

Sustainability and Children—Family and Childcare under Disaster: Comparative Study of Fukushima and Chernobyl—

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The aim of this paper is to examine how family and childcare systems in Ukraine and Japan reacted to nuclear disasters (Chernobyl in 1986 and Fukushima in 2011) and dealt with providing safe living environment for children who, according to many scholars, are second most vulnerable to radiation after pregnant women.

By doing so, we can see how the public sphere actors were coping with consequences of catastrophes at nuclear plants in private sphere – that is, how they were taking care about and providing adequate medical help for children who suffered as a result of nuclear crisis.

It might seem that making such comparison is not quite adequate, as there are many significant differences between the two disasters, political and ideological situations in two countries, healthcare, family care, and childcare systems etc. However, we will argue that it is important not to compare the scales of two catastrophes, but to concentrate on the fact that they took place, and on the way how common citizens, with (or without) the help of the State, were dealing with their consequences.

It is especially important that now, when more than one year has passed since Fukushima disaster happened, Japan, its governing bodies and the citizens themselves still have time to learn from lessons of Chernobyl and to avoid the faults that Ukrainian citizens and government made. This is especially true when we talk of childcare system, its sustainability and its reaction to new challenges that arose after the nuclear crisis. Thus, another aim of this paper will be to make suggestions about how people and government bodies in Japan can use the lessons of Chernobyl and what should be done in Fukushima in the sphere of child- and family care in the next several years, based on Chernobyl experience.

We will first take a look at situation in post-Chernobyl Ukraine, paying special attention to the following analytical points: evacuation standards and reasons for them; methods and scales of compensations to victims of disasters, both financial and of other forms (such as providing housing, new jobs etc.); measures taken to protect the children; the issue concerning safety of the products consumed; the way how public, private and third sector reacted to the crisis. After that, we will consider the situation in post-Fukushima Japan.

Although data collection is not finished yet and results are only preliminary, they show that the difference in healthcare, family care, childcare and health insurance systems and, speaking more generally – general political and ideological situation in Ukraine (Soviet Union) and Japan were one of the factors that influenced decision-making processes while dealing with consequences of the

crisis.

Another important and actually quite obvious finding is that in post-crisis situation in risk society, it is especially crucial for the citizens to make active decisions concerning their future based on information gathered from different sources.