



HFHJ Newsletter

Habitat for Humanity Japan

Number 25 April 2012

From Tohoku

Repairing the Damaged Homes

In Ofunato, Iwate, Habitat Japan began a project to rehabilitate individual houses damaged in the disaster to help those who wish to restart their lives in their own homes. By offering to cover a part of the cost of repairs, the project assists the victims in rebuilding their houses on their own means and will to restart.

At Last, I Feel Safe in My House.

Mr. Mori is one of the beneficiaries of this project. His house was safe from the tsunami, however, it couldn't escape the impact of the earthquake, leaving the foundation shifted by up to 15cm. Furthermore, the damage to his house was categorized as "partial" and it wasn't enough for him to qualify for a temporary shelter or to receive funding from the government at first. Mr. Mori kept strong and managed to stay in his damaged house even though he could never feel safe with the integrity of his once earthquake-hit home. Having finished his mortgage payment just before the disaster, he was not confident to continue repairing either. When he learnt of Habitat's program, Mr. Mori thought of his

father with heart disease and decided to lift the foundation, put up new walls and new roof, and fix other major parts of the house. Now that the repairs are completed, he is left with a feeling that it is now truly safe to live in his house. (photo, right)

Identifying the Needs, Door to Door

Up until February, Habitat Japan had been spreading word of its work through different promotional channels. However, it became clear that not everyone had access to newspapers, radio, the bulletin boards at community centers, etc. and as a result a significant number of people were not finding out about the program being offered. In order to identify specific needs of the people, we added to making door-to-door visits. With the help of local volunteers, we visited a total of 600 households. While distributing flyers and explaining the program.

The staff also gave consultations on not only the program Habitat Japan offers, but



also opportunities to combine it with the governmental subsidies and other housing solutions available. In the end such efforts resulted in 42 households newly registered to receive Habitat's assistance. Currently, we are aware that there are many people who are hesitant or feel they don't qualify, even though they do in reality, and planning to continue to further increase awareness amongst the people of Ofunato city.

Ofunato received a disproportionate amount of damage to homes. Even now people are living with broken windows, holy walls and makeshift roofs. Meanwhile, as public funding ended last year, options for those affected are becoming increasingly limited. Working alongside organizations such as Japan Platform, Habitat Japan is aiming to complete the repair of over 100 homes by this summer.





Miyako District, Higashimatsushima city, Miyagi prefecture. The area was known for its healthy fishing industry. With a several boats escaped the destruction, the locals restarted the fishing; at first they didn't have a place to store their fishing gears and cargo containers are being used as a makeshift storeroom. Habitat Japan helped to paint a scene of people enjoying the sea to ensure that, as local people wish, "no one forgets the beautiful views of the seashore." In Miyagi, we are working to rebuild not just homes, but also the community, to secure a safe and sound environment to restart lives for the local people.

Event Report

Reaching Out of the Disaster Response and the Youth Program

3.11 Memorial

On March 3rd, Habitat Japan held "The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Memorial" in Tokyo.

Around 120 people attended, including volunteers, donors and supporters. We shared reports on our work and announced plans for the year 2012, as well as expressing our gratitude to individuals and corporations who joined and contributed to our initiatives.

At 14:46, when the earthquake hit in 2011, the attendees had a moment of silence. Following that, we shared the stories by a survivor who is also a Habitat's homeowner, which brought some guests to tears recalling the significance of the loss.

Natsuki Ichikawa (Kyoto University of Foreign Studies), who helped led many volunteer teams last year, gave a speech. She said "I cannot forget the tears of the person who told me 'What I am afraid the

most is to be forgotten.' Live afar from Tohoku, we should not forget there are people who still need our support. Let's send our thoughts and power to Tohoku."

After the event, many guests stayed to share their thoughts on how they can contribute to the rebuilding themselves.

"Habi-Gra"

March is a time for graduation in Japan. Habitat Japan held "Habitat Graduation Ceremony (Habi-Gra)" for those who graduate from Campus Chapters this year.

It was the first time for Habitat Japan to hold such ceremony, one in Kansai (Kitashinchi, Osaka) and the other in Kanto area (Ebisu, Tokyo). A total of 70 guests, including the recent graduates, current Chapter members and the alumni had at-

tended. Looking back to their times in college, the graduates lead other guests discussing how to support those who are in needs through Habitat's initiatives and how to keep precious connections gained through their involvements even after they leave school.

At the end of the event, Habitat Japan presented certificates of appreciation to the graduates thanking their contributions. One of the graduates shared "I am very

happy to receive this. There are many things I could have done better, but I will hand them over to the undergraduates."

【Planning Habi-Gra】 "I once again noticed that it is important that how we, the graduates, continue to support Habitat. I hope that we can extend Habitat's possibilities further through our networks."

- Saya Komatsu, former leader of Ritsumeikan University Campus Chapter

Supporting Resettlement of IDPs in Sri Lanka

The civil war is now over in Sri Lanka and the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are returning to their hometowns. Habitat Japan is now building homes for the returnees of the Mannar district supporting them in restarting their lives after tens of years in evacuation. In total, 86 houses have been completed as of the end of February, and we are now working to increase this number to 100.

Dedication Ceremony with the Homeowners

On March 19th in the village of Waddakandal, Habitat Japan held a celebration for the 69 houses that were completed. The region's officials and homeowners attended and there Habitat Japan's staff gave a speech in honor of the homeowners new beginning. "We'd like



each of the families to use these houses as the first step towards independence." The houses were officially dedicated through tape cutting at every single door step. Razak, a homeowner said, "I am able to return to my village thanks to this house. It is a place where I can reunite with my friends and family that have been driven away by the civil war. I am just so happy."

Electricity to the Village

Wattakandal was completely destroyed in the civil war. The rebuilding process is in progress now, and through such efforts, electric lines have been installed in some parts. It is just one of the positive results and many people are hoping for continuous growth from now on. Habitat Japan, teaming up with Japan Platform, will continue to support this community.

Volunteers Wanted!

Volunteers from the World Get Together in Sri Lanka

"Big Builds" is one of Habitat for Humanity's signature events that builds tens of houses with hundreds of volunteers from different countries all at once in a short period of time. This summer, it will take place in Negombo, a coast town of Sri Lanka. Twenty four houses will be built with 300 volunteers and homeowners who are trying to rebuild their lives after natural disaster and civil war.

Come and Join Us Today!

- Meet, live and work and with volunteers from all over the world.
- Enjoy Negombo's world famous beaches on your free time.

Schedule:

August 5th (Sun) - 11th (Sat)

Contact:

rebuildsrilanka@habitatjp.org



Japan Hope Builders In Flood-Affected Pathum Thani, Thailand, Team Builds Hopes and Homes

On March 4th in Pathum Thani, a suburb of Bangkok, Thailand, Habitat Japan completed a build with "Japan Hope Builders" team of 12 volunteers. Pathum Thani is one of the places severely hit by last year's floods. The area seemed calm and normal, but the water marks on the house walls showed the area was flooded waist deep. The volunteers were nervous to see that at first, but warmed up especially after meeting the homeowners, the Jing's. The week of hard work turned the group into a team.

Participant's Report by Daichi Maehata "Work was hard. But I just can not forget the smiling face of Jing so happy. For many Japanese people, the true value of a home seems to be forgotten. Through this experience I really recognized what a precious thing it can be. It opened my eyes to the world's poverty, and at the same time, it reminded me of the disaster that recently struck Japan, inspiring me to do more for those affected."



At first, "I never expected to make it this far," says Yuya, the founder of Muster Peace, a Campus Chapter at Kansai University. He is participating in the Global Village Program (GV) for the golden week holidays while he keeps a full time job in the food industry. The members of the team he formed include not only the alumni of the chapter, but also other adults and students—some for the first time. While the majority of vol-

unteers are students belonging to one chapter, this team is quite unique.

It all started at the chapter's camp he joined as a recent graduate. He says "how we all worked hard for one short week of GV trip, I wanted to remember that feeling." Yuya took action but the people around him were too busy to join him, even for one short week.

"My experience suggested me to keep it up," he continues. When he established Muster Peace, he distributed 1,000 flyers in a month. Another time, he walked around campus with a panel wrapped around him as a 'walking photo exhibit.' "You can not start anything without

speaking out and taking action. When you do everything you can, then people would come around eventually."

He started to plan for this trip a year ago, contacting everyone he knows and via the chapter's mailing list for the alumni. The biggest contributor is "the connection with friends" he says. The team grew up to 18 people in the end.

Yuya hopes for everyone to take positive attitude. "We all want to be needed but only few can feel that through their jobs. I hope this trip will inspire many of my team members, through hard work for other people's good." His report and future plans are to be told very soon.

Intern Profile

Hello! My name is Eriko Konishi from Habitat APU (Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University). I worked as an intern in Ofunato office for a month, helping out with documentations, answering phones, assessing damages of houses and the flyer posting. Through this internship, I learned a great deal.

In Ofunato, there are houses that look perfect from the outside, but on the inside it



Eriko (right),
a mood maker of the team

is left as it was right after the tsunami. There are a lot of homes that needs repairs.

Spending time with Habitat Japan staff was such a wonderful experience. They would sometimes get into passionate debates over even the smallest details of the project, but I realized this was because they are professionals who are passionate and concerned about the affected people.

After this internship, I am going back to my college and share this experience with my schoolmates. I am looking forward to discuss how we can further contribute.

Habitat Ranked as Trusted Brand

Habitat International has been ranked as the second-highest brand among social service non-profit organizations in the 2012 Harris Poll EquiTrend study.

The annual survey of over 37,000 consumers in the United States focused on a range of elements like familiarity, quality, trust and performance.

The American Red Cross was rated number one and the Salvation Army number three, with a slight point difference in between. The survey conducted by New York-headquartered Harris Interactive. As the web site reads "the stronger the brand, the greater the bond" the study shows how Habitat is widely accepted.

Tohoku Volunteers Wanted

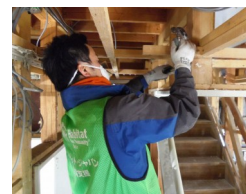
Recruitment for Tohoku

volunteers is open! The minimum commitment is for 1 day and no special skills or experience are necessary.

Locations: Ishinomaki city and Higashi Matsushima city, Miyagi.

Tasks: Cleaning private houses, public and community buildings and etc.

Schedule: We are continually looking for volunteers, check the Habitat Japan website for more details!



Editor's Note

Recently, I have visited Sri Lanka and Thailand both hit by devastating tsunami after the Eastern Indian Ocean earthquake 8 years ago. Even after that, Sri Lanka suffered from the civil war, and Thailand was damaged by a flood last year. Moreover, magnitude 8.6 quake hit Indonesia during the edition of this issue.

A year has passed since the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami. We still have a long way to rebuild, though the number of volunteers and participating organizations in affected area are on the decline. It's time to consider how we continue a long-term support amid such frequent disaster. (Habitat 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.