



# HFHJ Newsletter

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY JAPAN

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## From the Aid Field

### Housing Civil War Returnees and Building Peace in Sri Lanka

Habitat Japan started helping internally displaced persons (IDPs) of the late civil war in Sri Lanka reconstruct their lives, in partnership with Japan Platform (JPF).

The war began in 1983 between Sinhara and Tamir people. In Northern and Eastern Sri Lanka where the warfare was severe, many refugees fled from homes. In 2009, this civil war at last ended and many people went home from refugee camps, only to find their homeland devastated and still with families apart. Their temporary shelters are often made of straws, decaying logs and vinyl sheets, much insufficient even for the wind and the rain.

#### IDPs: In-country Refugees

In Neelasenai village, Mannar district, one of the communities where Habitat Japan builds with Habitat Sri Lanka, many have become IDPs since 1990. There are varieties of the location of IDPs, with some in churches, prisons, and some in

neighboring districts, or in India.

The house of Mr.Nikkaran, one of the returnees who returned to Neelasenai from refugee camps, was the largest in the village, and was confiscated by the antigovernment forces because of its size. The debris only remain with the bullets holes. As well, Ms.Salmira, another IDP, was shot in her left arm by the government forces, leaving still painful wounds there. She can only hold very light things with her left arm.

#### Difficult Work, Strong Ties with the Local Communities

The building walls for 20 families in Vaddakandal village completed in December. The house walls made of cement blocks stacked one by one came to sight. In November the building stopped due to the heavy rain, three days a week. It became difficult to quarry rocks for the foundation, and the heavy rains blocked the trucks to reach the sites. We had to wait for a long time to dry the ce-



ment blocks wet by the heavy rains. We made best efforts to catch up by increasing the number of workers and the suppliers, with the support of local stone masons and carpenters.

At the same time, home owners continued to join the work. We saw Mr.Taslim who owns the agricultural tractor help Ms.Slihauma who has difficulty in carrying heavy slates. The work is a little behind the schedule but we observe the community nourishing the helping ties toward each other and seeing the result of support for the empowerment.

40 homes were completed at the end of December. Habitat Japan will continue to help those IDP resettle, and help Sri Lanka not go back to dreadful warfare.







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volunteers of Habitat Japan worked in Miyagi and Iwate prefectures since March 11, 2011. It has been 10 months since the Great East Japan Earthquake and in 2012, the operation is shifting from emergency relief to restoration of the life. Now temperatures often fall below freezing in the affected area and other volunteers are evacuating from the sites, but we are continuously working with the affected families by providing help and support to revitalize the community.

## From the Tsunami-hit area, Tohoku

Revitalizing Communities: Phase in from Emergency Relief to Reconstruction Assistance

### Higashi-matsushima, Miyagi Prefecture

Approximately 96% of all housing in Higashi-matsushima were damaged by the disaster. In December, Habitat's volunteers decorated Christmas tree with lights and ornaments at a complex of temporary shelters where more than 70 families are living. The tree was located at Gazebo where now temporary shelters are standing. On the following day, Habitat staffs joined a

community Christmas party and tree-lighting ceremony with local residents living in temporary shelters. A disaster survivor said, "It is the light of hope. I can expect good luck for the coming year! This tree has turned on a light inside of my heart." At the same time, Habitat Japan distributed electric hot carpets for 2,400 families still living in their damaged house in Higashi-matsushima.

Now, some families have moved into

newly constructed temporary shelters, while other families have returned to their partially damaged homes, ready to start a new life post-tsunami or have rented apartment houses. Aids tend to reach more to families in temporary housings and less to ones in own homes or apartment houses. Habitat Japan, with the municipal office, identified the needs and distributed winter items for those families sheltered in own homes.

### Ishinomaki & Onagawa, Miyagi Prefecture

Habitat Japan started the operation in Ofunato, Iwate Prefecture and in August we began the operation in Ishinomaki, Miyagi Prefecture. Habitat's volunteers cleared debris and mud. Ishinomaki is one of the most devastated areas where more than 3,000 lives were taken by the Tsunami. The lifelines of the city were damaged and there are areas reachable only through

temporary roads. The needs for volunteers still exist. Furniture and clothes absorbed by sea water became heavy with nasty order. The areas are still sunk with high tide, which limits the working time.

Later in September, Habitat started distributing Futon (Japanese sleeping mattress) sets to the families who moved in temporary shelters from the evacuation centers, with other NPOs and municipal office. We did so three

times till November, delivering to total 234 families, 554 family members.



## Ofunato, Iwate Prefecture

Habitat began the operation in Ofunato immediately after the Tsunami. Now the work of clearing the rubbles by volunteers is coming to end, the trials to restore the life have begun in many parts of the city.

### The land sinking prohibits the restoration

The land sinking has been an obstacle for the restoration in many areas, Ofunato being no exception. The areas near the railway station sunk by more than 1 meter, and soaked by the sea water under high tide, which prohibits especially the shopping streets from restoration. The roads which supported the daily life lost the function and the traffic concentrate on the roads on hill side, leaving heavy congestion. People have not returned the land sinking area soaked with sea waters.



*Ofunato, right after 3.11*



*Ofunato in mid-October*

### Home Repairs Started

Many of the disaster survivors in coastal areas are still living in homes that have holes in the walls and the floors, windows covered only with blue tarps to block wind and rain, and broken toilets and baths that offer no sufficient sanitation. Ofunato is one of the most devastated towns and more than half of the survivors wish to move back into their own homes after repairs. However the government aid for the emergent repair ended and have no plan to resume. Responding to such situation, Habitat Japan began home repairs last December in partnership with Japan Platform. The project will support households with repairable damaged homes, and are willing to help themselves through restarting their lives.

### ~ HFH Japan in Tohoku ~

2011.3.11. Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami struck

3.30 Delivered 1,000 blankets in Tochigi with EU

4.1. First visit: Iwaki, Fukushima

4.4. Campus Chapters began appeal for donation

4.10. First visit: Iwate and Miyagi

4.13. Delivered Sanitary aid to Soma, Fukushima

4.28. First volunteer team to Ofunato, Iwate

8.6 Began operation in Ishinomaki, Miyagi

9.23. Delivered 144 Futon sets to temporary shelters in Onagawa, Miyagi

10.8. Delivered 132 Futon sets to temp. shelters in Onagawa, Miyagi

10.21. Campus Chapters appealed donation across Japan

11.5. Delivered 278 Futon sets to temp. houses in Onagawa, Miyagi

11.7. Campus Chapter teams joined in volunteers

12.11. Christmas decoration in Higashi-matsushima, Miyagi

12.23. Delivered 2,400 winter kits to homes in Higashi-matsushima

## Volunteers for Overseas

Having much needed disaster response work back home,  
We kept sending volunteers overseas – for a reason.

**713** volunteers (41 teams) traveled to countries like Thailand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka in 2011, to build homes for the families in need. Many of these volunteers questioned themselves, weather to work overseas while having much needs to recover from the great disasters in our own country. Japan has always been the country to help others, but this year the table was turned. The world has been watching as the country go through the phases of recovery. It was humbling experience for many Japanese people to realize the unity we build through the history and also the responsibility we have to continue providing support across the



# Habi-Bito

## Michiko Uchida Office Volunteer

Michiko tells us with a smile “my goal is to be needed when I am older.” As a volunteer at the Habitat Japan office, she has a role of members support, preparing and sending letters.

Michiko was employed in the private sector for the last 35 years. She never had the chance to volunteer until recently – she was invited by a friend to give a hand when she was looking for another job. That was 4.5 years ago. When she came to Habitat for the first time, Michiko wasn't sure of why people would use their time and money to volunteer. “Why volunteer?” she wondered. But she was surrounded by younger staff

who are frequently speaking and discussing in English and Japanese; it was a completely different and new environment for her.

“When I first started, I actually wanted to quit,” confides Michiko. She always found something new here, something new to learn. At first, it was just “giving a hand” but now these activities have a real meaning for her.

So naturally when the East Japan Earthquake struck, Michiko wanted to know how she could help. She felt she was not physically able to go to the disaster region herself, and even though she was volunteering with a group that was contributed to recovery, she kept wondering if there was more that she could do personally. She has the

feeling she could make much more, and she was determined to help “even if it was just doing the tiniest little thing.”

These days, the people in her life comment that she is full of energy. Michiko herself feels that she is kinder to people. It seems that Michiko has found her answer to the question she once asked herself – “Why volunteer?”



### Intern Profile

Hi, I'm Toshiyuki. I have been an intern at the Habitat Japan office since last fall.

I was a part of a Campus Chapter at my college, Meiji Gakuin University (MGU) for 4 years. The people I met and the experience I gained during those four years are my treasures; they helped me think about my future and I'd like to stay connected with Habitat. To give back for having received so much, I thought to be a connection between Habitat and students, here at the Tokyo office till I graduate.

Currently, I am helping to plan events, manage dispatch of disaster response volunteers to Tohoku, handle paperwork for the Global Village Program, and other tasks of the Youth Program. On April, I will start my new job in the industry which is one that is completely different from this non-profit, international cooperation sector, but I'd like to find ways for people like me to remain involved with Habitat's missions.



### Global Village Volunteers Wanted

The team will build houses in Bangkok, Thailand, for those in need due to the poverty and disaster. Along with the homeowners, the volunteers will work with their own hands at a worksite cleared for safety. No skills nor experience needed!



Besides house building, the team will visit a local orphanage and/or elementary school. The trip also includes city tour and farewell party. Come join us build more than houses and see the world through your own eyes, minds and hands.

### Calendar on Sale!

Habitat Japan original calendar for 2012 “What Will You Build?” is now on sale! It is filled with smiles of Habitat's homeowners and their children from around the world!

Calendar 2012 (A5 size, 28 pages)

- ◆ 1 order : 500 yen each
- ◆ More than 10 copies : 300 yen each
- ◆ More than 50 copies : 200 yen each



### Editor's Note

New year's greetings from Habitat Japan. Last year was an unforgettable one, with the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, and floods all over the world. While Habitat Japan worked with other country offices to implement the disaster response programs in Tohoku, we also are very grateful to have received much contributions from across Japan. Thank you very much.

In the new year of 2012, we plan to continue with our work in the local communities in Tohoku, as well as bridging Japan and other parts of the world. Your kind support is appreciated. (HFH Japan)



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Established in 1976, Habitat for Humanity, as an International NGO is aiming to build homeowner's dignity and independence through building communities, has helped over 500,000 families, without regard to race, religion or personal background. Now, Habitat has activities about 100 countries and regions, and is building a house every 21 minutes in the world.