

'We are in danger'-tsunami was bigger than their estimate,

One man had the tact to save lives of 60 people

Translated by SEEDS Asia

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<http://www.asahi.com/national/update/0323/TKY201103230182.html>

In Shichigahama, Miyagi, one of the areas hit by Northeastern Japan Earthquake, 60 people's lives were saved by a quick decision made by a leader from a voluntary disaster risk reduction(DRR) group. The leader heard from a radio that the level of Tsunami largely exceeded what the prefecture had been preparing for. He immediately decided to evacuate the residents to higher ground from their original evacuation site. 60 people were saved by a hair.

'We truly owe to the professor'.

The leader of the voluntary DRR group in Shichigahama-cho Hanabuchi, Mr.Suzuki, 57, embraced the professor, Dr.Miyagi from Tohoku Gakuin University when they met each other after the earthquake.

Mr.Suzuki and other residents have been working on DRR under the guidance of Dr. Miyagi. Dr. Miyagi is a prominent specialist in the field of DRR of Tsunami in the region.

For the village where majority of residents are elderly people, it is difficult to move long distance after earthquake. Thus original evacuation site was set up at a temple nearby, which can protect the residents from maximum 3.3 meter Tsunami. On March 11th after the earthquake, as having practiced, residents gathered to parking areas of the temple.

Mr. Suzuki was listening to the radio, and he could hardly believe his ear. He heard that Tsunami that hit other parts of the regions is *5 meter*.

'This is bigger than what Miyagi prefecture had been preparing for. We are in danger'

Mr. Suzuki remembered what he had been studying with Dr. Miyagi, and immediately saw the need of moving from the original place. He took elderly people by a bus from the kindergarten nearby, and told others to move immediately. It took 30 minutes to travel all 60 people to the higher ground that is several hundred meters far from the original evacuation site.

'As soon as we completed the evacuation, the temple, original evacuation site, was swallowed by Tsunami' Mr. Suzuki looked back.

After one week of Tsunami, Dr.Miyagi visited people in emergency shelter and met Mr. Suzuki who has been supporting people in the emergency shelter.

'I feel very sorry that I could not tell you the appropriate evacuation site. But you saved people by making the most of what you learned. You did amazing work.' Dr.Miyagi said. --END--