

SVC52-09

Room:416

Time:April 28 12:15-12:30

Tool handing down disaster experiences using Geoparks: examples of Unzen Volcanic Area Global Geopark

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Local inhabitants living in Shimabara peninsula has suffered volcanic disasters of Mt. Unzen repeatedly, which include the worst volcanic disasters occurred in 1792 (Kansei eruption and Shimabara Catastrophe). Nevertheless these conditions, they stay near Mt. Unzen to take good living environments.

Since they continue living in the near active volcano, they are always at risk of the volcanic disasters. If these experiences of disasters pass down to next generations, disaster prevention awareness in local inhabitants and, as the result, risk from disasters should be reduced. However, because of a long eruption interval (a few hundred years) of Mt. Unzen, it is difficult to pass down these experiences to next generations. Furthermore, the information that emphasized a disaster more than required may lead the uneasiness of local inhabitants. The system to overcome these problems is a Geopark.

Education is one of main component of businesses of geoparks. Thus, we have carried out an education program of disaster prevention for local school students as a business of Geopark and promote their awareness of disaster prevention.

Actually, all of 6th grade of elementary school students in Shimabara city visit geosites for a day as a geotour and learn the highlights of the Geopark. Main theme of the geotour is *a Kansei and Heisei eruptions and their disasters*. School students learn what happened at their home town in about 20 years ago through observation of a building of elementary school burned by a fire derived from pyroclastic surge and a memorial park preserved houses buried by lahar. In the tour, I also try to inquire why you stay near the active volcano introducing great landscapes created by big landslides occurred in 1792, spring water sprung out from a head of a lava flow emitted in 1792 and local special foods using local natural environments.

This is not a program to learn disaster prevention directly. However, when local inhabitants (especially children) understand academic value of local resources (e.g. strata, landscapes, human history, culture, and so on) and realize reasons to stay near active volcanoes, their consciousness of disaster prevention must be promoted. I believe the system of Geopark must contribute promotion of volcanic disaster prevention in Japan.

Keywords: Unzen Volcanic Area Global Geopark, Education of disaster prevention, geosites, Heisei eruptopm, Shimabara Catastrophe