



## **Triple Disaster Relief Work: Northern Japan Earthquake & the Pacific Tsunami, and the Tokyo Electric Power Company Fukushima First Nuclear Power Plant Accident**

**YWCA of Japan          June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

<Briefing since the last report on April 7th>

In this two months period, YWCA of Japan held a board meeting, formed a relief work project team, and had the annual national meeting with all local YWCAs to review our initial relief works and discussed and decided our direction forward.

Sendai area (northern Japan inland city where Sendai YWCA locates) where we first implemented our initial relief work, such as goods delivery, is now regaining its “normal” daily life. Sendai YWCA gradually became able to initiate a recreation program for local residents who all experienced the massive earthquake. YWCA of Japan and Sendai YWCA are now taking an initiative in Sendai together by implementing programs and by working with other humanitarian NGOs.

The needs and the support required for the areas affected by tsunami and for the areas affected by nuclear power plant accident are quite different. In early May, YWCA of Japan was given an opportunity to work in Shinchi-machi, a beautiful rural northern coastal town in Fukushima, in collaboration with Japan Council of Social Welfare. In that targeted area, measures towards the damage from earthquake and tsunami are the major priority while the effect caused by nuclear power plant accident is equally taken into account.

<Report by activities>

### **1. YWCA of Japan Relief Work Project Team**

- Members: YWCA of Japan President and General Secretary, local YWCA senior (\*) level staffs (6), Sendai YWCA President, Niigata(\*) YWCA /Japan YWCA board.
- \* Senior staffs who have experience in relief activity at the time of Hanshin-Awaji (Kobe) earthquake in 1995. Working in areas where radioactivity is concerned, YWCA of Japan does not recommend to send women under 40 years old due to the risk to reproductive health.
- \* Niigata is a prefecture west to Fukushima which holds the biggest population of nuclear refugees from Fukushima. Approximately 8000 people are still taking shelter in Niigata.( as of May 22<sup>nd</sup>)
- Official formation: April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011
- Project Period: First phase/ April 2011 – March 2012,    Second phase/ April 2012 – March 2013

### **2. Goods donation and delivery**

- From YWCA of Korea: 21,600 bottles of drinking water and 43,200 packages of ramen noodles were donated in April. 60 Christian kindergartens in 5 prefectures (Iwate, Miyagi, Fukushima, Tochigi, Chiba) received the drinking water: each received 360 bottles. In these areas, water contamination by radioactive substances was concerned and/or water supply was stopped since water tubes were damaged. The provided water was “soft water” and it served well for making powdered milk for babies. Many happy voices were heard from mothers and kindergartens. In collaboration with St. Andrews Tokyo Church and its networking churches in Northern Japan, 12,000 packages of Ramen noodles were delivered to the people in shelters and individual houses. The other 31,200 packages were delivered to the base camp of

the NPO Ecotourism Japan- RQ Disaster Relief Center of Citizens, and provided to the small size shelters scattered in the coastal areas in Miyagi prefecture. Many thanks to YWCA of Korea!



Photo: YWCA of India, Candle Vigil



Photo: Letters and messages from Chengdu YWCA (China)



Photo: YWCA of Korea, “Tree of Hope” Campaign



- Initial efforts by local YWCAs in Japan: goods for babies such as feeding bottles, baby food, and diapers, also sanitary goods for women were collected and shipped to UCCJ Tohoku Disaster Relief Center. As time passed by, particular needs were requested from particular sites. YWCA of Japan received a request call for instant foods and sweets from Kamaishi and Natori coastal cities. With Kobe YWCA’s effort, Ezaki Glico Co Ltd in Japan kindly donated boxes of instant foods and sweets that were delivered to the two coastal cities accordingly.

### 3. Housing service

Since the formation of the project team on April 8<sup>th</sup>, the team members visited Fukushima and Miyagi prefectures in rotation to investigate and to develop partnership at the local level. Findings are that, many people who stay in shelters and people who remain at home in areas with radiation risks have various reasons by which they feel moving to a house in a new community is difficult. To list some of the many reasons, it can be a better accessibility to adequate welfare information in public shelters while there is none in private housings outside the affected area. Some other reasons can include issues relating to separation of family. Many families ended up taking a shelter separately due to the level of radiation concern—mothers and small children stay further outside the radiation concerned area while father and older son/daughter remain at home due to job and school.

In fact, the situation varies and it is more sensitive than what is reported in the above paragraph. YWCA of Japan suggested local partners and individuals in the affected areas a short term home-stay or participation to YWCA summer camps to refresh their mind and to release accumulated stress. While providing opportunities for home-stay and summer camps, YWCA of Japan continues to provide housing information to those who need to move to a safer place.

#### **4. Care for the heart—therapeutic/healing activities**

This project is not only aiming at healing of survivors but also at providing the people in the post-affected areas with an opportunity to become a volunteer care provider. During early April, a project team member in charge of this care activity interviewed 54 survivors in Sendai area, and started to develop a network with local women's NGOs, child care groups, Board of Education, Council of Social Welfare etc. Up to May 12<sup>th</sup>, three volunteer training pre-sessions were provided, and a series of a volunteer care provider sessions will start from the end of June.

#### **5. Volunteer coordination at Fukushima Disaster Volunteer Center (Shinchi-machi town, Fukushima)**

The Volunteer Center is organized and managed by a network of NPOs, Fukushima Council of Social Welfare, corporate sector, Central Community Chest of Japan, and professionals of various sectors. YWCA of Japan was asked to join the network as a volunteer coordinator. During May, total of 7 YWCA members and staffs visited the center in rotation and worked in a team with people from other organizations. Shinchi-machi is a northern coastal town in Fukushima 50km away in a straight line from the damaged Tokyo Electric Power Company Fukushima First Nuclear Power Plant. The amount of radiation level should not be underestimated, so YWCA of Japan provided a guideline for the members who were willing to volunteer in the area, in order to minimize the radiation effect. Taking rotation and making the duration of stay short is one way to minimize the effect. There are many young women who are willing to volunteer there; however, women under 40 years old are not recommended due to the risk to reproductive health.



Photo: Shinchi-machi (Fukushima)

#### **6. TV meeting system (Shinchi-machi town, Fukushima)**

Cisco Systems, Inc. Japan provided a TV meeting system for three local elementary schools in Shinchi-machi, Nagoya YWCA, Shinchi-machi Board of Education, and the Ministry of Education Japan. Installation of this system is the first trial in the entire affected areas and it is expected to provide a direct discussion and consultation opportunity for the education sectors. Nagoya YWCA is expected to provide a counselling service for children through the TV.

#### **7. Fukushima YWCA and Sendai YWCA**

Fukushima YWCA: Planning and providing information meetings for local mothers who are concerned of radiation effect for their children in and around their daily living. Participating in actions to demand local and national governments to provide adequate measures to protect residents, especially children, from radiation. In

order to support local farmers and the local economy, promoting products of Fukushima, such as rice and fresh juice, which were harvested and produced before the power plant accident.

Sendai YWCA: On April 20<sup>th</sup>, Sendai YWCA planned and provided a recreation program for local Sendai residents by inviting a facilitator using various kaleidoscopes. A kaleidoscope sounds not directly related to what is called relief work; however, providing participants with an opportunity to see many different types of kaleidoscopes gave them a time to relax and enjoy a beautiful moment which they had not managed to have in the past months. 33 people participated.

The Sendai YWCA building survived the massive quake, and later in April they opened the first floor for YWCA events and activities, the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor for Tohoku HELP (the network introduced in the report in April 7<sup>th</sup>), and the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor for Japan International Food for the Hungry's volunteers' accommodation. Sendai YWCA provides a free meal for the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor volunteers once a week as one of their support activities. For Tohoku HELP, YWCA of Japan has been sending management support staff since April when needed.



Photo: Sendai YWCA building 3<sup>rd</sup> floor for the volunteers

<Contributions and grants>

Contributions: (As of May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011)

Total of 12,726,651 JPY from 571 donors, including individuals and organizations .

The donors include YWCAs and YMCAs in: Australia, China, Chengdu (China), Kwang Ju (Korea), Thailand, Taiwan, Sweden, and many individuals around the world. We thank you all, sisters and brothers of YWCAs and YMCAs!

Grants:

Applied to and granted from: Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) 413,000 JPY, project period April to September, 2011.

And other applications are in process of verification.

<Prayers>

**Countless prayers and spiritual support from sisters and brothers around the world!**

**YWCA of Japan**

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