

## 8. WHAT HAVE THE PATIENTS BEEN REQUESTING?



**Mr. Hamamoto, talking about Minamata disease as a narrator**

More than 40 years have passed since Minamata disease broke out. For the Minamata disease patients, the 40 years has seen the continuation of hardship and strife. What the patients requested through the trials and negotiations against the administrations and Chisso was a heartfelt and sincere apology for having caused Minamata disease and not having helped the patients. Also, the patients have been requesting that the victims' conditions be acknowledged and quick relief be provided. What they most strongly appealed for during this period, one of isolation from the local society, was that they be treated as human beings and citizens of Minamata.

There is no complete cure for Minamata disease. Most patients go to hospitals every day for symptomatic treatment and rehabilitation. As the patients become older, the number of people who are hospitalized or receive home medical assistance increases. In this rapid aging society, the patients' wish that they be able to live in the community without any worries is also a common concern in Minamata.

Needless to say, those who can move their body do what they can manage. Although farming and fishing are considered heavy labor, they can help with rehabilitation. Some patients work for companies. The patients have learnt to live with their symptoms. However, prejudice and misunderstanding related to Minamata disease still remains. As such there are cases in which some patients hesitate to reveal that they are a Minamata disease victim even to their family or relatives. Others devote themselves to activities such as talks about their experiences and the lessons for future generations, hoping that Minamata disease will never be repeated.

Not forgetting those who were sacrificed to Minamata disease as the desire for materialistic prosperity and a result of natural destruction, what can we do next? What the patients would ask us to do is to continue to think about what we can do from now on.