's Fukushima Daiichi crisis. NGOs accuse them of whitewashing, while officials from G8 countries have expressed concerns that the IAEA has been slow in providing clear information about the Fukushima radiation release and the situation at the Daiichi plant. The organization is also accused of not being sufficiently critical of the Japanese government.

The WSJ reports that diplomats have expressed concerns about potential conflicts of interest and "questioned the IAEA's ability to serve as a global nuclear safety watchdog and its ability to handle a nuclear disaster, particularly when most of its resources are dedicated to promoting peaceful use of nuclear energy, a mandate from its founding in 1957." Many feel that since the IAEA exists to promote nuclear power, representatives have incentives to play down the seriousness of the situation in Fukushima and the potential for widespread public health effects. *The Guardian* has reported fierce criticism from former Soviet nuclear experts who felt the IAEA to be ineffective in the aftermath of Chernobyl. Iouli Andreev, a scientist who participated in the Chernobyl clean-up, describes the organization as negligent and is quoted as saying: "After Chernobyl, all the force of the nuclear industry was directed to hide this event, for not creating damage to their reputation. The Chernobyl experience was not studied properly because who has money for studying? Only industry. But industry doesn't like it."

Ironically, this close relationship between industry and the major international regulatory body is mirrored domestically in Japan where the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency is responsible both for overseeing and for *promoting* nuclear power.

Meanwhile, Japan's *Mainichi Shimbun* calls for more close monitoring of radiation releases and especially 'hot spots' outside of Fukushima prefecture, suggesting that the Japanese government / IAEA partnership has not been doing enough to provide accurate, timely

information to the public. Municipal governments in Chiba prefecture are taking matters into their own hands, coordinating with experts to measure radiation. These types of efforts are becoming more widespread: "A private organization that monitored radiation levels in Tokyo detected higher amounts of radiation than Tokyo Metropolitan Government official data. Residents of the 23 wards in central Tokyo and cities in the Musashino district in western Tokyo have voiced concerns about their exposure to radiation, prompting many of these municipalities to launch or plan measurements of radiation levels. Similar moves are spreading in neighboring Kanagawa and Saitama prefectures." The *Manichi* calls for more central government support of these municipal efforts.

International groups such as Greenpeace are also stepping up efforts to provide independent radiation measurements. On June 9, the group released findings along with a call to evacuate children and pregnant women from an area 60km away from the stricken Fukushima Daiichi plant, demanding that the Japanese government: "provide full financial and logistical support for the prompt evacuation of pregnant women and children living in high-radiation areas and conduct a full clean-up of contaminated areas."

The group also continues to condemn the Japanese government's decision to raise the acceptable radiation exposure threshold to 20mSv per year for Fukushima school children, a level that Greenpeace and other critics argue is meant to be a short-term emergency threshold for adults. Greenpeace International executive director Kumi Naidoo told reporters "Enough lives have been lost already due to the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, and it is not justifiable for the government to neglect the health risks of high radiation in Fukushima."

The data that Greenpeace has gathered does not differ significantly from the Japanese government's numbers. The opinions of scientists on the public health effects of radiation vary widely and Greenpeace urges utmost caution amid uncertainty.

Greenpeace has posted a video of their efforts to measure radiation levels at parks and playgrounds in Fukushima City as well as a copy of their demands to the Japanese government.

For more information on the differing scientific opinions on the public health effects of radiation, see:

Matthew Penney and Mark Selden, "What Price the Fukushima Meltdown? Comparing Chernobyl and Fukushima"

For additional details on the 20mSv controversy and the situation in Fukushima, see:

Satoko Norimatsu, "Worldwide Responses to the 20 Millisievert Controversy"

Peter Karamoskos, "Fukushima Burning: Anatomy of a Nuclear Disaster"