

1. Introduction

The Great East Japan Earthquake of March 11, 2011 caused tremendous human and material damage. Even now, facing the facts regarding the large numbers of missing saddens my heart. Among the survivors, the stagnant economy resulting from the earthquake and tsunami damages has taken the means of livelihood away from many. The ongoing proliferation of radiation problems resulting from the Fukushima nuclear accident continues to aggravate the loss of livelihood for ever more victims of the disaster.

Under these conditions, the public consensus is that reconstruction and revitalization of the disaster stricken areas is not possible without addressing the two most pressing problems, stopping the spread of radiation contamination as quickly as possible and rapidly securing the funds necessary for rebuilding the lives of the victims. The topic of this paper examines the latter necessity by considering an emergency income guarantee.

In the debate over various reconstruction plans and their funding a number of diverse proposals quickly came to light. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, proposals touching upon an income guarantee for victims are not to be seen in the debate over reconstruction policy.

Of course, if the existing systems of the welfare state provide enough support for rebuilding lives in situations where victims have difficulty maintaining a minimum standard of living, proposals for a guaranteed income are not necessary.

Therefore, this paper will start with an overview of the debate regarding disaster reconstruction plans and then look to place an income guarantee within the debate (section two) . The third section will begin by

¹ The early version of this paper was published in Japanese at August 2011 in Ohara Journal for Social Issue. That version was translated to English by Brian Small, and then revised for up dating by myself.

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examining the contributions of the existing social welfare structure to rebuilding the lives of the poor and needy. In the fourth section will examine the ability of the existing welfare system to provide relief for victims in light of the characteristics just covered in the previous section. Unfortunately, it is readily apparent that the existing system is not sufficient for victims to rebuild their lives. In light of these conditions, the fifth section will examine a proposal for Basic Income.

2. Income guarantees for victims in earthquake reconstruction plans.

As is widely known, the recent Earthquake has violently disrupted the lives of a tremendous number of people. In the current situation where the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident took away the lives of many earners many more face unemployment. Among business owners and the self employed, many have been forced to close down. As time goes by business failures and unemployment adversely effect more people outside the zones suffering direct damage from the disasters.

There are two laws purporting to provide relief for the victims of natural disasters, the Act Concerning Support for Reconstructing Livelihoods of Disaster Victims (*Hisaisha Seikatsu Saiken Shien Ho*) and the Disaster Relief Act (*Saigai Kyujo Ho*). The former law arose from experience with the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and was established in 1998 (was revised in 2007). Under this law up to 3,000,000 yen in aid is paid to households whose homes have been destroyed. Payment for damages other than that to homes is not specified. The Latter Law, Disaster Relief Act was enacted in 1947. Article 23 of this law clearly stipulates the provision of basic goods and, through payments or loans, the “necessary funds for occupation.” However while there are examples of loans for victims, payments to victims have not once been provided since the passage of the law. The law remains unenforced to this day in the response to the current disaster.(Wakabayashi[2011])

Regarding the man-made disaster of the Fukushima nuclear accident,

it is possible to make claims under the Atomic Energy Damage Compensation Act. As of mid-April, 2011 residents that have been forced to leave their homes or remain indoors within a 30 kilometer radius of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plants Tokyo Electric has, in accordance with the government requests, decided to make temporary advances of 750,000 yen to single-person households and 1,000,000 yen to households of two or more persons. On August of 2011, the Nuclear Damage Liability Facilitation Fund Law (*Genshiryoku Songai Baisho Shien Kiko Ho*) was established, in order to support TEPCO to compensate victims.

There was also movement to pass a special law for making advance payments to victims whose livelihoods are effected by damages to the agricultural and fishing industries. The Law for Emergency Measures Regarding Damage from the 2011 Nuclear Accident (*Heisei 23 nendo Genshiryoku Jiko niyoru Hgai nikakawaru Kinkyusochi nikansuru Houritsu*) was passed in August, 2011.

Outside the existing legal framework, citizens have been making donations for relief efforts. Two of the largest relief organizations, the Japanese Red Cross Society and the Central Community Chest of Japan, have received donations in excess of 210 million yen as of May 12, 2011. However they failed to deliver these money to victims swiftly. Two months after the disaster none of this money had reached the victims. Even after three months only 15% of eligible victims had received aid.

It is in these conditions that Satoru Sato who was born and grew up at Minamisoma (an area gravely effected by both the natural disasters and nuclear accident) makes the appeal that the biggest problem for refugees from the disaster is lack of an income. In addition he points out that the governments voluntary evacuation order is, in effect, saying “you should evacuate, but you will bear all the financial burdens and other risks.” He criticizes this response as a form of “vague and life-negating flood of bootstraps thinking” which, in the context of disaster relief, “merely prolongs the chaos.”

The government launched the Reconstruction Design Council (*Higashi Nihon Daishinsai Fukko Koso Kaigi*) and held the first meeting April 14, 2011. At the time, other than the figure of 140,000 for the number of people in

evacuation shelters the government had not even approximate figures for the number of victims. It was in this climate of uncertainty that the discussion began. While, for the victims it may have been the most pressing problem, at this point the council did not seem to include income guarantees among the items for discussion. (Kan[2011], Iokibe[2011])

On the other hand, The Hokkaido and Northeast Japan Association of Prefectural Governors submitted to the council materials requesting a “special law for the creation of a special provisional fund for assistance in rebuilding the life and livelihood of victims” and “flexible application of the Disaster Relief Act.” The governors' latter request for flexible application of the Disaster Relief Act (mentioned earlier in this paper in accordance with Wakabayashi[2011]) is an attempt to change to more than 50 year history of failing to enforce the dead letter provision to provide benefits to victims (Hokkaido and Northeast Japan Association of Prefectural Governors[2011],p.4).

In and unprecedented catastrophe such as this one, rather than setting aside a Fund based on the Act Concerning Support for Reconstructing Livelihoods of Disaster Victims, a special law should be enacted whereby, fully funded by the national treasury, a fund is established in the areas effected.

The establishment of this new fund, in addition to attending to damaged homes as the Act Concerning Support for Reconstructing the Livelihood of Disaster Victims, must also include livelihood support for victims that move to areas outside the disaster zone. While eligibility for support should remain those households resident in the area at the time of the disaster, the system must change to allow broader support for the reconstruction of victims' lives in aspects other than housing as well. In order to secure the necessary finances, insufficient national finances should be augmented by government issue bonds purchased by the Bank of Japan (Hokkaido and Northeast Japan Governors Association[2011]).

On this point, making an almost identical request the National Association of Prefectural Governors on March 23 had previously released an “emergency appeal concerning the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake” for “the creation of a special fund for reconstructing the livelihood of disaster victims (National Governors' Association[2011], p.4).” The governors' request presented a sample text for the special law:

Those eligible to receive benefits for victim livelihood reconstruction from the fund are the heads of households resident in disaster stricken municipalities on the date, _____. And according to government decree those persons planning reconstruction (ibid. p.8, underline for emphasis added by author).

On March 30th the Association of Designated City Mayors (from the 19 largest cities of Japan, representing one fifth of the population) made a similar appeal requesting that “the necessary outlays, for the return of children to school and other aspects involved in the restoration of livelihood to households, support for a decent standard of living for victims and the implementation of policies to provide victims with the sufficient benefits and loans to rebuild their lives, should be borne wholly by the national treasury” in “The Designated City Mayor's Emergency Appeal Regarding the Great East Japan Earthquake.”

These Governors’ and Mayors' proposals aim to expand the framework of current policies for providing aid to encompass cash payments for victims regardless of damage to homes. In the Reconstruction Design Council however, judging both from the summary of the proceedings available on the government Cabinet Secretariat website and news reports³, and from their final official

³ One rare exception is Reconstruction Council member, Atsushi Seike's reference to "immediate relief for victims." He states "the most important thing is to make the best possible use of the existing public safety net" and more specifically "provide unemployment benefits to those who have lost employment opportunities."(Seike[2011 p.1]). However as we shall see in the following sections unemployment benefits have been failing to function sufficiently as a safety net to ensure the livelihoods of the unemployed since before the natural disaster. In his proposal, it is not possible to see how such an insufficient safety

report “Towards Reconstruction: Hope beyond the Disaster”, there is virtually nothing to indicate that any discussion of these proposals has taken place.

Mass Media Discourse, though featuring debates over financing (government bonds purchased by the Bank of Japan) it does not seem as if there is much discussion of direct benefit payments as a form of relief so that victims can rebuild their lives. The debate over financing is all about how the costs will be covered. Will the funds come from tax increases or not? If so will the increases be seen in consumption taxes or income taxes? If, rather than immediate tax increases, government bonds are issued will they be purchased by the Bank of Japan or not? This is the extent of the debate. These sorts of debates are repeated on a weekly basis in economic magazines giving the impression that the main issue for reconstruction plans is financing⁴. I will disregard the risk of being charged with simplifying the coverage but discussions in the media seem limited to the issue of financing, should funds come from tax increases or government bonds. Regardless of funding sources, if the reconstruction plans do not meet the core need of income guarantees crucial for the process of rebuilding livelihoods, the efforts will not be of much help to many of the disaster victims.

3. The Dysfunctional Welfare State in Japan

net can be used to provide immediate relief for victims. While his comments to the effect that "social welfare programs have a large role to play in the reconstruction and livelihood restoration in disaster stricken areas"(Seike[2011 p.2] is an important rarity in the overall tendencies seen in the Reconstruction Council discussions but it does not bring the subject of government bonds into the discussion of funding disaster relief. For this reason, as far as a reply to the Mayors' Associations' proposals for funding new relief policies with government bonds issued the Bank of Japan, we are left with absolutely no response.

⁴ Examples are Ihuri[2011], Morinobu[2011], Ito[2011], Jinno[2011]. Although there has been worthwhile special coverage of the earthquake such as the combined May3rd and May10th issue (no.4170) of the Japanese language "Weekly Economist" with the feature "The Earthquake and Reconstruction" and the May 28th issue (no. 6327) of another Japanese publication "Weekly Economy of the Orient " with another special feature edition, "East Japan Reconstruction." Unfortunately neither magazine made reference to any proposal for income security including the demands put forth by the two governor's associations for a new framework of support for disaster victims.

Disaster relief laws and the reconstruction debates mentioned above failing to discuss income security for victims is not necessarily an immediate problem if the welfare state is functioning. Many developed countries have, over the past half century have established a framework to guarantee the incomes of those who fall into difficulty maintaining a minimum standard of living. If, in principle, the existing systems of income security can respond to the needs of recent disaster victims there is no need to discuss emergency measures of income guarantees.

Unfortunately, Japan's system of income security has been in a state of dysfunction since long before the earthquake. Let's take a look at several points in support of this view.

To start with, how is security provided for those who, becoming unemployed, are unable to maintain their livelihoods? In Japan benefit payments from unemployment insurance is supposed to function to provide security for the unemployed. However, in 2009, the ILO reported that among the unemployed a mere 23% receive unemployment benefits. This figure is higher than China's 16% but significantly lower than Germany's 94%, France's 80% and even the United States' figure of 41% (ILO [2009]). Three reasons for this low figures are the short time period for benefits, the fact that only 60% of workers have unemployment insurance and those that are not covered are the most insecure.

While Japan's unemployment benefits may not function as those in other developed countries, the basic principle of social security is the same as other welfare states. The framework for social assistance, through cash payments, is meant to maintain a standard of living for those who have fallen below a certain level of poverty. To see if this framework makes it possible to maintain a humane standard of living for the poverty stricken it is necessary to question two aspects of the system. First, what percentage of the people that live on an income that does not allow them to live above the standard for receiving social assistance actually make use of the system? Second, where does the system set the standard for receiving social assistance?

The first question is answered by looking at the take up rate for which researchers in each country have made estimates. For a long time the Japanese government did not make estimates of the take up rate but made an estimate available in 2010. According to this estimate, the take up rate was 15.3% in 2007 (Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare, Social Welfare and War Victims' Relief Bureau [2010]). The government's estimate is consistent with researchers' previous estimates. For example, economist Toshiaki Tachibanaki et al showed a downward trend in take up rates estimating 19.7% with the data from 1995 and 16.3% for 2001 (Tachibanaki, Toshiaki and Kunio Urakawa [2006]) .

A take up rate below 20% means that among all the households that have fallen below the standard, for every ten households not even two of them are receiving social assistance. Receiving social assistance depends on successfully completing official application forms and even given the true intentions of the system not achieving a take up rate of 100% does not have to be an immediate problem. However, considering the system as the “last and final safety net” for ensuring “minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living (the article 25 of the constitution of Japan)” the fact that the take up rate is less than 20% forces us to say that the social assistance system is not functioning as a safety net.

In international comparisons Japan stands out for its extremely low take up rate. For example, the system that is the equivalent of Japan's public assistance in the UK has a take up rate of 78-90%.⁵ Most industrialized countries have rates of over 50% (Hernanz, Malherbet and Pellizzari[2004]).

Moving on to the second question, just where does the social assistance system set the standard for eligibility? For international comparisons one standard for estimating poverty levels is the OECD's relative poverty rate. A country's poverty is calculated by determining the percentage of the population living on less than 50% of the median income (OECD[2008]). Kohei

⁵ The data for 2008-2009 (Department for Work and Pensions [2010]) The same figures hold for the data from the mid 1990's on (Hernanz, Malherbet and Pellizzari [2004]) .

Komamura et al compared the OECD rate with Japan's social assistance standard and found that they overlap (Yamada, Shikata, Tanaka, Komamura [2008]).⁶ Therefore Japan's standard for social assistance may be a valid measure of the poverty level. Some even argue that Japan's social assistance standard is on the high end among the advanced countries (Uzuhashi[1999]) .

The standards above consider the flow of income. However, there is the problem that during the actual review of applications, household assets are considered. This in itself is a natural outcome in view of the system's intent. However it's been pointed out that this standard is extreme in Japan. The limit for bank deposits and savings is set at a month and a half's worth of social assistance.⁷ Even within the committees of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare there have been opinions to the effect that the standard is overly austere.⁸ Regarding goods, ownership of anything that isn't found in over 70% of households in the region is, just as, in principle ownership of a car is, unacceptable. The result is that until one unable to receive social assistance until having lost everything. It has been pointed out that the effect of these conditions is that social assistance does not help recipients rebuild lost livelihoods (attain "independence" in Ministry terms) and regain conditions in which they would no longer require assistance. On the other hand, for the most part citizens with low incomes "carry on consuming patterns on par with the average citizen (Kikuchi[2010],p.105) ," taking on loans rather than coming to

⁶ The paper shows figures for both the overlap and differences between the two standards and presents interesting insights, however the authors caution "The numbers in this paper are still in a tentative stage we request that that you refrain from quoting the figures (Yamada, Shikata, Tanaka, Komura[2008], p.55) ."

⁷ The take up rates estimated with Ministry data mentioned above rise from 15.3% to 32.1% if savings are considered among household assets.

⁸ In 2004 a committee of experts was convened to discuss the Public Assistance Program of the Welfare Bureau in the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare. The opinion that the standard for household savings should be raised from 0.5 months to 3 months is recorded along with opinions in opposition.

apply for assistance. Research on international comparisons reveals that Japan's social assistance standard regarding household assets is among the most austere (Uzuhashi[1999]).

In addition, social assistance entails such restraint upon freedoms that some observers are of the opinion that citizenship has been taken away from recipients (Endo[2002]). It has been observed that these conditions stigmatize social assistance with the creation of boundaries between recipients and low income non-recipients though they may share similar hardships living at or below the poverty level.

In 2004 the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare changed the method for determining the standard for social assistance eligibility. Rather than using typical household consumption as a standard comparisons were to be made using low income household levels of consumption (Committee of Experts on the Public Assistance System of the Welfare Bureau in the Social Security Council of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare[2004]) . The proposals to abolish supplementary payments and lower eligibility standards arise from this new method, the thinking that continues to back these austere proposals continues to this day. In this proposal the comparison is made between consumptions levels of the 10% with the lowest income and the consumption level of recipients of social assistance. However this 10% basically overlaps with the population living below the poverty level set by social assistance standards (Tachibanaki and Urakawa [2006], p.123). Comparing the people living below poverty level and not receiving social assistance with people that are receiving assistance will, obviously enough, show higher consumption levels among recipients. This tactic is similar to comparing the salaries of minimum wage workers with those working for less than the minimum and then using this comparison to argue for a reduction in the minimum wage, which everyone is easy to see its nonsense. The fact that the MHLW considers this comparison as the basis for setting the standard suggests that not only is the system not functioning to protect people from poverty, but that the very idea of a system that functions against poverty has died.

We can see that Japan's system for providing social security, examined

for the ability to assist the poverty stricken rebuild their lives, has been dysfunctional for some time before the current disaster. Japan's tax and social security system decrease the relative poverty rate among the working population a mere 2.2%, an extremely low figure compared to the OECD average of 11.5%. In France the rate is 19.4%, in England it is 12.5% and even America's rate of 5.2% shows up Japan's social transfer system as ineffectual in this regard (OECD 2007).

4. The Current System and Victim Livelihood Restoration

How is this dysfunction influencing attempts to rebuild the lives of the disaster victims? As far as unemployment insurance, for workers that were enrolled in social insurance, the benefit payment is undoubtedly a crucial lifeline. However, workers that were not enrolled in the system are not able to receive employment insurance benefits. In addition it would seem that the disaster stricken area had a relatively high number of earners that were not employees covered by employment insurance. Employment insurance does not cover small retail store owners, the people in the farming and fisheries industries nor the workers in small (single-person or family) construction firms, all of which are highly represented in the Japanese countryside such as that found in North East Japan.

Of course, it would be great if those not covered by employment insurance could make use of social assistance as a means of livelihood restoration. However the social assistance take up rate in the disaster stricken areas of the Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate prefectures are not very different from the extremely low rates that we saw above in the rest of Japan. According the estimates arrived at by Kohei Komamura et al using data from 1999, Fukushima Prefecture's take up percentage is in the low 20s while both the prefectures Miyagi and Iwate have rates under 20% (Komamura[2010]) .

It has also been pointed out that, while the percentage of households actually living below the standard for public assistance eligibility in small cities and rural district of less than 50,000 people is higher, the actual number of

recipients is higher in the larger cities (Tachibanaki and Urakawa [2006], p.135). The researchers' hypothesis is that the feelings of stigma attached social assistance are stronger in rural than in urban areas. The areas most effected by the tsunami and the area within 30 kilometers of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plants include, with the exceptions of a few big cities like Sendai and Ishinomaki, there a many municipalities of less than 100,000 people. Many of these municipalities are the result of recent mergers and dissolutions so that the are, actually, combinations of smaller localities of less than 50,000 people.

Moreover, research points to another factor preventing social assistance as a viable means to support livelihood reconstruction for victims in the smaller municipalities. As mentioned in the previous section, the eligibility requirement forbidding car ownership extremely limits access to social assistance in rural areas lacking in public transportation infrastructure (Yamada, Komamura, shikata, Tanaka[2011]).

In addition, there are several difficulties awaiting victims that might attempt to apply for social assistance after evacuating to a new area or moving in search of employment. Although the official policy would seem to be that applications should be made at the municipality of residence, in actual practice welfare offices have often advised day laborers and the homeless to return to the hometown to apply for social assistance. As far as the current disaster, in order to avoid such responses that violate the intent of the law, the MHLW released a official notice and it says: "As a result of the recent disaster, where victims have temporarily evacuated far from original places of residence, and are unable to return, in consideration of these special circumstances implementing welfare agencies of the municipality of current residence bear responsibility and are to implement assistance (MHLW, Welfare Bureau Public Assistance Section Chief[2011])."

In spite of this official notice, there remains a bottleneck preventing successful applications. The costs of social assistance are partially borne by local municipalities. There has been devolution of social assistance implementation to the city governments for urban areas and prefecture governments for the smaller municipalities (town and village). Local governments bear a fourth of

the actual assistance expenditures and all personnel expenses.

While the system must operate according to the standards of social assistance (= the national minimum) dictated by the national government, the national treasury does not shoulder the full costs. The contradictions in this set up have been criticized for some time by social assistance claimants and their supporters (an example is The All Osaka Livelihood and Health Protection Joint Association[2010]). In addition, since the 1990s (especially in Osaka), faced with rising numbers of social assistance recipients and the accompanying financial burdens municipalities have been crying out with demands for the national treasury to bear the full costs (Designated City Mayors' Association[2010]).

Many of the evacuated victims are most probably not at their most confident in their new environs. It is said that already some of the citizens in areas receiving evacuees question policies that prioritize employment opportunities for victims at a time when many are in a precarious situation. In the midst of such unsettling conditions it is not hard to imagine the hesitation many victims feel toward applying for social assistance if doing so increases the financial burdens of the municipalities that have accepted them further contributing to ill will felt towards them by their new neighbors.

Apparently the number of social assistance claimants has been increasing since the disaster. However, as we just surmised, among the victims whose incomes have fallen below the standard for social assistance, in all likelihood, not a great number are making use of the system at this time.

Even after the disaster, the government has continued to quietly “reform”(dismantle) the social assistance system. Judging from media coverage and other sources of information post-disaster motions are in the direction of accelerating the austere state of affairs described above. The April 26th 2011 morning edition of *the Nihon Keizai Shinbun* (an economic newspaper in Japan) reported that the MHLW has a “Decrease in Public Assistance Expenditures” under review.

This is the environment in which movements to demand income guarantees for victims, though not appearing much in the world of academic

criticism or the debate in the mass media, has begun. Making the greatest contributions have been the NPO organizations and others that have been active working closely with social assistance applicants and recipient. They have produces a Q&A pamphlet for victims hoping to apply for existing public assistance (National Conference on Public Assistance Problems and Solutions [2011]). In the discussion regarding a response to the two (previously mentioned) Governors' Associations call for victim compensation permitted through the mechanism of a special law, voices demanding a basic income have been raised. Taking into account this edition's special feature the following section will describe these demands in detail.

5. Basic Income

Basic Income is the concept of providing an income, desirably an amount sufficient for living, unconditionally and on an individual basis to all members of society. On the meaning of “sufficient for living” the views of Basic Income scholars differ. Should the guaranteed income be kept at a “minimum”, in the neighborhood of standards for social assistance eligibility or set at a higher “optimal” level making possible a life with dignity for those relying solely on the unconditional benefit? Regardless of the grounds for deciding the amount, whether for mere survival or for a cultured life, any arguments for payments below this level are referred to as a “partial” basic income. Taking into consideration implementation feasibility and other factors, reservations have been raised concerning the “unconditional” basis for “all members of society” and the debate has ranged over “Basic Income-like” proposals such as the “Participation Income.” As a closer examination of this debate is beyond the scope of this paper I would urge readers to look into the details in my book (Yamamori[2009]) and other sources. However, I would like to quickly draw attention to a pair of misunderstandings that have appeared repeatedly in recent years as the debates of Basic Income have become more widespread in Japan.

One misunderstanding has to do with the overall system itself. Basic

Income is not meant to replace all current forms of social welfare. Of course, it is possible to make a proposal of this sort. However the claimants' movements for and academic researchers of Basic Income envision that, among the various welfare programs, only overlapping cash benefits would be replaced with unconditional payments. In other words, in-kind benefits would not be effected (actually proposals for an increase have appeared) and cash benefits that would not make the basic income redundant would remain. There have been contradictory proposals to both increase or decrease non-redundant assistance along with the implementation of Basic Income. However these debates are not derived from the principle grounding the proposal and should not be considered essential to a discussion of the merits of Basic Income.

The other misunderstanding is over the thinking, or philosophy, behind demands for Basic Income. This misperception comes from an "individual responsibility" or libertarian interpretations that anything over and above the absolute minimum income support should be left to the market. This tack is most probably the result of Phillippe Van Parijs', a central figure in the Basic Income Earth Network, self-designated label of "real libertarian" but his arguments are not made along these lines. In his main work on the subject, Van Parijs makes the extremely radical argument of "undominated diversity," a principle from which distribution would occur until people no longer bear feelings of envy toward one another (Van Parijs[1995]) .⁹ The fact that movements demanding Basic Income also attacked paternalistic aspect of the welfare state (Yamamori [2009]) may also contribute to this sort of misunderstanding. Disabled people's movements have similar criticisms of paternalism and dependence, just as it would be misleading to categorize their demands under the libertarian philosophy of "individual responsibility," it is also misleading to place the Basic Income proposal solely in the libertarian camp.

⁹ In recent years Van Parijs has modified his argument but his approach is still very different from usual libertarian interpretations of "individual responsibility."

Since the earthquake, a variety of voices have raised demands for Basic Income. The April 9th convention of the National Federation of Construction Workers' Unions' Kushiro Local adopted a special resolution demanding Basic Income. Most of the union members are construction workers living in Kushiro (in North East Hokkaido) and, though not seen as disaster victims in media coverage, their industry had been deeply effected the earthquake's disruption of supply chains for construction materials. The union's chief secretary, Satoshi Kishimoto, explains that many construction worker members working as one-person or small family firms are left outside the framework of unemployment insurance and are now facing conditions of crisis in maintaining their livelihoods. Faced with this situation many workers are leaving the area to find work building temporary housing under the auspices of the disaster reconstruction projects. In light of past experiences with this sort of migratory labor they said in thier special resolution that:

However, we have knowledge the severity of migratory labor. At times there is even uncertainty about a place to sleep. Workers have had their pay stolen and, unable to return, become homeless. Upon returning home, there is no guarantee of employment.

Primarily, we do not want to be meet with deprivation and face the threat of starvation.

We are not sparing in our support for the disaster stricken areas. However, if we are further impoverished we will be unable to provide support for the disaster zone. At present some members are already facing situations where they are unable to get the food for tomorrow's meals. We cannot afford to wait a moment longer.

Employment compensation for all! We demand Basic Income!
(National Federation of Constructions Workers' Union, Kushiro Local[2011])

This motion is a demand that, not only disaster victims, but all people receive Basic Income.

In contrast, there are also demands for a Basic Income limited to disaster victims.¹⁰ A publicized proposal along this lines came out on April 20th under the name "Right to life Income for Disaster Victims" (Muraoka[2011]). The rough sketch of a plan in the proposal advocates a monthly sum of 70,000 yen (with the possibility of graded payments adjusted to the amount of damage suffered in different cases) for 5 years. Muraoka suggests financing the initiative through "higher tax rates including the strengthening of a progressive tax on corporations with over 50 million yen in capital funds) raising income taxes on the highest bracket from 40% to 50%, and, while exempting food goods, doubling consumption tax rates on high priced consumer goods."

Seki's publication of April 23rd also raises the demand of Basic Income for earthquake victims. "At present what North East Japan needs is the provision of a universal, unconditional Basic Income of around 80,000 yen a month. If issued in government currency it is a relief measure that can be implemented immediately. Basic Income will not only support victims with no prospects for the future, but should also quickly reinvigorate the local economy." (Seki[2011], p. 2)

Within the narrow limits of my knowledge of the complete picture there are many efforts underway that have not yet made it into writing. Asako Shirasaki and many others backed the appeal "Demand for a Disaster Reconstruction Minimum Income Guarantee and Material Compensation for Livelihood Restoration" put out in the beginning of April. Among the 7 demands number 1 is "Please immediately provide a all disaster victims with unconditional basic income guarantees on an individual basis." The reasons given for the immediacy of the demands are that there are applicants facing such urgent conditions that they could die during the application review process and that "in many disaster stricken areas administrative agencies are also damaged and not functioning." On April 16th there was the "Demand for Government Provision of Minimum Income Guarantees and Other Support:

¹⁰ In keeping with the explanation at the head of this section, this demand should be termed "Basic Income-like" but I have simplified the terminology here to avoid complication.

Hope For Victims and All People, Basic Income!" an appeal backed by Kazuhiro Shirasaki.¹¹ Following these initiatives, April 27th "House of Councilors Gathering to Demand that the Government Provide for Disaster Reconstruction with Minimum Income Guarantees and Material Support for Livelihood Restoration" held in the hall of the Diet Upper House.

We can see that several voices are being raised in support of providing Basic Income to the earthquake victims. The two questions that come to mind for many are 1) who are the victims that would be eligible and 2) How to fund the payments.

As far as the first question, no clear answer is offered in the appeals just mentioned above. Muraoka [2011] prefacing his conjectures with the disclaimer "hypothetically" gives a figure of one million recipients. In the course of the debate, mentioned in footnote 13, within the "Basic Income Japan Network's Voluntary Planning Committee" Shinji Murakami calculated 9.1 million recipients as an operational assumption to approximate the amount of necessary funds. Recipients in his calculation include all residents in the three prefectures most damaged by the earthquake, Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima, with the addition of the number of residents in the local municipality suffered over hundreds of completely or partially destroyed home, in other four prefectures, Aomori, Ibaraki, Tochigi and Chiba (Murakami[2001]). Outside of these areas, we can be sure that there are many more people that have lost jobs and other ways of making a living, or that have evacuated voluntarily as a result of the natural disaster and nuclear accident. Regardless, these estimates (Muraoka's million, Murakami's 9.1 million) are simply temporary and operational calculations uses to better imagine the scale of the funds needed and are not based on clear-cut understandings of just who should be eligible for selective income guarantees in the face of the recent disaster. This debate will start now.

¹¹ The "Basic Income Association: In Search of Implementation" group's "BI Mail News" no.094. The Basic Income Japan Network Planning Committee members discussed Kazuhiro Shirasaki's proposed statement before the official release and added in material reflecting the Association's concern for financing through government bonds issued by the Bank of Japan.

For the second question regarding finances, based on Murakami's calculations just mentioned above, with Basic Income payments of 80 thousand yen a month, the necessary budget would be 8 trillion 700 billion yen. As far as securing the necessary funds, discussion within the Basic Income Japan Network has included restoring progressive elements of the income tax, strengthening the inheritance tax, enlarging the taxation base for corporate tax, increases in consumption tax after counter balancing regressive effects with refundable tax credit, and government bond. In the past Murakami, using statistical data for taxable earnings from 2007, has shown that simply returning income tax rates to what they were in 1987 would secure 6 trillion 760 billion yen (Murakami [2009]).

As mentioned above, Muraoka [2011] has proposed funding this Basic Income proposal through increases in the corporate and consumption taxes and strengthening progressive elements in the income tax system. Muraoka was developing Basic Income proposal before the disaster and presented the same approaches to funding in the past (Muraoka[2010]). Seki [2011] proposes that costs are covered by printing government currency. Seki also had been working on Basic Income proposals before the disaster and funding it by printing government currency has appeared in the course of his previous work (Seki [2009]).

I am in favor of these proposals for the most part. My reasons for backing income guarantees for disaster victims in the form of basic income type arises from the following two points. The first reason is so that there are no more disaster-related deaths. A lot of people died after the Great Hanshin Awaji earthquake in 1995. It is terribly unfortunate that many are dying after this current disaster also. Of course avoiding further loss in human life after a disaster requires a numerous variety of countermeasures such as quickly building homes, both temporary and lasting in a way that does not dismantle communities, providing robust medical treatment, nursing services and early child care. However income guarantees are an essential component for the successful implementation of these measures. At present, there are people that cannot leave evacuation shelters for temporary housing because they have no

money to pay heating and electricity bills or even buy their own food. Lack of income is an extremely limiting bottleneck in the way of recovery.

My second reason is thinking that Reconstruction Plans be developed with disaster victims as a central component in planning. I believe that many people would agree that planning should at least consider the wishes of the victims. However the majority of earthquake victims do not have the ability to take part in the debates over planning. Creating a blueprint for reconstruction is of extreme importance and has the potential to provide hope in desperate times. In order to successfully design reconstruction plans with the participation of those most affected by the disaster, income guarantees are necessary.

After saying this I imagine a common response to be that what is needed is not income guarantees but employment opportunities for all. There are a variety of proposals intending to contribute to the ability of victims to rebuild their lives by demanding employment for them. Within the Reconstruction Design Council also, in addition to council member Atsushi Seike's proposal mentioned in note 2 of the second section, another council member, Yoshihiro Murai, has offered a proposal for incorporating the fishing industry that begins to take into account that many people engaged in the primary industries work as individual contractors and are not covered by employment insurance.¹²

Looking over the press coverage, the Cash For Work (CFW) proposals demanding employment for disaster victims in reconstruction projects deserves some attention. Shingo Nagamatsu, who put together the CFW proposal and organized "CFW Japan" with extraordinary speed, explains that Cash For Work is "a program to issue cash payments to victims through employment in disaster relief, restoration, reconstruction and other projects," and further that "this is becoming the international norm for aiding the victims of large scale disaster (Nagamatsu [2011]), p.63)." He also raises the following four points of importance. For one, "the duration of projects is to last only until normal economic activities resume in disaster-stricken areas." The projects are

¹² The summary of the Reconsruction Design Council's second meeting.

temporary, and for this reason the cash payments must not go above the wages of normal (pre-disaster) economic times according to the 'Principle of less Eligibility.' Point number two regards object persons who are expected to work in this program, "men and women of good health, able to work," and exemptions "such as the elderly and disabled with difficulty working." Exempted persons, "such socially vulnerable individuals should receive separate forms of adequate aid." Nagamatsu's third point is "CFW is not the coercion of all victims into labor" and that the program must not "cut off aid necessary for the survival of those persons that do not participate in CFW." His fourth point is that the program is not intended convert the unpaid work of volunteers into paid employment (ibid, p.64) .

The proposal of Nagamatsu et al is very important considerations as there is no doubt that many victims hope for employment and CFW is a serious attempt to immediately address this need. However what I want to emphasize in the context of this paper is the fact that, as Nagamatsu explains appropriately enough in his second and third points above, employment policies alone are not able to guarantee the livelihood of all disaster victims. No matter what, there is always the need for income support.

Next I would like to go into the various reasons that income guarantees desirable in light of the conditions in the disaster zone.¹³ First and foremost it is crucial to get cash into the hands of victims as quickly as possible. Unconditionality is a great asset as for speed of implementation. Making distinctions on the basis of different levels of damage in disaster zones requires that victims return to destroyed homes, take pictures and then submit the photographic evidence to the office of the municipality where sometimes locates in far from either victims original home or current residence. Aid that depends on the proof provided by some sort of disaster certificate tends to make as the same difficult demands on victims as in the case of the "Act on Support for Reconstructing Livelihoods of Disaster Victims."¹⁴ Applying for aid not only

¹³ It's been some time since I have come to think that implementing Basic Income is desirable regardless of disasters, please see my book (Yamamori [2009]) for the reasons.

¹⁴ Chiba prefecture's UraYasu City began accepting disaster victim certificate

requires time and effort, but in the past there the process has taken two months before benefits reached victims, and this was in disasters smaller in scale than that currently afflicting North East Japan.¹⁵

Second, further burdening the damaged municipalities in the disaster stricken area must be avoided. Another great advantage of unconditionality is that it minimizes the amount of work demanded of these municipalities.

Third, though the majority of disaster victims may agree that the amount and eligibility of cash benefits should be determined by the extent of damages suffered, as the actual review process divides people into recipients and non-recipients there is great potential for community disruption. Another advantage of unconditionality is that it avoids community strife caused by envy.

Fourth, there are several reasons for the individual basis of income guarantees. The National Governors' Association statement mentioned in a footnote in section two proposes that benefits go to the heads of households. However if the head of the household is missing, the family must go to family court for a death certificate and this process takes over a year (Inoue[2008]). Emotionally, I imagine that there may be many families that will want to wait for over a year to seek an official court ruling on the death of a loved one. Regardless, the application process under existing law would not seem to provide immediate relief for bereaved families.¹⁶ Another problem is that opinions differ within households to evacuating away from radiation risks to ensure the health and safety of children. Income guarantees should not have the effect of increasing dependency and unduly effect family decision-making by increasing dependence on the head of the household. In contrast, evacuees that have decided to take their children away from the risks of radiation in spite of the opinions of the family head should not be denied benefits.

Social policy research from a feminist perspective has repeatedly

application on May 1st 2011 (May 2nd 2011 Asahi Newspaper Chiba Morning Edition p.27).

¹⁵ April 14th 2011, Asahi Newspaper Tokyo Evening Edition Front Page.

¹⁶ On this point, the government has changed policy to shorten the time period from 1 year to 3 months for those missing in the current disaster (May 11th Yomiuri Newspaper Evening Edition p. 2) .

shown that benefits are not necessarily distributed equally among family members, and benefits provided on a household basis tend to strengthen subordination to family heads. The conditions of the current disaster will not suddenly make these policies immune from such criticism.

I have discussed the problem of finances in the past with two reservations (Yamamori[2009]). It is not necessary to match each individual policy program with a specific funding source such as tax income or national bonds. We should think in terms of the entire budget (in this sense it is correct to discuss revisions in policy manifestos along with reconstruction plans¹⁷). Just as discussions do not normally range over the budgets for policies such decreasing school class size to 30 students, or paying the salaries of fire fighters and other civil servants dispatched to disaster stricken areas, there is no need tie up discussion of income guarantees debating the merits of funding the policy with government bonds, higher consumption taxes or more progressive income taxes.

The pros and cons of specific policy programs should be debated separately from issues of funding. A pressing example is the debate over the best course of action the government should take to get the nuclear accident under control. Discussions should proceed with debates over financing temporarily suspended. Of course, discussing which policy programs to prioritize over others in terms of financing debating the sources of funding cannot be avoided but, in general, debates on how to finance policy programs are not along with this manner.

In addition, in the case of implementing an unconditional basic income on a national level along with securing the necessary funds to make the benefits possible, the advantages (even if limited to just the alleviation of poverty) far outweigh any reasons for opposing the proposal because of a particular method of financing.

The same can be said about the advantages to be had for livelihood reconstruction with the Basic Income-like benefits for disaster victims. However,

¹⁷ However postponing election pledges to distribute child allowance benefits and make high schools tuition-free in order to fund reconstruction plans without income guarantees pushes victims into increasingly untenable positions.

in this case it is essential to take into account low income earners that are not among the victims. Then rather than a flat across-the-board tax increase, income taxes should be made more progressive. If consumption taxes are to be used for financing, they must be accompanied by refundable tax credit for lower income brackets.

If we take a proposal for issuing government currency or public currency, undoubtedly there is a need for serious debate over what amount and how it will be backed. If a government currency is printed exclusively to provide Basic Income-like payments to victims a big issue will be ensuring circulation. This issue suggests that circulation would be better served if it were used to pay for large public construction projects and public employee salaries. Debates over government currency, such as implementing a depreciating currency along the lines of Silvio Gesell's proposals, or limiting circulation to a certain time after which the currency will be taken up in exchange for Bank of Japan notes offer many valuable points for discussion but are beyond the scope of this paper.¹⁸

6. Concluding remarks

Without the quickly controlling the spread of radiation from the Fukushima Daichi Nuclear Plant, and providing income support for the victims of the disasters so that they may get their lives and livelihoods back, without these two things, reconstruction and revitalization will not happen. The latter essential component was the subject of this paper.

As we saw in section 2, the requests by the two governors' associations for "a special law for the creation of an extraordinary fund to aid victim livelihood reconstruction" are valuable as they are rare proposal directly addressing victims' needs to rebuild their lives. However, it is very unfortunate that neither the national government's Reconstruction Design Council, nor the media, nor the economic presses have directly addressed the proposals.

It is in this environment shaped by the requests of the governors and

¹⁸ Regarding government currency, Takeshi Murota's work (Murota[2004]), including actual cases from history, is a useful reference.

others, that the movement for Basic Income-like demands we considered in section five may be more widely accepted seen as offering a viable proposal. A variety of hurdles must be overcome before we are able to realize an implementation of Basic Income. I myself do not intend to insist that Basic Income has an absolute advantage over other proposals. However as we saw in this paper, the reality is that there are virtually no other proposals to guarantee income for victims.

Regardless, I hope that income supports are provided for victims as quickly as possible so that the disaster does not cause more death or continue to perpetuate the conditions that reproduce poverty. It is with income guarantees that disaster victims themselves will, at last, be able to face the future and share the time and space to make proposals and participate in reconstruction plans. As I lay down my pen I would like to take this opportunity to offer my prayers for the deceased.

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