

HFHJ Newsletter

Issue # 7, July 2007.

Report From the Initial Field Research in the Solomon Islands

At 7:40 local time on April 2, 2007, a magnitude 8.1 earthquake hit the Solomon Islands, which triggered a large scale tsunami. To support the victims on the islands, Habitat for Humanity Japan did initial research, which was financially supported by Japan Platform.



Nyumanda,

We started to collect information from the officials at Honiara, the capital of Solomon Islands. Then, we moved to Gizo Island, which was one of the most affected areas. On the island, we visited severely damaged Titiana and New-manda villages as well as official residences and the refugee camps in Gizo city in coordination with Oxfam field officers. These villages were completely destroyed by the tsunami. Furthermore, we researched Vorivori, Binblo and other villages which are accessible only by boat from the sea.

The traditional houses on the Solomon Islands are on stilts and made of trees

and leaves. As the seaside disaster areas have few trees, most of the houses were directly built on sandy places near the shore. The foundation poles did not have beams, so the strength of the joints between the foundation and a building were not sufficient. These are considered reasons why many houses suffered from the earthquake and tsunami.

The villagers are suffering trauma from the fear of tsunami and continue to live at the camps in the mountain areas even one month after the disaster. In such a condition, it is feared that infectious diseases may spread rapidly, and it is difficult to keep the space safe for children and women. The villagers depend on rations from the Solomon government and international NGOs for their life. As the schools have not restarted, the children play and study in the safe places established by NGOs.

Most of the victims want to live in the mountain areas due to their fear of a tsunami. However, their life is fishery, and some villagers desire to go back to the seaside area. On meeting with villagers, the Solomon government recommended they go back to the land they had lived on since they had proprietary rights to it.

Rebuilding the shelters is one of the most important issues to devote time to in order to help them recover their daily life. The government fully acknowledged this

task to be tackled immediately, so prompt support is expected.

Findings from the interview research

Mr. Noma, who is living in Vorivori village on Gizo Island, had his house destroyed. Currently only a few poles remain on the land he used to live. When the earthquake hit, he was outside and saw the big wave. He then escaped from it with other villagers. He said that he wanted to live in mountain area since he still felt fear. His father also said that he preferred to live in mountain area for the time being, but he wished to live near the seaside.



Where his house used to be.

Mr. Gola, living in Simbolo village, lost his boat and lamented that he could continue in fishery. He also thought that it would be safe to live in the mountain area. He used to live by selling the coconuts in the town, however he now has money trouble since he can not sell anymore. (Megumi Nishijima, Int'l Programs)

House Supporter Project Report from Bangladesh

With the great help and corporation of house supporters, we made a remittance to Bangladesh for nine houses in April. In the early May, a national office staff member in Dacca visited Jessore, which is going to be the building site. He met the homeowner and started to prepare for construction. In Jessore, there are a lot of people who lost their houses due to the heavy rain from the monsoon. Major houses there are built of bamboo, wood, and straw roofs. Therefore, they are not so durable in heavy rain and flooding. It is difficult for the people who do not have a regular income to build strong houses which are good for such natural occurrences and disasters.



We would like to introduce the Uttam Family, for whom we asked a donation for at the Charity Ohanami Picnic held in March. Uttam Sarkar lives with his wife, Parboti Rani Sarkar, his three daughters and his elderly mother in a tiny little house. The house has bamboo fenced walls with tine roofing and a mud floor. They have only one room and an open veranda. During monsoons, water drips in from the roof and the walls, and the house get heavily damaged. Uttam is a barber, and his wife weaves baskets to help them make a living. However, their income was not enough to build a new house. Uttam says, "When my new home is completed, I will shift my shop to my home. I am very excited. This will also help me save the money that I use for the rent." Uttam is a member of Habitat Bangladesh Save and Build group. The family is hopeful to move into their new home soon.

Homeowners for the nine houses under the construction now are the followings:

Kartik Sarhar, Ripon Sarkar, Uttam Sarkar, Shudhir Das, Shikha Das, Ashim Sarkar Pastor, Anath Das, Amal Das, Ashim Das

Japan Update

“Thank You ! ”

On April 28th, 2007, the Mie JETs volunteer team, made up of 11 assistant language teachers living in Japan, arrived in the Philippines. As our week began, I realized that this experience would instill in me a great sense of thankfulness. Every member of the team felt shocked when we learned that 70 percent of the population in Magaro, the municipality where we were building, was living in poverty. Since all of us come from developed countries, that kind of poverty was hard for us to even imagine. It was a lesson in gratitude for the basic necessities that we are blessed with.

On our first day at the work site, I got sick and had to go to the hospital in the afternoon. Even though I was upset at having to temporarily leave our work and my team, I realized how lucky I was. I was lucky, because I could afford to go the hospital, and to buy the medicine I needed. Many people there could not have afforded treatment when they fell sick. As a team with so many women, we were determined to prove how much we could get done during our workweek! I was the only team member who had previously participated in the Global Village program, and had been to the Philippines before. For most of my teammates this was their first time engaging in hard, manual labor, and it was an eye-opening experience! We all felt more thankful for the hard work that millions of skilled and manual laborers do everyday all over the world.

Our visit to the Queen of Peace orphanage was the highlight of the trip for almost all the team members. We brought games, jump ropes and balls with us to the orphanage. Bringing out the toys broke the ice and started a wonderful, but all too short, two hours during which we played with the children and held the adorable babies. Once again, we were all reminded of how lucky we were in our lives, and I think we all felt more thankful for the families who love us. Although the children at the orphanage had faced hardships that none of us could truly imagine, they were all so open and friendly. At the end of our visit, they sang several songs for us, including a song of thanksgiving. Almost all of us had tears in our eyes as we heard the children's refrain of “thank you”!

Planning for the trip had been stressful for me as team leader, but watching my teammates as they worked with the Filipino volunteers and experienced homebuilding for the first time, I knew that all the stress and hard work had been worth it! At the end of the trip, several team members told me that it had been the best week of their lives! I was so thrilled and grateful to hear that! If you are thinking about planning a Global Village trip, or joining a Global Village team- do it! I cannot emphasize enough how much this experience will make you thankful in your own life, and change your view of the world forever. My two trips to the Philippines with HFH have been priceless experiences that I will treasure for the rest of my life! I can't wait for next year's Global Village trip!

(Mie JET Team Leader; Megan Morrill)



Intern Report from Thailand: Working and Volunteering

(Intern, Keiko Shimizu)

I think that intern is someone between a staff and a volunteer. They are not paid, but have similar responsibility as paid staff members. Interns are not expected only to “help out” but also to think and move on their own, it could be a great opportunity for me to work and learn at the same time.

It's EXCITING!

Because my position as an intern had no predecessor or any other Japanese staff in this Thailand, I find it hard to be a “pioneer” and the one to start many things on my own. When approaching to the Japanese companies, I must consider who to contact, what the clients' needs are and how to attract their interests at all time. There is no pre-set way that I can trace; it is expected to have all-around ability for working in an NGO.

It's CHALLENGING!

Almost all staff at HFH Thailand office is Thai native and naturally the main language used here is Thai. To understand what the people really mean in different culture, I realized that the knowledge of the local language is very important al-

though we can communicate in English. As learning a new word each day, even the regular work days are valuable lessons for me while in a culture of “Sabbai (take it easy).”, away from the one that I used to.



My job title here is Japanese CSR officer and all my work is to reach out for Japanese people, Japanese society in Bangkok. Realizing the great difference in work ethics, I tend to push myself telling “I came all the way to Thailand, I should be able to do more and better!” Often times this becomes a burden pressuring on my shoulders rather than encouragement.

Working in international development industry, people with different backgrounds came together to cooperate, learn from one another and to grow. I hope that my struggle could have some impact on the people around me, just like I was encouraged by the smile on their faces. Working is creation; this is my observation. It gives much pleasure that also the fear at the same time, due to the responsibility that comes along. Much more than “self realization,” I must consider the benefits for the organization and the homeowners within the limited time and resources.

Now I am in the field of and international NGO in developing country, the very place I always dreamed to be. I see how my internship is filled with various opportunity for growth for a student like myself and I dare to give up.

3 months after my arrival here, standing at a turning point in this half a year internship, I'm looking forward to reporting my experience and the growth once I come home to Japan.

Event and Project

“Visiting BASECO” (Hyogo JET Team Leaders; Jennifer L. Hobbs and Robert Collard)

This past March 2007 Rob and I led a Habitat for Humanity trip to Manila, in the Philippines. The disparity in wealth in the Philippines is striking - families living in dumpsters across the street from mega malls. And slum areas, such as Baseco, where the people survive off next to nothing a short drive from five star hotels.

Baseco is located in Manila Bay. The land on which Baseco is situated was once ocean that has been reclaimed with layers of garbage and dirt. It is a shipping yard, as well as a community and home to thousands of families. Families of squatters, as they are called, move from the countryside to Manila in search of work. As they have no income they are drawn to areas of marginal land, such as Baseco, and set up shanty homes. The living conditions in Baseco are horrible. No one would want to live there, but many, due to their economic situation, have no choice. The smell is horrible, there is garbage everywhere. There is no electricity, running water or proper sanitation.

As part of a government project to clean up the many slum areas of Manila, Habitat was building homes in Baseco. The homes built are a vast improvement from the shanties the families lived in – with a lower level, a kitchen area, an upstairs loft, electricity, running water, and sanitation. This project is what our team was a small part of. We raised money for, helped build and paint some of these homes.

One of the memories from Baseco that has stayed with me is of a small boy. I saw him walking aimlessly around the shanties screaming and crying. He was naked, wearing only sandals. He had mucus and spit all over his face and down his front. His body was covered in scabs, and the wounds were not clean or healing properly. He was very skinny and his belly was so distended from hunger. Eventually, he calmed himself and started playing in a pool of water. I just watched him. It was one of the saddest things I had ever seen.

After seeing this boy and the hundreds of other children like him in Baseco, I decided I wanted to raise money to build a playground to improve the quality of the children's lives, to give them a safe and clean place to play. So Rob and I began raising money for our Baseco Playground Project.



However, due to a recent change of government in Manila, support for the project in Baseco has been pulled. And we were told it was no longer possible to build in Baseco - a harsh reality for the people there. There are still thousands of families living in shanties and so much more work to do. But, fortunately, Habitat found another place for the Playground Project, another slum area in Manila, an area that we are told is like Baseco, called Banai. Many of us are lucky enough to be born into a situation where meeting our basic needs is a reality, but, unfortunately, many more are not so lucky. Experiencing such poverty first hand is very different than seeing it on the news or reading about it in books. It has broadened my own and Rob's understanding of the world. Once you see such poverty, I believe, you can not ignore it, and feel some responsibility to help. Working with those in need, in some capacity, will always be a part of our lives.

Meet Travelers with a Purpose

On the 3rd of July, My Habitat held the first meeting of Travelers with a Purpose. The members of the Campus Chapter, the member of My Habitat, the Public and the staff of Habitat participated in the meeting. We spent a great time sharing the information about Habitat and the GV program.



My Habitat is started by the ex-participants of the GV who want to do something with Habitat in Japan. They started the meeting of Travelers with a Purpose to raise awareness and let the people have an interest in the International Cooperation. They hold the meeting every first Tuesday. Let's join the meeting!!
(Intern, Ayumi Ota)

Rock Band “Monkey Majik” Japan Tour Hosts HFH's Photo Appeal.

Rock band "Monkey Majik", as known through BGMS for TV shows and commercials is now touring across Japan, and invited HFH Japan to appeal with photos and donation at each live show.

Monkey MaJjik >



Thanks to the band member and the staff, Habitat's work has been introduced to many people across the country for a month, since June 9th. HFH Japan staff were at the concert in Tokyo to see our work catching the fans' eyes.

< Photos and donation box placed in the live house's lobby (Tokyo)

(PR Department)



Japan Update

Disaster Response : Report from Noto

HFH Japan have been working to build a volunteer program for domestic disaster response. Noto earthquake response was the first case; we sent the 1st team of 2 staff and 2 student volunteers for 6 days from Mar. 31st to Apr. 5th, and the 2nd team of 1 staff and 3 volunteers from Misawa US Air Base on May 21st and 22nd, 2007. This is the report from the second team worked in Noto peninsula.

Traditional warehouses(*) were heavily damaged by the Noto Peninsula Earthquake. These traditional warehouses are really valuable in terms of community renovation because they are used as workshops for traditional activities such as making Wajima-nuri lacquered ware and sake. Habitat for Humanity Japan worked in cooperation with three American volunteers from the U.S. Air Force, Misawa base, in Wajima City on May 21 and 22 and with a local executive committee of Support Activity for Restoration of Traditional Warehouses, which was established by some architects and community renovation consultants.

I worked with Masao Mizuno, Kiichiro Hagino, and other staff from the commit-

tee. It was very helpful for me as a coordinator that both Mr. Mizuno and Mr. Hagino were fluent in English. From the Misawa-base, we had Joseph Bordonaro, Song W Lee, and Jeremy Huffaker, who had participated in a Jimmy Carter Work Project (JCWP) last year. Since it takes more than 10 hours to drive from Misawa-base to Wajima city, they used their volunteer vacation system to join us, being cheered from other people in the base.



We worked on a two-story traditional warehouse in the Fugeshi area. Surprisingly, the family owns a total of three traditional warehouses. Basically, part of the

restoration activity was to knock down the clay wall that got damaged. After eliminating some bamboos and wood from the clay that was knocked off, we crushed it into moderate pieces. Then, we packed the wall clay into a bag and wheeled it out to be recycled (by adding about 2% of new clay into the old).

In Wajima, this Support Activity for Restoration of Traditional Warehouses is not only spotlighted, but the local newspaper and TV also came to interview us because even foreigners have joined to volunteer. During the two days, almost all the clay wall was removed, and we accomplished more than what we expected. In regards to the three Americans from Misawa base, they were willing to take the harder work, and their attitude of both modesty and frankness impressed a lot of people. It was such an ideal volunteer team for me as a coordinator.

** Traditional Warehouse: It's a cultural method of building warehouses using clay, which was developed in Wajima area.*

(Kimiko Mimura)

At the same time, we are raising funds to help make this effort a success. The donations gathered at HFH Japan would be used solely to help the earthquake victims in their recovery.

Banking information

Postal Account

Account Number: 00100-2-278431

Account Holder: HFH Japan

* Please indicate that funds are meant for "Disaster Response in Noto."

Bank Account

Bank name: Mitsui Sumitomo Bank, Nakano-Sakaue Branch Office

Account Number: 4180738 (Savings)

Account Holder: トクヒ/ハビタット フォー ヒューマニティ ジャパン

* Please notify us of your name, contact information and indicate that funds are for "Disaster Response in Noto" at the HFH Japan office.

Acknowledgement

These are donations gathered at HFH Japan for the Noto Peninsula Earthquake victims so far. We really appreciate all who showed the consideration to donate. We will make a use of the

donations for the support activity of the victims. These are the group and the people who made donations.

Charity

March 30	Jesuit Social Center	50,000 yen
March 31	Anonymous	20,000 yen
April 2	Aya Itoh	10,000 yen
April 2	Se Tian	3,000 yen
April 2	Kouichi Okutani	10,000 yen
April 2	Cosmos Initia Co., Ltd.	250 Blue sheets
April 4	Meito Christ International Church	20,000 yen
April 6	Haruhito Tokuchi	3,000 yen
April 11	Nobuo Morishima	3,000 yen
April 17	Sachiko Ogura	10,000 yen
April 17	Christopher Ruth	10,000 yen
May 1	Church of the Lord Jesus Christ Household of God	18,460 yen
May 17	KUFS Habitat	15,872 yen

Thank you, we truly appreciate your kind contributions.



**Habitat
for Humanity®**
Japan

Habitat for Humanity seeks to eliminate poverty housing worldwide through participatory, community led programs. In 2006 we mobilized nearly 1,000,000 volunteers in over 100 countries. For further information on our exciting activities and life-changing opportunities for you to get involved, contact us today!

Habitat for Humanity Japan

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