

JAPAN 2011 TSUNAMI

One Year Anniversary

SPECIAL DISPATCH

March 11, 2011



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE
Asia / Pacific

絆：復興へ向けてのパートナーシップ

See the video digest of our forthcoming documentary on Fukushima at: <http://www.cwsasiapacific.org>

Today marks the first anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake. The disaster was threefold: The most powerful earthquake ever to have hit Japan – and one of the five most powerful earthquakes the world has experienced since 1900 when modern record-keeping began – was followed by a massive tsunami, which in turn caused a nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

The World Bank estimated it to be the world's most expensive natural disaster, at a loss of US\$235 billion. Though for the survivors, the greatest loss is surely that of loved ones totalling 15,854 dead with 3,271 still missing (National Police Agency of Japan, March 7, 2012).

Today gives us an important opportunity to reflect on our support to the Japanese people over the past year, how it has helped alleviate some of the difficulties they have faced and how it has adapted to their changing needs, as well as the remaining challenges ahead.

Addressing changing needs

CWS-Asia/Pacific responded immediately to this compounded emergency, meeting internally on March 11 to formulate a response, and soon after this mobilising health services, as well as providing hot meals for thousands of evacuees in the cities of Natori, Iwanuma and Rikuzentakata in the affected area. Our initial response was focused on these urgent, basic necessities, but soon we expanded our support to address other emerging needs.



Through the Nippon International Cooperation for Community Development (NICCO), for example, we facilitated the provision of pest control services in Rikuzentakata and other cities, keeping a persistent “fly problem” in check, in both residential and industrial areas. After training local government officials and building a coordination mechanism between municipal governments, NICCO was able to roll out and expand the project to cope with pest prevalence on a larger scale, coordinating with the municipal governments of 13 cities and towns in 3 prefectures, acquiring more funds from other donors.

Focus on communities

As the situations of the survivors changed, we needed to respond appropriately to their changing needs. The closure of the evacuation centers and the survivors' relocation to temporary housing, for instance, brought about an increase in the need for psychosocial support.

Whilst CWS funded some formal psychosocial services in Rikuzentakata, most of our psychosocial support to survivors has been given through informal community-building measures addressing more commonly shared needs, including information-sharing and relationship-building within evacuee communities and between these and their local, neighboring communities.

One of our partners, SEEDS Asia, for example, has been organizing a café-style community space for relaxation and communication in the form of tea parties, which have become effective for sharing information and for discussing problems in the temporary housing sites. Over 350 tea parties have been held, involving almost 7,000 people.

Another partner, Peace Boat, has also provided psychosocial support to survivors of the March 11 tragedy. During the ongoing clean-up operation in Ishinomaki city and during its increased support for residents at temporary housing sites, Peace Boat volunteers have

provided an invaluable source of comfort for survivors who often find it hard to express grief amongst themselves.

Peace Boat has responded sensitively and astutely to survivors' changing needs. Whilst initially providing hot meals – over 100,000 of them – Peace Boat began clearing people's houses of mud and debris. It then widened its focus on the rehabilitation of factories and other infrastructure. In total, around 2,000 structures, including houses, offices, factories, shops and schools have been cleaned. By establishing and maintaining direct contact with survivors through these activities, it was able to identify and respond to other needs in the temporary housing communities.

As such, it continues its work distributing a newsletter to more than 4,000 temporary homes; assisting with the improvement of the environments of the temporary housing areas to enhance evacuees' quality of life; and helping residents in Ishinomaki city to organize traditional local festivals, including the Kawabiraki Festival and the Ishinomaki Light and Art Festival – all of which contributes to community-building.

Peace Boat, along with the Japan NGO Center for International Cooperation (JANIC), is now one of our leading partners seeking to raise public awareness of radiation and nuclear issues in Japan and elsewhere.





Bridging international donors and the Japanese people

CWS-Asia/Pacific is possibly unique in being able to form a bridge between international donors and local Japanese partner organizations on the ground. To a large extent, this accounts for the successes we have had and our ability to adapt to changing situations. Aware of the Japanese context and culture in which our partners are operating, and by participating in strategic meetings with partner organisations in Japan, we learned of emerging needs in time to be able to respond and use funds kindly donated from abroad effectively.

Women and children's specific needs, too frequently overlooked in emergency situations, were often overlooked during this disaster, especially in evacuation centers. But by being involved in local networks with an ear to the ground, CWS became aware of these needs

and prioritized them very early on. Support was provided to Oxfam Japan to enable several local NGOs to provide a lifeline for women via telephone hotlines and face-to-face counselling. Through Caring for Young Refugees (CYR), another local NGO, learning kits were distributed to kindergartens that had lost many or all of their precious resources.

From emergency relief to the longer term

Throughout 2011, as we learned more about the evolving situation on the ground and as our operations shifted from emergency relief to rehabilitation, CWS was able to introduce new elements to our program in Japan targeting longer-term issues.

An area in which CWS is able to bring its expertise directly is in the area of quality and accountability (Q&A), and we have begun building the capacity of our local NGO partners



to be able to respond more effectively to future disasters by introducing international standards of humanitarian assistance. Japan has been a key donor and provider of humanitarian relief to other countries for decades. But local NGOs whose work focuses on Japan, whilst doing excellent work, were not until now familiar with these international standards, especially regarding accountability to beneficiaries.

Through its Pakistan/Afghanistan office, CWS has trained local partners in the internationally-recognized standards and principles of the Sphere Project and the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership. To maximise sustainability, we trained NGO representatives to become officially recognized trainers of HAP and the Sphere Project and assisted them to forge linkages with Q&A experts in the region and at Sphere in Europe.

Recognizing the importance of the role of Peace Boat volunteers in coordinating a response to this threefold disaster, and the need for future volunteer leaders, CWS facilitated the Peace Boat Disaster Relief Volunteer Leaders Training Center, in November 2011. Already, more than 100 volunteer leaders have been trained in areas such as safety management, physical and psychological first aid, leadership and the structure of relief in Japan.

An ongoing disaster

Perhaps the long-term issue that has emerged as the most important one from this triple tragedy is that related to the unknown extent to which the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima will adversely affect the health of Japan's people, environment and economy.

In November, CWS-Asia/Pacific visited the cities of Fukushima, Minamis Soma, Iwaki and Aizu Wakamachi in Fukushima prefecture. After seeing the effects of the nuclear disaster upon local communities first-hand, and listening to the views of local people regarding their current predicaments and hopes for some solutions, CWS became more firmly

committed to addressing this issue.

It is clear that the nuclear disaster in Fukushima is far from over. The forced evacuation from within the 12-mile radius has torn communities and families apart and left many questions unanswered. There is considerable confusion over what 'safe' levels of radiation are and what the real dangers posed by radiation amount to. No one really knows the extent of the leakage or where it has leaked. The absence of reliable maps is compounded by the fact that radiation moves with wind currents. This has created fear and anxiety amongst many across Japan, not just in Fukushima.

Yoko Ito, Program Coordinator for CWS in Japan, says, "Every time I visit Fukushima I feel the people's fear and anxiety. I've heard so many sad stories from people in Fukushima, including families divided because of different understandings or opinions on the threat from radiation, and evacuee children bullied by local children in their new temporary neighborhoods.

People want clarity to be able to make plans and regain a sense of normalcy to their lives."

In January, through Peace Boat, CWS helped facilitate the Global Conference for a Nuclear Power Free World. This event, attended by 11,500 people and broadcast online, helped bring some clarity to some of the issues relating to Japan's nuclear situation. Perhaps more than this, we learned from the experience of others abroad, that there is much more that we can do.

In our latest appeal, for which we still welcome pledges of support, we plan to continue our awareness-raising campaign both in Japan and internationally through a range of different activities that seek to promote issues concerning Fukushima, nuclear power and alternative energy sources. These include, through JANIC, the facilitation of cooperation among local organizations to gather and disseminate reliable data on radiation levels in food and an initiative for farmers to grow safe organic crops.



We also plan to support Kodomo Foundations, a grassroots organization, to provide temporary respite to children from Fukushima. By relocating them on a rotational basis to Sapporo City in Hokkaido in the north, where they can study for a month, we hope to offer them some protection from radioactivity. The scientific basis for this program is that radioactive cesium, which children are especially susceptible to, passes through the body during an average time of three weeks, depending on the age and size of the child.

Thanking friends from abroad

The one year anniversary of Japan's triple disaster presents an opportunity for reflection on how far the Japanese people have come in dealing with the damage and loss wreaked upon them – and on what remains to be tackled. But it also presents us with an opportunity to express our sincere gratitude to our donors (all of whom are listed below) for their support so far and appreciation in advance for any additional support that can be pledged to fill the gap of USD \$600,000 that remains in our latest appeal.

Takeshi Komino, Head of Emergencies for CWS-Asia/Pacific, says, "Along with our partners in Japan, we are truly touched and grateful for all the support given to the Japanese people from our friends abroad, but we have to remind ourselves that issues and needs remain."

Indeed, there is still much more work to be done. But we at CWS are not the only ones that are thankful to the kind donors abroad. As Yoko, our Program Coordinator in Japan, observes, "Whenever I go to visit the disaster-affected area in Tohoku, survivors tell me 'Thank you for coming and your support.' Support from abroad, ultimately from kind individuals and families they have never even met, really encourages the survivors to keep moving forward."



CWS-Asia/Pacific would like to thank the following donors whose generous support makes our work in Japan possible:

- **ACT for Peace**
- **American Baptist Churches**
- **Canadian Churches in Action / Manitoba Council for International Cooperation**
- **Canadian Lutheran World Relief**
- **Christian Aid**
- **Church of the Brethren**
- **Church of Sweden**
- **Dan Church Aid**
- **Développement et Paix - Development and Peace (Caritas)**
- **Disciples of Christ**
- **Evangelical Lutheran Church of America**
- **Global Hope Network International**
- **International Orthodox Christian Charities**
- **Japanese American Association of New York**
- **Lutheran World Relief**
- **Mennonite Central Committee**
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- **Primate's World Relief and Development Fund**
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- **Tokyo International Coordination Service Co., Ltd**
- **Trull Foundation**
- **United Church of Christ**
- **United Methodist Committee on Relief**
- **Y&H Soda Foundation**

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