

“Kyushyu Disaster Volunteer Report” July 8 – 12, 2023.

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Water flood, that is repeatedly occurring every year. Nine people lost their lives at northern Kyushu water flood on July 10th, 2023.

There was nothing but muddy water. plastic greenhouses at Ishizaki Kitanomachi Kurume City are sunken by water¹. There are several cars run through the road by making a big water splash, that is reckless act. Many of them are stuck in water. They are trying hard to get out of it, so no car tends to stop. I cannot tell what I see whether rice fields, sea nor rivers. Chikugo River is over flooded.



Kitano-cho, Kurume City, Fukuoka Prefecture July 10, 2023 3:00 pm

(1) Flood disasters hit Kyushu’s largest city

Firefighters say that they have never experienced such flood disasters in recent years. Since around 3:30 am, floodings occurred even though it was not raining heavily. On the news, residents worried that the water would not be reduced due to the release of water from the Terauchi dam in Asakura City.

Kenjiro Oshima, head of the Kumamoto Branch, who has been working with us since he served at Aijien immediately after the Kumamoto-Oita Earthquake (April 14, 2016), and five of us visited riverbank where Umi River, which is close to Katamine shinbashi Kasuya-gun Fukuoka Prefecture,

¹ Estimated 40,000m2 of houses flooded in Kitano district, Nishinippon Shimbun (July 17, 2023).

was over flooded. At 8:00 am on July 10th, a loud warning started through smartphones that people must evacuate from entire Shime-machi district. Evacuation orders were issued to a total of 189,858 people, 91,817 households in seven districts of Fukuoka City².

An eviction warning kept going in Shime-machi. On that day, I recorded the release of water from Terauchi dam (Asakura City Fukuoka Prefecture), which was the cause of the muddy water that swallowed residences in Kurume City. The thundering sound of dam was releasing the same amount of inflowing of rain.



Rising waters of the Umi River in Shime Town, Kasuya District, Fukuoka Prefecture. July 10th at 8am.

It seems that news coverage of the releasing from Hata Dam and Terauchi Dam was almost zero. Emergency evacuation warnings have been issued for floods, landslides, and flood damages. A mount of muddy water was overflowed.

Please watch the video. <https://youtu.be/bAfKHL1FDjU>

Raining started around 3 am. The local people were also surprised by the muddy streams that they had never experienced before.

Yabakei Dam that water level rose, conducted a controlling of water flood. As a result, Megumi Okuchi (58 years old), a company worker who lived in Tabakei-cho Nakatsu City, was found offshore where is the downstream of Yamakuni River.

² "Nishinippon Shimbun" (July 10, 2023).

Isn't it too soon to conclude that the floods in early July every year are related to El Niño weather, global warming, linear rain belts, etc.? As our modern human society pursues economic globalization, "water" help to operate large factories and "electricity" bring us a convenient life. We must wake up to see the fact that dams are the root of all the evils of housing public development by nuclear families that would damage the ecology of mountains. After noon on July 10, Zendoji-cho Kurume City was isolated. Roads were flooded and cars were stacked. Many of the people were puzzled and said that the flood was which "they never have experienced".



Zendoji-cho, Kurume City July 10, 2023 11:00 a.m.

Roads were blocked and traffic stopped. Kenjiro Oshima, head of the Kumamoto Branch, who has been working with us since he served at Aijien immediately after the Kumamoto-Oita Earthquake (April 14, 2016), and five of us loaded up "shien supplies (支縁: *shi-en* [Sustainable Relationship])" at Zendoji and visited affected houses.



(2) Japan, cannot break away from the myth of dam safety

Navigation system on vehicle is useless to detour around places where the road to the site is blocked. We even could not talk each other because of the deafening loud sound of the discharge. What is wrong that newspapers and local papers cover by only one or two lines for such a large-scale dam discharge. I cannot help but thinking that it must be a gag order by the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism (MLIT).

Discharging of Terauchi dam. Taken at 4 pm on July 10.

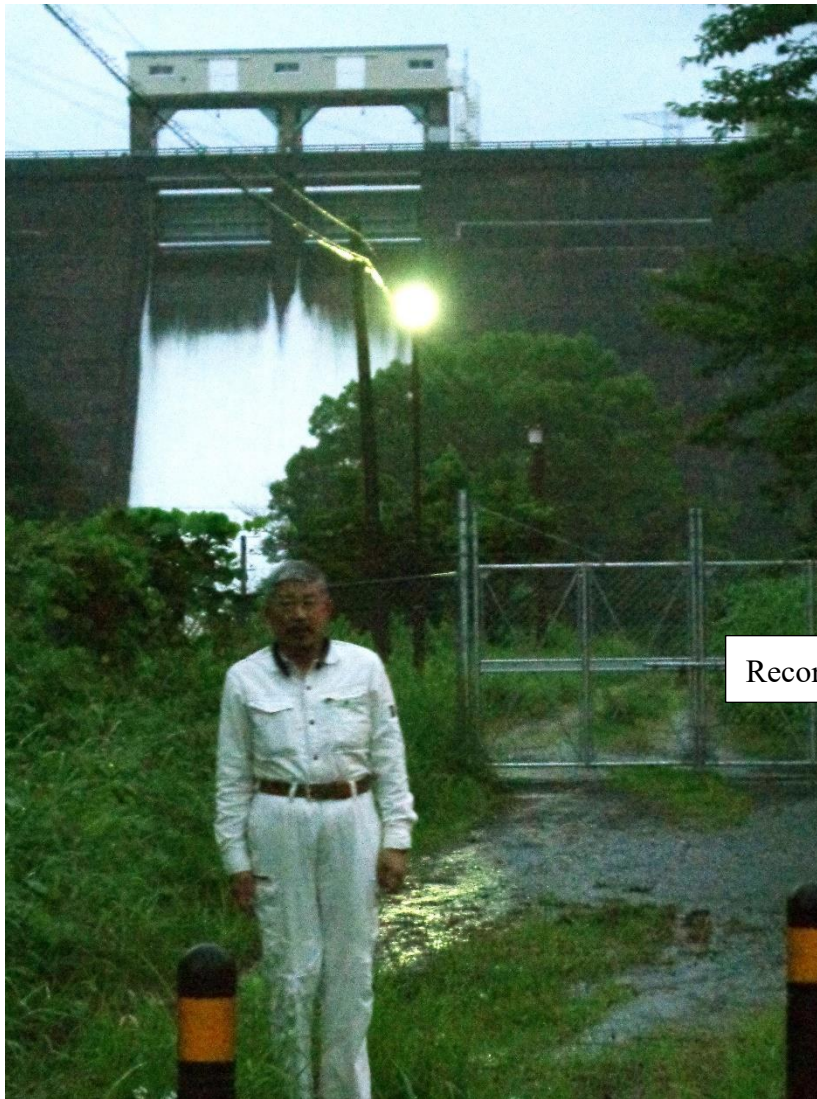
<https://youtu.be/gsXPEyqp2Ts>



Is there a national newspaper that covered the dam discharges? I could not get newspaper easily at convenience stores, so I did not check all of them.

Hata Dam (Yahata nishiku), which is owned by Kitakyushu City, also started its discharge from 10:30 am on the July 7. They warned children not to get close to the river through their school located downstream of dam. (*The Nishinippon Shimbun*. July 10, 2023) Only “*Kumamotonichinichi Shimbun* (July 11, 2023)” covered about “emergency discharge” of Terauchi dam in just three lines, so it was not easily to be catch attention.

I can only be said that the Japanese media is controlled by a bureaucratic state.



Record of Hata dam discharge. July 9,

(3) Like saying that disaster prevention means to rely on self-help

On July 4, 2020, Hitoyoshi City was covered by mud due to the discharge of Ichifusa Dam at Kuma River (Kumamoto heavy rain). Including related deaths, 81 people died or went missing. A ramen shop in Konyamachi run by Mr. Toyohiko Fujimoto (75 years old) and Mrs. Sakae, who have been in business for 44 years, was also covered in mud up to the 2nd floor. We were stunned when we were guided to the 2nd floor 3 years ago. It has just re-opened on July 4, 2023. Five of us appreciated the delicacy of their delicious noddle.



Ramen RYU (Dragon), Hitoyoshi City, Toyohiko Fujimoto & Sakae couple July 11, 2023



From left: Kenjiro Oshima, Kayoko Imamura, Kenji Noda, Miwa Sasaki

Ms. Kayoko Imamura lives in Ōmachi-chō Saga Prefecture. She lives alone and was save twice from the floodings of Rokkaku River just on time. All her neighborhood dogs died. Only her dog chama that stays in her arms survived. On July 10, she was preparing to evacuate again.

<Conclusion>

The Japanese government did not apply “*gekijin* (激甚) disaster [the Designated Disaster of Extreme Severity /a tremendous catastrophe]” to this time Kitakyushu flooding. Every year, whenever a large-scale disaster occurred, the word “*gekijin* (激甚)” fluttered. By the way, is there an appropriate English expression when using the word “*gekijin*” overseas? We have also visited areas affected by earthquakes, cyclones, floods, and other disasters overseas. 10 years ago, from July 21, 2013, we have been visiting earthquake affected areas in Sichuan. More than 1,000 people were dead and injured. Even at that time, I did not hear the expression of “*gekijin*”. I cannot forget that I could not explain about the word to the Chinese university professor who accompanied me. Only what I can think that the people in power in Japan are leading people to believe to give up since it is an act of god, which is beyond human’s control. One of the methods used to imprint *ethea* of resignation is using expression of “*gekijin* disaster”, “linear rainbands”, and “~ front”. Have we learned the lesson that the epitome of the safety myth of nuclear power plant, was a blatant lie? Even now, radioactively contaminated water is being released to the coast of Fukushima Prefecture again. “International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)”, the leaders of the EU and South Korea have also come to endorse it. The world buys food materials that even Fukushima locals say loudly it’s unsafe.

After returning from Kyushu to Kobe, I see headlines that Hokuriku and Tohoku regions are facing a seasonal rain front and its downtowns have been facing to flood, landslides, and river flooding. You just have to quickly check out what kind dam is placed at upstream of flooded river. You will find out about the dam discharge. On July 7, 2018, we visited Daini Fukuda Elementary School for food distribution on the same time a flood occurred in Yata Mabi-chō Kurashiki City Okayama Prefecture. Due to flooding that reached six meters high, 59 people dead and 8 are missing. It was a flooding what occurred inland more than 10 kilometers from the coast. It looked very strange if it was a break of bank embankments. I visited together with brother Shinsuke Matsumoto the upstream Nariwa River Dam, and confirmed the fact of releasing from the dam office manager. Houses along Takahashi River stream were also washed away because of water discharge from a dam that provides water for factories in Setouchi Industrial Area, and there were casualties. In September of the same year, I went straight from Lebanon to Hokkaido. Magnitude 6.7 was recorded and 42 people dead, 762 people injured. “Tomatou” is the Japan’s largest industrial base located in the eastern part of Tomakomai Hokkaido. There is Azuma Dam, which was constructed for industrial water supply. Dams are absolutely necessary for Japan’s economic growth and development. What I witnessed at the site was not an earthquake, but a large amount of driftwood from discharge of Azuma Dam, which had attacked the Azumagawa district [Atsuma-cho, Abira-cho, Mukawa-cho] in Hokkaido.

It goes without saying that dams should not be built like in other countries. The river construction method must be reviewed. In order to protect residential areas, I would like politicians, officials, economic leaders, scholars, and media to wake up to the perspective of disaster prevention that let rivers to flow slowly. If the river bank and bottom are not hardened by concrete construction method, but utilize stone masonry method from ancient times knowledge will have the effect of slowing down the flow of river water. I would suggest to let the water flow as it is. Then, the aquatic life will be revived, and the hometown will be restored. It is the “Resurrection of Rice Field, Mountain, and Bay”. Young people will return form the city, and it will also lead to stop the declining birthrate. I hope that it will connect to leaving beautiful landscapes of hometowns for our children and descendants.

To close my report, I would like to thank Hirotaka Murakami, president of our organization, who has been supporting our activities by his excellent driving techniques to go through safely areas of flood disaster, unstable ground and mountain landslides for over 10 years.